

Before the play begins

Henry IV Part 2 continues the story, begun in *Part 1*, of the rebellions against King Henry. His troubled reign began when, as Bullingbrook, he seized the throne of England from Richard II, and probably ordered Richard's murder. The play enacts Shakespeare's version of the power struggles in early fifteenth-century England caused by Henry's dubious claim to be the rightful king.

Part 2 begins shortly after the battle of Shrewsbury in 1403. It imaginatively dramatises certain events between that time and 1413, when King Henry IV died and his son, Prince Hal, succeeded him as King Henry V.

Part 1 had left unfinished business. Henry had defeated one rebellion led by Hotspur, but the play ended with him preparing to meet another rebel army led by the Archbishop of York. Prince Hal had vowed to throw off his wild ways and to break from his corrupt companion Falstaff. *Part 2* sees the defeat of the Archbishop's rebellion and the working out of Hal's vow. It ends with Hal crowned as King Henry V and his final rejection of Falstaff.

Shakespeare did far more in *Parts 1* and *2* than portray the military and political events of the unquiet times of Henry IV. His dramatic imagination created the character who would ensure the plays' lasting success from the moment of their first performance: Falstaff.

The cycle of Shakespeare's history plays (1398–1485)

Richard II: Bullingbrook deposes King Richard and is crowned as King Henry IV. Hal is briefly mentioned.

Henry IV Parts 1 and *2*: Rebellions against Henry are defeated. Hal enjoys Falstaff's company, but, crowned as King Henry V, rejects him.

Henry V: Henry is victorious at Agincourt and is betrothed to Katherine, the French King's daughter.

Henry VI Parts 1, 2 and *3*: Henry VI loses the English possessions in France. His kingdom is racked by the Wars of the Roses. Henry is murdered by Richard, Duke of Gloucester.

Richard III: Richard murders his way to the English throne, but is overthrown by Richmond who becomes Henry VII.

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 Edited by Rex Gibson
 Excerpt
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The world of the play



List of characters

RUMOUR the presenter

The Court

KING HENRY IV		EARL OF WARWICK
PRINCE HAL		EARL OF WESTMORELAND
PRINCE JOHN OF LANCASTER	} King Henry's sons	EARL OF SURREY
DUKE OF GLOUCESTER		GOWER
DUKE OF CLARENCE		HARCOURT
LORD CHIEF JUSTICE		SIR JOHN BLUNT

The Rebels

ARCHBISHOP OF YORK	LORD MOWBRAY
EARL OF NORTHUMBERLAND	LORD HASTINGS
LADY NORTHUMBERLAND	LORD BARDOLPH
LADY PERCY	
Northumberland's daughter-in-law	TRAVERS
COLEVILE OF THE DALE	MORTON

The Tavern

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF	HOSTESS QUICKLY
BARDOLPH	DOLL TEARSHEET
PISTOL	} Followers of Falstaff
POINS Prince Hal's friend	
PETO Prince Hal's follower	WILL
PAGE to Falstaff	FANG
	SNARE
	} Drawers (Barmen)
	} Officers

Gloucestershire

SHALLOW	} Justices (Magistrates)	MOULDY	} Falstaff's recruits
SILENCE		SHADOW	
DAVY Shallow's servant	WART		
	FEEBLE		
	BULLCALF		

Grooms, Servants, Porter, Messenger, Officers, musicians, soldiers

The action of the play takes place at various locations in England.

Henry IV Part 2

Rumour tells how he spreads lies round all the world, sometimes of peace, sometimes of threatening war. Such false reports are easily spread, because everyone joins in rumour-mongering.

1 Induction (in small groups)

An induction is a prologue, or explanation of what the play will be about. Rumour is a symbolic or allegorical figure of the kind often appearing in plays, pageants and masques from medieval times until after Shakespeare's death.

Rumour first gives a general account of what he does (lines 1–22), then talks directly about the play. Use the suggestions below and on page 6 to help you prepare a presentation of Rumour's lines.

- a Design Rumour's costume, 'painted full of tongues' (see page 38).
- b Rumours create a sense of unease and confusion. Experiment to find an appropriate tone of voice for Rumour (for example, contemptuously scornful and unpleasant, revelling in the ease with which he can make people believe and spread rumours).
- c Work out gestures that Rumour might use to accompany his words. For example, at line 22, what action could he use to show that all the audience ('my household') are rumour-mongers?

2 Imagery: music and monsters

Lines 15–20 contain two vivid images. Rumour is pictured as a musical instrument like a recorder. It is played upon by rumours ('Blown by surmises'), spreading lies inspired by jealousy. The pipe is so easy to play ('so plain a stop') that any mob or crowd ('blunt monster with uncounted heads') can use it.

