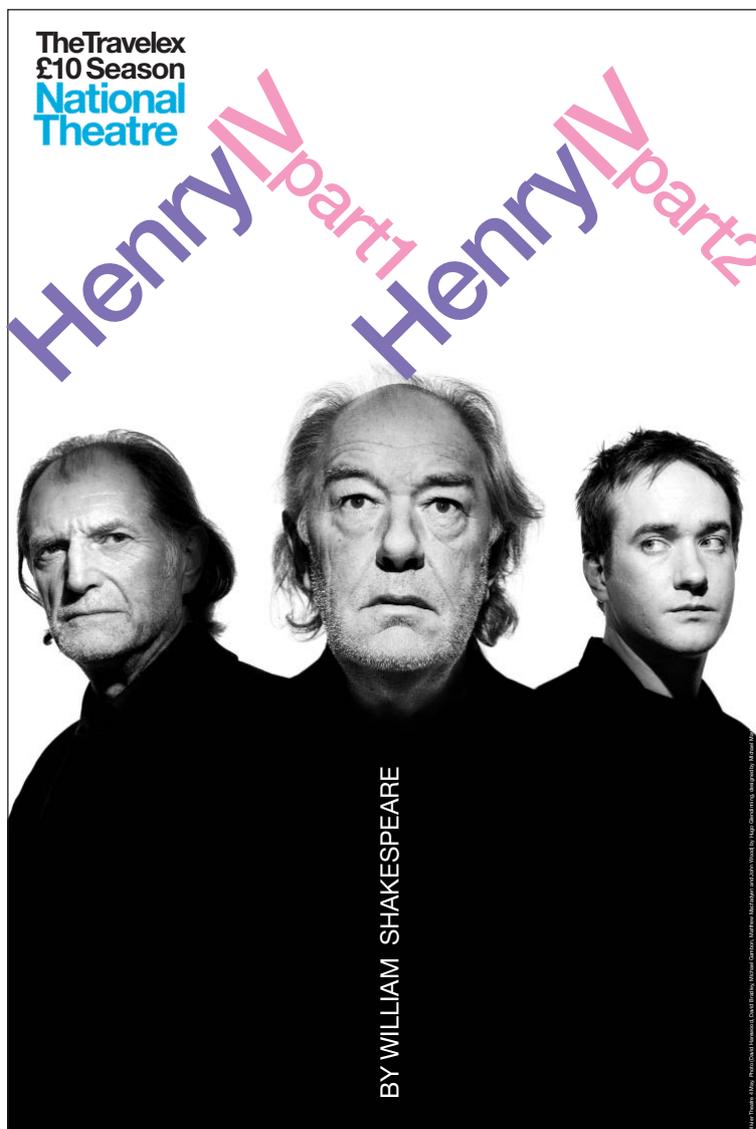


Henry IV Parts 1 and 2 Preparatory workpack

Contents

A Dramatic Commentary	2
Shakespeare's History Plays	14
Teaching <i>Henry IV Parts 1 and 2</i>	15
Preparing the National's productions	20



Henry IV Parts 1 and 2
By William Shakespeare

Director
Nicholas Hytner

Further production details
www.nationaltheatre.org.uk

Workpack co-written by
Peter Reynolds,
Creative Director of
www.stagework.org.uk
with contributions from
Samantha Potter,
Staff Director on this
production

Editor
Emma Thirlwell

Design
Patrick Eley, Lisa Johnson

NT Education
National Theatre
South Bank
London SE1 9PX

T 020 7452 3388
F 020 7452 3380
E educationenquiries@nationaltheatre.org.uk

Workpack
© Peter Reynolds and
Samantha Potter
The views expressed in this
workpack are not necessarily
those of the National Theatre

A Dramatic Commentary

HENRY IV PART 1

Act 1 scene 1

KING HENRY IV and his closest associates acknowledge the deeply troubled nature of the times. Henry speaks of the recent armed conflict that has left them all feeling physically and emotionally exhausted. He wants to unite the country under the banner of a crusade; a tactic that he hopes will focus attention away from troubles at home and onto foreigners, “*these pagans in those holy fields*”, and so serve to unite a disunited people. He also wants the crusade to atone for his own deep sense of guilt at being responsible for the deposition of the previous, supposedly divinely appointed, English King, Richard II. But Henry’s plan is stillborn because of continuing instability and the imminent threat to his kingdom posed by “*the irregular and wild Glendower*.” The margins of Henry’s nation are far from being united with it. GLENDOWER is Welsh, but there is also trouble brewing in the North where fighting is reported between forces led by the young and “*gallant*” HOTSPUR, son of the powerful Earl of Northumberland, and the young and “*valiant*” Scot, DOUGLAS, who commands some ten thousand men. The King hears that Hotspur has emerged the victor, causing the anxious monarch to reflect on how different this young man is in every way compared to his own son and heir, HARRY, Prince of Wales: “*riot and dishonour stain the brow/Of my young Harry*.” Hotspur too is rebellious as with most adolescent young men, but in a very different way: he has refused to hand over his prisoners to the King (bar one), as convention dictates he must. WESTMORLAND, one of the King’s closest counsellors, claims this is due to the malign influence of an older man, Hotspur’s uncle, WORCESTER.

Act 1 scene 2

The action moves from the high politics of the court to a very different world in which we are presented with an older man in the company of a younger: FALSTAFF and Henry IV’s son, Harry.

Their manner and their talk reveal an intimacy and informality entirely lacking from the behaviour of the men in the opening scene and, in contrast to news of a kingdom at war with itself, we now meet a man at odds with himself: Falstaff, according to his young companion, doesn’t even know what time of day it is. Their talk justifies Henry’s fears for his son’s moral wellbeing not least because Falstaff states that they are both criminals: “*we that take purses*”, and the Prince’s subsequent question to Falstaff, “*where shall we take a purse tomorrow Jack?*” One of their drinking companions, NED POINS, plots to rob wealthy travellers, “*pilgrims going to Canterbury*”, and “*traders riding to London*”, but the Prince says, “*I’ll tarry at home*”, leaving a question mark over his previous apparent willingness to act as a thief. After Falstaff has left, Poins explains that he really intends an elaborate practical joke at Falstaff’s expense, a plot involving a robbery that will lead to the exposure of Falstaff as both a coward and a supreme liar.