Make up several lines of your own, beginning 'Rumour is ...', which suggest similarly telling pictures of how quickly rumours spread.

vent holes
 Orient East
 post-horse hired horse
 still always
 covert hidden
 fearful musters panic-stricken
 recruitment of armies

prepared defence preparations
 against invasion
 big pregnant
 And no such matter such
 rumours are false
 anatomise explain, dissect

King Henry IV Part 2

INDUCTION

Enter RUMOUR painted full of tongues

RUMOUR Open your ears; for which of you will stop
 The vent of hearing when loud Rumour speaks?
 I from the Orient to the drooping West
 (Making the wind my post-horse) still unfold
 The acts commencèd on this ball of earth; 5
 Upon my tongues continual slanders ride,
 The which in every language I pronounce,
 Stuffing the ears of men with false reports:
 I speak of peace while covert enmity,
 Under the smile of safety, wounds the world; 10
 And who but Rumour, who but only I,
 Make fearful musters, and prepared defence,
 Whiles the big year, swoll'n with some other grief,
 Is thought with child by the stern tyrant War?
 And no such matter. Rumour is a pipe 15
 Blown by surmises, Jealousy's conjectures,
 And of so easy and so plain a stop
 That the blunt monster with uncounted heads,
 The still discordant wav'ring multitude,
 Can play upon it. But what need I thus 20
 My well-known body to anatomise
 Among my household? Why is Rumour here?

Henry IV Part 2

Rumour tells the truth about what happened at the battle of Shrewsbury, then describes the false rumours he has spread. In Scene 1, Lord Bardolph arrives at the Earl of Northumberland's castle.

1 Telling the truth (in small groups)

Rumour first says what actually happened at the battle of Shrewsbury: King Henry (Harry) defeated the rebels led by Hotspur. In *Henry IV Part 1*, Shakespeare's portrayal of the battle shows Prince Hal ('Harry Monmouth') killing Hotspur and rescuing his father from death at the hands of the Scottish warrior Douglas.

Rumour recounts how he has spread false reports everywhere, claiming that King Henry and Prince Hal have been killed in the battle. Rumour knows that to Northumberland, father of Hotspur, the lies about the battle will be comforting but eventually hurtful ('smooth comforts false').

- a Show the events described in lines 23–32 as two mimes to accompany Rumour's words. Your first mime shows what really happened (23–7), the second shows the false events as Rumour describes them.
- b Use Rumour's description of Warkworth Castle as 'this worm-eaten hold of ragged stone' to design the set for Scene 1.

2 Playing the Porter

This is the Porter's only appearance in the play. If you played the part, would you try to make the Porter into a truly memorable character for the audience (for example, playing him very drunk, or outstandingly insolent and surly)? Or do you think he should be played merely as a someone whose only function is to introduce Lord Bardolph? Give reasons for your decision.

field battlefield
 office duty
 noise abroad spread rumours
 everywhere
 anointed sacred
 peasant rural

worm-eaten hold decaying castle
 crafty-sick pretending to be ill
 posts messengers on horses
 tiring on worn out by furious
 riding

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Act 1 Scene 1

I run before King Harry's victory,
 Who in a bloody field by Shrewsbury
 Hath beaten down young Hotspur and his troops, 25
 Quenching the flame of bold rebellion
 Even with the rebels' blood. But what mean I
 To speak so true at first? My office is
 To noise abroad that Harry Monmouth fell
 Under the wrath of noble Hotspur's sword, 30
 And that the king before the Douglas' rage
 Stooped his anointed head as low as death.
 This have I rumoured through the peasant towns
 Between that royal field of Shrewsbury
 And this worm-eaten hold of ragged stone, 35
 Where Hotspur's father, old Northumberland,
 Lies crafty-sick. The posts come tiring on,
 And not a man of them brings other news
 Than they have learnt of me. From Rumour's tongues
 They bring smooth comforts false, worse than true wrongs. 40

Exit

ACT I SCENE I
 Outside Warkworth Castle

Enter the LORD BARDOLPH and the PORTER

LORD BARDOLPH Who keeps the gate here, ho? Where is the earl?

PORTER What shall I say you are?

LORD BARDOLPH Tell thou the earl
 That the Lord Bardolph doth attend him here.

PORTER His worship is walked forth into the orchard,
 Please it your honour knock but at the gate, 5
 And he himself will answer.

Enter the Earl [of] NORTHUMBERLAND

LORD BARDOLPH Here comes the earl.

[Exit Porter]

Henry IV Part 2

Lord Bardolph is confident that the rebels won the battle of Shrewsbury. King Henry is near to death, Hal slain, Falstaff a prisoner, and all the rest fled. Travers brings different news.