At the end of the scene the Prince is left alone. The audience have seen and heard his behaviour and witnessed the company he keeps and must, like his father, be inclined to see it as evidence of juvenile delinquency, an adolescent male at risk because of a very under-developed sense of personal responsibility. But as if to counter these unvoiced assumptions about him, the Prince addresses the audience and claims that what they have seen is only a form of play-acting. He plays a role in a company of unsavoury characters, so that when the time comes for him to assume a very public role as Prince and eventually as King, he will change and shine all the brighter in public opinion: “*...like bright metal on a sullen ground,/My reformation, glittering o’er my fault,/Shall show more goodly, and attract more eyes/Than that which hath no foil to set it off.*”

Act 1 scene 3

The action switches back to the court and we

Directing and rehearsing

are introduced to another high-born adolescent young man, HENRY PERCY, known as Hotspur, the son of the Earl of Northumberland. Unlike the King's eldest son, this young man is held in high esteem by his father, and indeed by the King himself. But Hotspur and Prince Harry have similarities, for both are rebelling, albeit in different ways, against authority. The Prince associates with the 'wrong' sort, in very inappropriate places. Hotspur is impetuous enough to rebel against the lawful authority of the King himself and has played a leading role in an armed insurrection that threatens to embroil the whole country in civil war. His frustration with the King is evident in this scene and is shared by his father who, we learn, was instrumental in helping the then Henry Bolingbroke take power and ultimately the crown from the entirely legitimate grasp of the former king, Richard II. According to the Percy family, Henry failed to return the favour, which continues to rankle with them. Hotspur refuses to hand over the prisoners that he has taken, which is both a symbolic snub to the King's authority as well as a blow to the monarch's exchequer: the only prisoners worth taking were those who could command a ransom. Before he leaves, Henry IV makes the return of the prisoners an issue of principle and demands their return.

The rebellious lords explain to Hotspur (who becomes too incensed with his own outrage to actually listen) that they will now press ahead with their plans for an armed rebellion, in effect civil war, aimed at toppling the King.

Act 2 scenes 1-2

Having watched and listened at some length in the previous scene to Hotspur's conspicuous display of the traditional attributes associated with masculine prowess: bravery, decisiveness, assertiveness, and heard his open disdain for anything he regards as remotely "effeminate", (cautious), Shakespeare now offers a wonderfully telling contrast. We witness a very different performance by very different types of men. Their action parodies the heroic masculine rhetoric, the fighting talk so beloved of Hotspur. There is an actual armed engagement (Falstaff leads a robbery of unarmed travellers at

Gadshill), but what the incident displays is a world away from the kind of action Hotspur would seek out. The trickery of the Prince and Poins, and the cowardice of Falstaff and his companions, transform it into a farce. After robbing and binding the travellers, a process accompanied by Falstaff's approximation of fighting talk, "*Ah, whoreson caterpillars, bacon-fed knaves!*", the successful action is overturned with consummate ease by a challenge to the robbers from the Prince and Poins that scatters them: "*The thieves are all scattered, and possessed with fear/So strongly that they dare not meet each other.*"

Act 2 scene 3

Hotspur enters reading a letter from someone who thinks that the strategy behind the rebellion is ill-considered. Instead of heeding what the writer actually says, Hotspur, in typically impatient fashion, becomes first exasperated and then outraged at the author's temerity in expressing any doubts whatsoever. He labels caution as weakness, and with a characteristically sexist insult, "*I could brain him with his lady's fan*", ignores what the letter is clearly signalling. Ironically, his lady (his wife), LADY PERCY, then appears, and through her eyes we are able to see a very different side of this roaring boy, a boy who cannot sleep at night because he dreams of battle: "*Thy spirit within thee hath been so at war,/And thus hath so bestirred thee in thy sleep,/That beads of sweat hath stood upon thy brow/Like bubbles in a late-disturbèd stream...*" These night sweats signal anxiety beneath the tough exterior and display another side of Hotspur. Shakespeare gives us the private as well as the public man, and shows that, for all his aggressive masculinity, the young Hotspur is also capable of playfulness and gentleness, qualities that prevent him from being one-dimensional.

Act 2 scene 4

From the bedroom to the tap room, we follow the other adolescent boy's progress in a tavern scene full of indulgence and humour. The Prince boasts of drinking in the company not of the nobility, but of very ordinary men, "*Tom, Dick, and Francis*". He acknowledges that others (including his father) have compared him

Directing and rehearsing

unfavourably with Northumberland's son, but mocks Hotspur in a way that shows he understands his rival and knows his weaknesses: *"I am not yet of Percy's mind, the Hotspur of the north, he that kills me some six or seven dozen of Scots at a breakfast, washes his hands, and says to his wife, 'Fie upon this quiet life, I want work'. 'O my sweet Harry', says she, 'how many hast thou killed today?' 'Give my roan horse a drench', says he, and answers, 'Some fourteen', an hour after, 'a trifle, a trifle'"*.

The relationship of the young prince and the humorous if dissolute Jack Falstaff has often been compared to that of a father and son. After all, there is little evidence at the start of the play that the King loves his son; he rather despairs of him, whereas Falstaff obviously does love Hal and never ceases to indulge him. In this scene the two of them play a game in which they act out the father-son relationship first with Falstaff playing the King. He admonishes Hal for letting down not only his father, but himself and asks the question that doubtless troubles the mind of the real King who is more aware than most of the importance of preserving the public face of the monarchy: *"...why, being son to me, art thou so pointed at?"* Falstaff knows all too well the trouble his relationship with the heir apparent has caused, and as part of his performance

plays a neat reversal of the King's actual opinion of him: *"...there is virtue in that Falstaff. Him keep with, the rest banish."* This prompts Hal to reverse roles and now when he addresses Falstaff it is only partly in jest, for his father's voice is in what he says, *"there is a devil haunts thee"*, and what he means is inflected by his father's vision of Falstaff as a corrupting influence, a vision that ultimately he will come to share. Falstaff: *"...banish not him thy Harry's company. Banish plump Jack, and banish all the world."* Prince: *"I do, I will."*

The scene ends with the Prince alone, acknowledging to himself and the audience that the time for play-acting has ended, at least for now, and *"we must all to the wars"*.

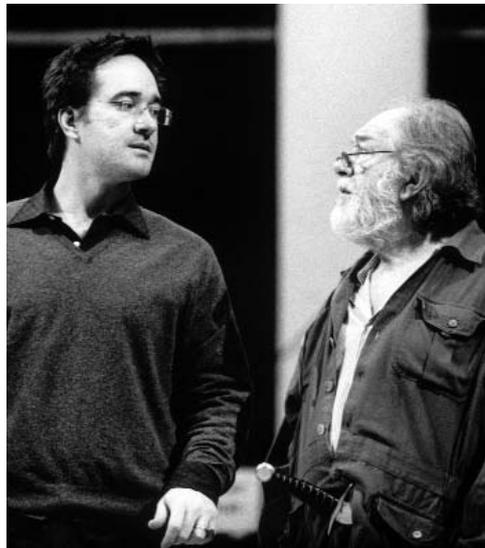
Act 3 scene 1

The scene begins with a confrontation between two men, Glendower and Hotspur, given to exaggeration and seemingly stuffed so full of words that they pour out un-checked. The Welshman, although an ally, is mocked savagely by Hotspur, and the two fall into a fierce argument about the future ownership of territory yet to be taken in battle. Worcester and MORTIMER (Glendower's son-in-law) urge restraint on both men. Indeed, just as in the former scene an older man (Falstaff) anatomises the faults of a younger (Prince Harry), so too in this, Worcester lays bare Hotspur's wilfulness. Hotspur takes it in good part and the scene ends with the wives of Hotspur and Mortimer changing the mood and adding a domestic and lyrical dimension that once again balances the aggressive male behaviour.

Act 3 scene 2

The King and his son finally meet in the play and it is an uncomfortable experience for both of them. The King is under considerable pressure as a result of the rebellion; it is a time in which he most needs the support of those closest to him, not least his eldest son. The King's keen sense of disappointment in Hal fuels his anger as he castigates him, comparing him unfavourably with Hotspur, the *"infant warrior"*.

Matthew Macfadyen (Prince Harry)
and Michael Gambon (Falstaff),
in rehearsal
photo Catherine Ashmore



The play

The father offers the son a lesson in how the public role of a future King is to be performed. Henry IV understands that the power of the monarchy lies partly in its continuing mystique; the things that set it apart from the ordinary lives of ordinary people need to be protected. In order to preserve his special status and the aura surrounding it, Hal must maintain the impression that his birth has set him apart from the people. He should be alive to public opinion, and see himself as others see him. His father was able to obtain the most powerful position in the land because "*Opinion*" helped him to the crown. In contrast to Richard II, "*the skipping King*" surrounded by "*shallow jesters, and rash bavin* [wood that flames quickly and then burns out] *wits*", the then Henry Bolingbroke ensured that he was seen only sparingly, dressed humbly, and always acting modestly, never associating himself in any way with common people. "*Thus did I keep my person fresh and new/My presence, like a robe pontifical,/Ne'er seen but wondered at, and so my state,/Seldom, but sumptuous, showed like a feast,/And won by rareness such solemnity.*"

Of course this is the opposite of what Hal has been doing. His association with Falstaff and others and their publicly inappropriate behaviour (for a Prince), which includes drinking, debauchery and defiance of the law, pollutes his status and renders him ordinary. His power is made vulnerable because he may not be able to rely on the respect of the public when he needs it most. As his father says, "*As thou art to this hour was Richard then...And even as I was then is Percy now*". In other words Hotspur's standing in public opinion is higher than that of Hal and, if nothing changes, it will be Hotspur who will in future wear the crown.

Stung by his father's words, the Prince eloquently promises to redeem himself by confronting Hotspur in combat and "*make this northern youth exchange/His glorious deeds for my indignities*". The King appears persuaded of his son's sincerity and they leave together to confront the rebellion.

Act 3 scene 3

We return with a jolt to the tavern to witness

another angry exchange, this time between Falstaff and BARDOLPH. Falstaff complains with sweeping irony that he too is out of sorts despite having, like a gentleman, "*swore little. Diced not above seven times a week. Went to a bawdy house not above once in a quarter - of an hour...*" Falstaff also uses the occasion to make much of Bardolph's red nose. "*I never see thy face but I think upon hell-fire... thou art a perpetual triumph, an everlasting bonfire-light!*"

Amusing as this is, the humour is cut through by the intervention of the Hostess of the tavern, MISTRESS QUICKLY. Her story shows a distinctly unsavoury side to Falstaff's character, his willingness to ruthlessly exploit the good nature of others. The Hostess has bought him "*a dozen of shirts*", and has lent him money. Added to his bill at the Inn, he owes a considerable sum of "*four and twenty pound*". The Prince hears Falstaff falsely claim that whilst he was asleep in the tavern his pocket was picked and he lost "*three or four bonds of forty pound apiece, and a seal-ring of my grandfather's*". Despite this obvious lie, the Prince tells his friend that he has himself repaid the money stolen in the robbery at Gadshill and has made men and money available to Falstaff so that he may command in the coming civil war. The Prince is full not only of generosity towards his friend, but also of high-sounding rhetoric. For a minute he sounds more like Hotspur than himself: "*The land is burning, Percy stands on high,/And either we or they must lower lie*". Falstaff, however, is grounded in a very different kind of reality: "*Rare words! Brave words! Hostess, my breakfast, come! O, I could wish this tavern were my drum.*"

Act 4 scene 1

We now meet the young rebels, Hotspur, and the Scot, the Earl of Douglas. Despite their outward show of confidence, both are undermined by the relentless stream of bad news about the ever-decreasing number of their allies. First Hotspur's father, Northumberland, "*cannot come...he is grievous sick*" and then Worcester and his forces are delayed by "*fourteen days*" and the Welsh rebel Glendower is also unavailable, leaving Hotspur and

The play

Douglas well outnumbered. At the same time there is also daunting news of the forces that face them. SIR RICHARD VERNON describes the King's army as "*furnished, all in arms,/All plumed like estridges that with the wind/Bated, like eagles having lately bathed,/Glittering in golden coats like images,/As full of spirit as the month of May,/And gorgeous as the sun at midsummer.*" He goes on to describe the behaviour of Hotspur's rival Prince Harry. In what sounds like an outrageously theatrical piece of propaganda befitting a legendary hero rather than a bar-room malingerer, Hal has mounted his horse in spectacular style: "*I saw young Harry with his beaver [helmet] on,/His cuishes [thigh protection] on his thighs, gallantly armed,/Rise from the ground like feathered Mercury,/And vaulted with such ease into his seat/As if an angel dropped down from the clouds/To turn and wind a fiery Pegasus,/And witch the world with noble horsemanship.*"