1 'What news?' (in groups of four)

Every history play has a special problem: how to ensure, right at the start, that the audience has sufficient information to make sense of what follows. Shakespeare chooses a particularly effective method of providing that information, showing that Rumour has done his work well.

Instead of having someone narrating past events, Shakespeare begins with Lord Bardolph's false story of the rebels' victory. He then has Travers provide a hearsay account. Finally, Morton provides an eyewitness account of the defeat of the rebels.

Take parts as Northumberland, Lord Bardolph, Travers and Morton and speak lines 7–135, in which the truth gradually emerges from contradictory accounts. Use the activities below and on pages 10–14 to help your understanding.

2 Echoes of Caesar

Suggest how line 21 echoes Julius Caesar's famous claim, 'I came, I saw, I conquered'.

3 Creating atmosphere (in small groups)

When you have read lines 7–135, talk together about the dramatic effectiveness of Shakespeare's method, particularly in the tense, uncertain atmosphere it creates. It will help if you begin by reminding yourselves that today television and radio report battles as they happen. Then identify the ways in which Shakespeare builds up an impression of a medieval world where eye-witness accounts are slow to arrive.

stratagem violent act
contention war
the Blunts, Stafford supporters of
 King Henry
brawn, the hulk Sir John fat
 boar, Falstaff
good name a noble family

over-rode overtook
haply may retail perhaps may tell
Sir John Umfrevile a rebel who
 does not appear in the play
forspent exhausted
breathe rest

- NORTHUMBERLAND What news, Lord Bardolph? Every minute now
 Should be the father of some stratagem;
 The times are wild: contention, like a horse
 Full of high feeding, madly hath broke loose, 10
 And bears down all before him.
- LORD BARDOLPH Noble earl,
 I bring you certain news from Shrewsbury.
- NORTHUMBERLAND Good, and God will.
- LORD BARDOLPH As good as heart can wish:
 The king is almost wounded to the death,
 And, in the fortune of my lord your son, 15
 Prince Harry slain outright, and both the Blunts
 Killed by the hand of Douglas. Young Prince John
 And Westmoreland and Stafford fled the field,
 And Harry Monmouth's brawn, the hulk Sir John,
 Is prisoner to your son. O, such a day, 20
 So fought, so followed, and so fairly won,
 Came not till now to dignify the times
 Since Caesar's fortunes.
- NORTHUMBERLAND How is this derived?
 Saw you the field? Came you from Shrewsbury?
- LORD BARDOLPH I spake with one, my lord, that came from thence, 25
- Enter TRAVERS*
- A gentleman well bred, and of good name,
 That freely rendered me these news for true.
- NORTHUMBERLAND Here comes my servant Travers, who I sent
 On Tuesday last to listen after news.
- LORD BARDOLPH My lord, I over-rode him on the way, 30
 And he is furnished with no certainties
 More than he haply may retail from me.
- NORTHUMBERLAND Now Travers, what good tidings comes with you?
- TRAVERS My lord, Sir John Umfrevile turned me back
 With joyful tidings, and, being better horsed, 35
 Out-rode me. After him came spurring hard
 A gentleman, almost forspent with speed,
 That stopped by me to breathe his bloodied horse.
 He asked the way to Chester, and of him
 I did demand what news from Shrewsbury: 40

Henry IV Part 2

Travers reports that he was told that Hotspur is dead. Bardolph denies the report is true. Morton arrives and Northumberland sees bad news written in his face.

1 How does Travers tell his story?

Travers is a servant who has to report that he has heard news that his master's son (Harry Percy) is dead. Suggest what thoughts went through Traver's head as he rode back to Warkworth castle with his ominous news (for example, how to avoid using the word 'dead?'), and how he now feels in the presence of two mighty noblemen. Then explore different ways of speaking his lines 34–48.

2 Are appearances deceptive? (in pairs)

In *Macbeth*, King Duncan says 'there's no art to find the mind's construction in the face'. But Northumberland's three images in lines 60–73 show that he is confident that he can tell what Morton is thinking from the look on Morton's face:

'title-leaf' (line 60) – like the title page of a book or play that summarises the tragedy

'the strond' (line 62) – like the seashore which shows evidence of the retreating stormy tide

'Priam' (line 72) – like King Priam's face, when he woke to find Troy burning (in Greek mythology)

Talk together about whether you think that someone bringing bad news shows it in their face.

3 Should they laugh?

Morton brings an eye-witness account of the battle of Shrewsbury. If you were playing Morton, would you want the audience to laugh at your first four words?

spur was cold is dead

jade worn-out horse

rowel head spiked wheel on spur

point lace (used to fasten breeches)

barony noble title

hilding good-for-nothing, contemptible

at a venture recklessly

a witnessed usurpation evidence of the tide's attack

party forces, supporters

apter more significant