Act 4 scene 2

From hearing about the elite in their "glittering golden coats" and observing the young swashbuckling gallants Hotspur and Douglas, we turn to a more mundane scene. Falstaff has compelled his troop, composed of the wretched of the earth, to follow him into battle and hazard the only thing they have remaining of any value: their lives. The Prince enters, presumably still dressed to impress, in his armour and battle-ready, and asks Falstaff, "*whose fellows are*

those that come after? ... I never did see such pitiful rascals". The answer is that these are ordinary men, dirt poor perhaps, but people with feelings, families, and friends. To Falstaff they appear to be worthless. Like a first world war general he has no regard for their safety or their lives, dismissing them as "*food for powder, they'll fill a pit as well as better...*".

Act 4 scene 3

The rebels argue about whether, given the news of their depleted forces, they should delay the confrontation with the King. Needless to say, Hotspur, always ready to live up to his nickname, and Douglas press for an immediate encounter but the older men, Worcester and Vernon, urge caution. Vernon (who was impressed by the show of strength by the King's army) says that they are militarily unready because some of the promised troops have yet to arrive and others, recently arrived, are not prepared for battle. Worcester also reminds the hot-headed youths that they are outnumbered. SIR WALTER BLUNT arrives with "*gracious offers from the King*" who asks the rebels to "*name your griefs, and with all speed/You shall have your desires with interest/And pardon absolute for yourself...*"

Hotspur responds with an interesting, if one-sided, history lesson. He reminds Blunt how Henry IV actually came to power: "*...when he was not six and twenty strong/Sick in the world's regard, wretched and low,/A poor unminded outlaw sneaking home, [he had been banished by Richard II]/My father gave him welcome to the shore.*" Hotspur argues that were it not for the help of his father, Northumberland, the banished Bolingbroke, now resplendent as Henry IV, would have remained forever on the margins of power: "*When the lords and barons of the realm/Perceived Northumberland did lean to him,/The more and less came in with cap and knee,/Met him in boroughs, cities, villages,/Attended him on bridges, followed him/Even at the heels in golden multitudes...*" Hotspur attributes the mass growth in Bolingbroke's popularity and power to Northumberland's endorsement of his claim to the title of Duke of Lancaster. It gave

David Harewood (Hotspur)
in rehearsal
photo: Catherine Ashmore



The play

Bolingbroke renewed confidence and an ambition ascending beyond the title, despite promising Northumberland he would limit his ambitions. He went much further, having the closest confidants of King Richard executed whilst the King was fighting rebels in Ireland, and on his return he “*deposed the King, / Soon after that deprived him of his life.*” Once he had become King Henry IV, he turned against the hands that fed him, including Hotspur’s father, who he “*In rage dismissed... from the court, / Broke oath on oath, committed wrong on wrong*”. These wrongs, articulated by Northumberland’s son and echoing the story told by his father, were the cause of the current rebellion.

During this shocking series of allegations, Blunt remains silent. Now he asks simply, “*Shall I return this answer to the King?*” Hotspur plays for time, “*...in the morning early shall mine uncle / Bring him our purposes...*”

Act 4 scene 4

Two of the rebels anticipate the coming battle at Shrewsbury. The Archbishop is fearful of Hotspur’s chances against the King’s more augmented forces, and knows that if the rebels are defeated it will not be long before others, including himself, are forced into a confrontation with the monarch.

Act 5 scene 1

Jeffery Kissoon
(Henry Percy, Earl of
Northumberland), in rehearsal
photo: Catherine Ashmore



The King and his followers are preparing for the struggle when one of the rebels, Worcester, appears. The King immediately upbraids him for the blatant betrayal of trust which has led directly to this potentially deadly encounter. But Worcester doesn’t take the King’s reprimand without counter-claiming on behalf of the rebels. He repeats back to him the list of allegations made by Hotspur in the previous scene, claiming again that it was Henry who broke the oath he made at Doncaster which promised to limit his ambition to being Duke of Lancaster. Worcester uses words like weapons, hurling insults at his former friend like hand grenades: “*unkind usage, dangerous countenance, / And violation of all faith and troth.*”

The King attempts to brush aside the claims, but then comes an extraordinary intervention from Prince Harry, who acknowledges that, as an outcome of this quarrel, many men will suffer. He suggests that instead of two armies slugging it out he will challenge Hotspur to single combat and thus “*save the blood on either side*”. This gesture is, consciously or not, part of young Harry’s rehabilitation from villain to national hero: he will spare the nation suffering by acting as a Knight of old. The King accepts his son’s offer and adds to it an offer of his own: “*...will they [the rebels] take the offer of our grace, / Both he, and they, and you, yea, every man / Shall be my friend again, and I’ll be his...*”

Harry thinks his offer “*will not be accepted*” and the King and his company exit to prepare to fight. The Prince is left alone on stage, alone except for Falstaff. The fat knight has been present throughout this scene, the first time he has shared the stage with the man who so disapproves of his association with his son. Falstaff said nothing, but his presence is an eloquent reminder of both what the Prince has been in the past, and of the underworld in which he played his part so robustly. Hal leaves, and Falstaff, fearful for his life, contemplates aloud the real meaning behind the heroic rhetoric that invariably surrounds the bloody chaos and cruelty of hand to hand combat. He asks a rhetorical question: “*What is honour?*” and

The play

answers himself that it is merely “a word”. Falstaff thinks of the coming fight not as an opportunity to display individual heroism and honourable behaviour, but sees an alternative reality in which abstract ideas such as honour are powerless to heal wounds, or relieve the suffering of the wounded.

Act 5 scene 2

Worcester refuses to tell Hotspur of the King’s offer to address their grievances because he doesn’t trust the King to keep his word. He says that he and Vernon and their friends will in any event eventually be charged with offences, not least because they will be accused of misleading the young Hotspur: the “*hair-brained Hotspur, governed by a spleen./All his offences live upon my head/And on his father’s. We did train him on,/And, his corruption being taken from us,/We as the spring of all shall pay for all.*”

Act 5 scene 3

In the chaos and confusion of battle, Douglas kills Sir Walter Blunt who had, in a strategy designed to help protect the monarch, with several others, disguised himself as the real King: “*The King hath many marching in his coats*”. As the frustrated Douglas and Hotspur leave for another part of the battle field to seek out the King, the grotesque figure of Falstaff looms into view. His presence again pricks the bubble of glamour surrounding the fighting and reminds the audience of the fate not just of nobles like Blunt, but also of the hundreds of ordinary men who understand nothing of the quarrel that led to this battle. Falstaff speaks of leading his “*ragamuffins*” into a valley of death “*where they are peppered. There’s not three of my hundred-and-fifty left alive.*”

The Prince of Wales encounters Falstaff and asks him for his sword. Instead, Falstaff offers his pistol, which turns out to be a bottle of beer, which the furious Prince throws back in Falstaff’s face. Falstaff has failed his young pupil at a time when his help was most needed. It is another nail in the coffin of their relationship.

Act 5 scene 4

The King is finally confronted on the battlefield by the young Scot, Douglas. Just as it seems that the younger man will slaughter the older,

the Prince of Wales realises it is his moment for heroic action and a chance to redeem himself in his father’s eyes. He confronts Douglas who, after a brief encounter, runs away instead of staying to fight to the death. Hotspur emerges and the two young aristocrats, similar in so many ways, face each other: “*Two stars keep not their motion in one sphere,/Nor can one England brook a double reign/Of Harry Percy and the Prince of Wales.*” As the two men embrace in the deadly dance of combat they are overlooked: Falstaff watches the struggle. The voyeur is then himself the subject of unwelcome attention because Douglas sees and fights with him, and Falstaff, using the last possible trick he can play in this situation, falls down and pretends to be dead. As he plays dead, a real death is enacted elsewhere on the same stage: Prince Hal overcomes Hotspur who lies defeated at his feet.

As the victorious young man stands over the body of his adversary and pays him a generous tribute, he sees the ‘dead’ body of his old friend and mentor, Falstaff. Not for the first time the young prince is deceived by him. As he surveys the corpse, he resolves to have the body preserved, a process that will necessitate the removal of Falstaff’s most distinguishing feature, his not inconsiderable intestines.

As the Prince leaves the field a hero in waiting, Falstaff is left to play his own part out, of which, as he so memorably remarks, “*the better part of valour is discretion.*” He hatches a crude but ultimately effective plot to bring glory on himself by claiming to the world that it was he that killed Hotspur. In a peculiarly chilling act after the heat of the single combat, he takes his knife, pushes the blade into the thigh of the dead Hotspur and then lifts the body with difficulty and carries it away. With the dead youth on his back he encounters the living Princes, Harry and his brother John. Falstaff claims it was he who killed Hotspur since the Prince had merely left him temporarily unconscious. The story is as bizarre as its author, but instead of challenging him, the Prince, perhaps because he is moved to see his old companion still alive, does not challenge his story: “*For my part, if a lie may do thee grace,/I’ll gild it with the*

The play

happiest terms I have.” As a consequence, the hero of the encounter, the vanquisher of the King’s prime enemy and the killer of the Prince of Wales’s most serious rival, is now believed to be none other than Sir John Falstaff.

Act 5 scene 5

The play ends with the victorious King showing no mercy to his enemies, Worcester and Vernon. The King reminds all that the civil war is not over and he must now divide his forces, some to confront Northumberland and Scroop in the north, others to take on Glendower and the Earl of March in the west. We are back where the play began; a nation divided, but with one crucial difference: the father of the nation, Henry IV, is reunited with his adolescent son, Henry, Prince of Wales.

HENRY IV PART 2

Act 1 scene 1

“The times are wild”.

In this brilliant opening scene a rumour rapidly reaches the Duke of Northumberland that the forces led by his son Harry, known as Hotspur, have triumphed over those of King Henry IV at the battle of Shrewsbury. But no sooner has the good news been digested than TRAVERS brings unwelcome news that the *“rebellion had ill luck”*. The negative feelings are confirmed by the arrival of MORTON, a man present on the battlefield, and who claims to have actually witnessed the killing of Harry Percy by Prince Harry. Once Hotspur was down, recounts Morton, the fate of his forces was inevitable.

The news is both a personal and political blow for Northumberland who responds to it with intense grief and also anger. Morton urges him to remember that his followers are now depending on him and not to lose himself in grief. In a brave speech he reminds the Earl that his son’s nature, for which his father must own some responsibility, was always going to involve him in personal risk.

Morton’s courage succeeds in re-focusing Northumberland’s attention onto the still as yet inconclusive outcome of the rebellion against the King. And he tells the Earl that he may have lost his son and ally, but he has gained another powerful friend in the shape of *“the gentle Archbishop of York”*. This ‘gentle’ prelate is good news all round not least because, as the eager Morton explains, he can lend the authority of God Almighty to aid their campaign: *“...the Bishop/Turns insurrection to religion;/ Supposed sincere and holy in his thoughts,/ He’s followed both with body and with mind.”*

Act 1 scene 2

Falstaff, described in the previous scene as *“the hulk”*, enters with his diminutive page following, a visual humour being effected by the contrast in their sizes. The Lord Chief Justice is hot on Falstaff’s heels since he failed to respond to a summons issued after the robbery at Gadshill (an event dramatised in *Henry IV Part 1*). Falstaff has no intention of co-operating with the chief law officer of the nation and uses his new (and

The play

entirely ill-founded) reputation as a war hero to avoid answering the charges against him. He is ultimately 'let off the hook' by being called to join the forces of Prince John, Hal's brother, in a campaign against the Archbishop of York and the Earl of Northumberland.

Act 1 scene 3

A key group of the rebels consider their position and the hopes they have for a successful military outcome. They have 25,000 men (none of Northumberland's forces have yet arrived). But is it enough? Lord Bardolph urges caution after the rashness of Hotspur, going into battle with the King's forces grossly unprepared. He "*lined himself with hope, / Eating the air and promise of supply, / Flattering himself in project of a power / Much smaller than the smallest of his thoughts, / And so, with great imagination / Proper to madmen, led his powers to death, / And winking leaped into destruction.*"

Despite this sobering reminder of the consequences of an ill-considered action that cost not just the life of its leader, but those of many hundreds of others, the Archbishop, that "*gentle*" man, urges them to action believing that the common people are tired of the reign of Henry IV and will rise in support of the rebellion.

Act 2 scene 1

Yet another lawsuit is entered against Falstaff by a pub landlady, Mistress Quickly of the Boar's Head tavern in Eastcheap, to whom he owes money. Falstaff is arrested and ordered to pay by his old adversary, the Lord Chief Justice. But Falstaff's greatest weapon has always been words and he uses his wit to persuade Quickly

to lend him even more money. The Lord Chief Justice, likely bemused by Quickly's turnabout, urges Falstaff to leave London, recruit soldiers, and march north to join the forces of the King.

Act 2 scene 2

The Prince of Wales, the still unacknowledged victor over Hotspur, confesses to POINS feelings of unease with his life and his sadness at the news of his father's illness "*I tell thee, my heart bleeds inwardly that my father is so sick...*" He cannot make his feelings public, nor wear his heart on his sleeve, having in the past kept "*such vile company*" (with Falstaff). If he were to show his true feelings about his father, "*every man would think me an hypocrite.*"

A letter is received from Falstaff which turns out to be far from flattering to Poins. It irritates both men and they decide to take revenge on Falstaff by disguising themselves as barmen in the Boar's Head. There they will spy on Falstaff's ambition to achieve an amorous liaison with the notorious prostitute, Doll Tearsheet.

Act 2 scene 3

This is one of the few occasions in either play where women are given a voice. Northumberland's wife and his daughter-in-law, the widow of Hotspur, persuade the Earl against immediately joining with the rebels. He listens especially to his late son's wife who counsels him to wait until the Archbishop and his forces "*get ground and vantage of the King, / Then join you with them like a rib of steel, / To make strength stronger; but, for all our loves, / First let them try themselves.*" He decides to wait in Scotland to see how the rebellion progresses.

Act 2 scene 4

A wildly comic and anarchic scene set in the Boar's Head in which two of the pub's customers, both drunk, fall into a quarrel. DOLL TEARSHEET levels a stream of insults in Pistol's direction: Pistol has something of the reputation of a being a hooligan and a thug, but is called 'Captain', to Doll's astonishment and outrage: "*You a captain? You slave! For what? For tearing a poor whore's ruff in a bawdy-house? He a captain! Hang him, rogue, he lives upon mouldy stewed prunes and dried cakes.*"

Naomi Frederick,
(Lady Percy) in rehearsal
photo: Catherine Ashmore



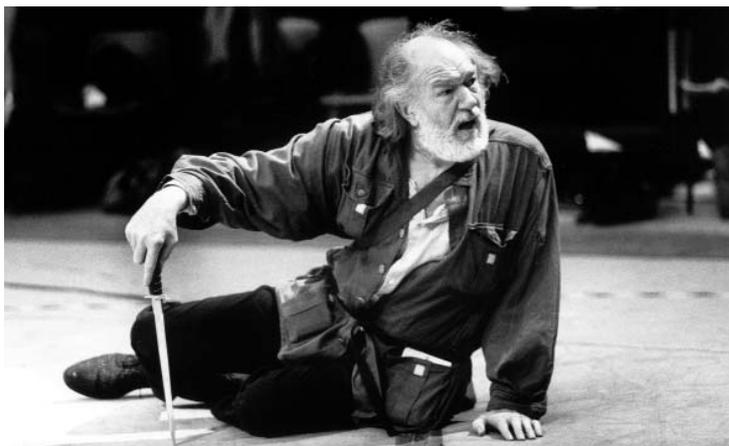
The play

Falstaff ejects Pistol and is rewarded with Doll's undivided attention but, just as he begins to sound off against the Prince, the latter and Poinz drop their disguises and confront the astonished onlookers. Falstaff uses his verbal agility to save himself from yet another difficult situation of his own making. Again, Falstaff's entirely bogus claims to be a war hero rescue him because he is summoned back to court immediately in order to join the preparations to fight the rebels in the north.

Act 3 scene 1

The life and energy of the last scene drain away at the start of Act 3 when we see, for the first time in this play, King Henry IV. We see him not in his public role as King, but as a vulnerable man, dressed in a nightgown, and followed only by a page. The King cannot sleep because he carries a weight of cares: "*Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown.*" His isolation contrasts with the lively company and sense of companionship enjoyed by his son Hal. The King elegantly and ruefully compares his failure to find comfort in sleep to that of very ordinary people, like the ship boy lulled asleep by the wind. As people do who wake in the night and cannot sleep, the King's thoughts exaggerate the scale of the problems facing him: "*They say the Bishop and Northumberland/Are fifty thousand strong*". Warwick enters the chamber and tries to reassure his sovereign, "*It cannot be, my lord./Rumour doth double, like the voice and echo,/The numbers of the feared.*"

Michael Gambon (Falstaff)
in rehearsal
photo: Catherine Ashmore



Act 3 scene 2

Moving from a scene that focuses on a man weighed down by responsibility, the play turns to old men looking back on their past with pleasure, recalling the "*mad days*" of their youth. Here, in the Gloucestershire countryside, Falstaff has arranged to recruit soldiers from JUSTICE SHALLOW's household to fight under him in the King's cause. Shallow and Falstaff were students at Lincoln's Inn some 55 years previously. Falstaff surveys a selection of men, two of whom (MOULDY and BULLCalf) are able to buy themselves out of Falstaff's service, leaving two unfortunate others, FEEBLE and WART, who are both entirely unsuited, as is their new master, to fighting. Although it is an amusing scene, the thought of Feeble and Wart led to almost certain death by Falstaff counterbalances the heroic rhetoric about war that issues so freely from the mouths of the powerful men in this play.

Act 4 scene 1

The rebels gather and learn what we already know: one of their principal backers, the Earl of Northumberland, has written a letter saying that he has gone to Scotland and cannot, for the time being, join the rebellion. This undermines their position, as does the further news that the King's youngest son, Prince John, has an army of thirty thousand men which is less than a mile away. Westmorland comes from the Prince and attempts to convince the rebels that their quarrel with the King isn't sufficiently grave to merit this armed rebellion and the inevitable loss of life. Prince John is prepared to hear their grievances and will respond generously to any demands that he considers well-founded. The rebels decide to put their case in writing, but remain divided as to whether the King (or Prince John) is to be trusted. Finally, Westmorland returns with the offer of talks to which, with some trepidation, the rebels agree.

Act 4 scene 2

We encounter Prince John for the first time. He receives the rebels and offers them a solemn but ambiguous promise that their list of grievances "*...shall be with speed redressed,/Upon my soul, they shall.*" The

The play

rebels' response is to dismiss their armies, who seize the chance to return to domestic life with alacrity: "*Like youthful steers unyoked they take their courses/East, west, north, south; or like a school broke up,/Each hurries toward his home and sporting-place.*" Shakespeare contrasts the enthusiasm to fight that characterises leaders of men, with the joy that comes from release from mortal danger back to the known and familiar delights of home.

But the rebel leaders, unlike their men, are not going home: Prince John has them arrested. He promises indeed to address their grievances, but also charges them with treason and orders their execution.

Act 4 scene 3

One of the rebels has escaped, only to have the misfortune of being taken prisoner by Falstaff. SIR JOHN COLEVILLE surrenders only because he has heard of Falstaff's (mythical) fighting prowess. Falstaff presents his prize capture to Prince John who sends Coleville to his death.

Falstaff castigates Prince John to his back as a humourless and unfeeling man who "*drinks no wine*", before musing on the merits of alcohol as necessary fuel for courage. Falstaff compares the two princely brothers, and judges Hal unlike his younger brother, to be "*valiant; for the cold blood he did naturally inherit of his father he hath like lean, sterile, and bare land manured, husbanded, and tilled, with excellent endeavour of drinking good and good store of fertile sherris, that he is become very hot and valiant.*"

Act 4 scene 4

Two more of the King's sons, THOMAS and HUMPHREY, are with their father who is now gravely ill. His discomfort is exacerbated by the news that his heir apparent, the son who saved his life at the battle of Shrewsbury, has apparently reverted to his old ways with his old companions. Warwick tries to convince the King that Hal's behaviour is a necessary stage in his education in the world; as a future King he must know all his people. Westmorland brings good news that Prince John has successfully put down the rebellion in the north and that Northumberland is dead. The King faints.

Act 4 scene 5

The King is taken to an adjoining room to sleep, the crown beside his head on a pillow. As he lies sick and vulnerable, Hal enters and is left alone with his father, whose breathing is so shallow and his body so lifeless that Hal believes he must have died. He is actually asleep (which is ironic, given that the last time we saw him he could not sleep) but Hal, not realising, takes the crown, places it on his own head and leaves the room. The King wakes, sees that the crown has gone and assumes that Hal, greedy for power, has taken it prematurely.

When Hal returns with the crown, the ailing King launches a fierce attack on him, imagining what will happen to the country once his son becomes King. It is the sum of his worst fears, and carries with it the frustrated rage from the many nights he lay awake fretting about his eldest boy:

*Harry the Fifth is crowned! Up vanity!
Down, royal state! All you sage counsellors, hence!
And to the English court assemble now,
From every region, apes of idleness!
Now, neighbour confines, purge you of your scum!
Have you a ruffian that will swear, drink, dance,
Revel the night, rob, murder, and commit
The oldest sins the newest kind of ways?
Be happy, he will trouble you no more.
England shall double gild his treble guilt;
England shall give him office, honour, might;
For the fifth Harry from curbed licence plucks
The muzzle of restraint, and the wild dog
Shall flesh his tooth on every innocent.
O my poor kingdom, sick with civil blows!
When that my care could not withhold thy riots,
What wilt thou do when riot is thy care?
O, thou wilt be a wilderness again,
Peopled with wolves, thy old inhabitants!*

Despite this outpouring against Hal's obdurate refusal to conform to his father's expectations, the King and his son are soon reconciled. It gives Henry IV time to confess what he regards as his own most grievous fault: the deposing of the former King, Richard II. Now close to death, King Henry warns Hal against accepting the advice of those who will urge him to wage foreign wars in order to secure unity at home.

Hal's brother, Prince John, arrives from the

The play

North in time to hear his father anticipate his imminent death. The King is carried to the Jerusalem chamber to die and thus fulfil the prophecy that he should die in Jerusalem.

Act 5 scene 1

Sir John Falstaff is with his old companion from his student days, Justice Shallow, who hopes by wining and dining the knight, to secure for himself a privileged position at court.

Act 5 scene 2

Henry IV has died and Hal is now King in his place. Three of Henry IV's sons sympathise with the situation in which the Lord Chief Justice finds himself: given that his old adversary is King, all seem to agree that he will lose his job. But the new King confounds their expectations. He allows the Lord Chief Justice to continue because he had proved his courage to uphold the law by dealing with Hal's past offences (he had him imprisoned for a time) as equally as with any other subject. Henry tells his brothers that his wild days are behind him, that he will recall Parliament and choose counsellors to help him achieve "*the best-governed nation*".

Act 5 scene 3

Falstaff has been indulging himself at Shallow's expense, and his companions are now in Shallow's orchard late in the night. Their revelry is interrupted when Pistol brings news of Henry IV's death and Hal's assumption of the throne. This news excites Falstaff, who believes his old friend will continue to do him favours and even make him the new Lord Chief Justice. Shallow now believes he has even more reason to invest in Falstaff.

Act 5 scene 4

Old certainties are challenged and a new order sweeps through the land. In Cheapside, Doll Tearsheet and Mistress Quickly are arrested following the death of a man they have beaten with Pistol's help. In the past, with Hal's protection, they might have got away with it, but under the moral purge sanctioned by the new King and executed with new vigour by the old Lord Chief Justice, this is no longer the case.

Act 5 scene 5

The final scene is a public one, seeing the spectacle of the young King's coronation at Westminster Abbey. The crowd includes Falstaff, Shallow, Pistol and Bardolph, who all anticipate Falstaff's instant elevation to power following the coronation. But when Henry V emerges and hears Falstaff calling out to him, "*King Hal*", his response surprises Falstaff. Although his life is spared, Falstaff is to be banished from the King's presence until he has undergone a moral reformation. The procession moves on, leaving behind a devastated Falstaff and an anxious Shallow, who stands to lose the one thousand pounds (a huge sum) that he has lent to Falstaff. Falstaff, without the continued patronage and protection of the King, stands to lose everything. Yet he persuades himself that Hal's reaction to him was just a necessary part of the new King's public image, and away from the public gaze, things will be different.

The Lord Chief Justice interrupts this hopeful but doomed speculation by arresting Falstaff and his companions and committing them to prison. Prince John, the man singled out by Falstaff as being cold hearted, now applauds the actions of the new-style Hal and predicts that within the year an English army will have invaded France. "*I will lay odds that, ere this year expire, / We bear our civil swords and native fire / As far as France.*"

Despite Henry IV's warning against such an action, that is precisely what will occur: the English army, led by Henry V, will invade and conquer France. Shakespeare tells this story in the next play in the sequence, *Henry V*.

Shakespeare's History Plays

The first play in the history cycle is *Richard II*, written by Shakespeare in 1595. Although, like all of the history plays he wrote, it deals with events in the then distant past, it packed a powerful and potentially risky contemporary political message. It staged the deposition of a legitimate monarch, and Queen Elizabeth I was anxious to prevent any connection being made in the public's mind between the unfortunate fate that befell Richard and her own situation. At one point, Shakespeare's company were temporarily imprisoned for performing it and the deposition scene (4,1) was omitted from the first published version of the play in 1597.

It is followed in the cycle by the first part of *Henry IV*, written a year or so later in 1596-97. The play continues to tell the epic story of English history, drawn in large part from the historian Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* first published in 1577. But writing about history always tells us as much, if not more, about our contemporary selves as it does about the past. Shakespeare's history plays are windows onto his own world, peopled by those he met, or heard about, or saw in the streets and inns of London and Stratford. He dramatises social history, telling the story not only of the actions of the great and powerful, but also the lives of ordinary people and how the deeds of their leaders impact on them. In *Henry IV Part 1*, for the first time in an English history play, Shakespeare mixes comedy and history, not least with the introduction of Sir John Falstaff, one of his most popular characters.

The following year, 1597-98, saw Shakespeare continue with the story of the life of *Henry IV* by taking it up to the monarch's death and the succession of his eldest son Hal to the throne. The dramatised second part of the story has never been as popular in the theatre as the first, perhaps because it is a darker story, one in which Falstaff's moral and physical decline results in a loss of at least some of his beguiling charm.

Henry V was written next, in 1598-99. From the start it was regarded as a great patriotic play showing the young King finally fulfilling the dream of his father that he would leave behind the taverns of Eastcheap and act out his destiny as the acknowledged and loved leader of a united kingdom.

The narrative sequence of English history is continued in the trilogy *Henry VI Parts 1, 2 & 3*. However, these plays were actually amongst the first that Shakespeare wrote, between 1591 and 1592. They have not proved as popular with audiences as others in the history cycle, perhaps due in part to their highly elaborate plots and, certainly in the case of Parts 1 and 2, the lack of a central character with the appeal of a Hotspur, a Falstaff, or a *Henry V*.

One outstanding character does emerge in *Henry VI Part 3*: Richard, Duke of Gloucester. Shakespeare dramatises his rise and fall in *Richard III*, published in 1592-93. Only at the end of this play are England's 'wild times', finally laid to rest.

Teaching *Henry IV Parts 1 and 2*

PRE-PERFORMANCE

There are potentially lots of issues and ideas in both parts of *Henry IV* that would appeal to an adolescent reader/playgoer and which teachers might want to follow up. Firstly, in part 1 Shakespeare dramatises the politics of the family, and especially of that invariably problematic relationship between fathers and their adolescent sons, that exists in many contemporary families.

Family relationships

To help students think about family relationships and thus consider those dramatised in both parts of *Henry IV*, use a simple exercise that draws on their own personal experience. Allow approximately three minutes per person for a rough idea how long this exercise will last with your group.

Sit together in a circle (preferably on the floor, because chairs and certainly desks or tables tend to make the situation more formal than it needs to be for this purpose).

Ask the students (of either sex, it doesn't matter) to think for two minutes about the relationship they have with their fathers. The students then tell the group a brief but true story about an occasion in which they have clashed with him. If some of the group don't know their biological father, they can choose an alternative person who they regard as either a father figure or figure of some authority (such as a teacher).

Ask a volunteer (you might decide that no one has to speak if they don't wish to) to tell their story. Do this until everyone has had a chance to speak, if they wish to. You will bring together any common threads. Why do these clashes occur? What are fathers concerned about? Do fathers appear to treat daughters differently from their sons? Is the role of father a difficult one to perform? How does the father's role differ from the mother's?

If the students have read the plays or already seen them, ask what qualities a good father should possess. Are they present in *Henry IV* and *Northumberland*? Or *Falstaff*?

Although it is old, Orson Welles' 1965 film *Chimes at Midnight* (119 minutes, available on

video and DVD) has still, like *Falstaff* himself, many good things in it. It uses text from *Richard II*, both parts of *Henry IV*, *Henry V*, and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, with a narrative commentary from Holinshed's *Chronicles*. Without necessarily showing the whole film, it offers an opportunity to consider an interesting interpretation of the changing and problematic relationship between *Falstaff* and the young Prince Hal, and a good base for comparison with that performed by Michael Gambon (*Falstaff*) and Matthew Macfadyen (*Prince Hal*) at the National.

WATCHING THE PLAYS

Family relationships in *Henry IV Part 1*

In preparing to watch the performance, ask the students to look for those moments in the production when father and son share the stage.

The Earl of Northumberland and Hotspur

The Earl of Northumberland and his son Harry, known as Hotspur, are together for the first and only time in Act 1 scene 3:

- ∑ There are several other people present (including the King)
- ∑ Northumberland doesn't have much to say in comparison to his son
- ∑ How is the father-son relationship staged in Nicholas Hytner's production?
- ∑ How does the movement, gesture and use of the stage by the actors (Jeffery Kissoon as Northumberland, David Harewood as Hotspur) signal the family relationship?
- Is the father-son relationship made more obvious by the staging than it is on the page?
- Having seen it in performance, what adjectives would describe their relationship?
- ∑ Why should this father/son relationship be of importance to some of the key ideas in the play as a whole?

Henry IV and Prince Harry

The relationship between that other troubled adolescent male and his father (the Prince of Wales and Henry IV) is dramatised in Act 3 scene 2. Although father and son appear

Teaching the plays

together later in Part 1, in this scene they are alone and the meeting is highly charged.

What is happening on the stage before the King speaks and what does it signify?

The King speaks first. What is Hal (Matthew Macfadyen) doing whilst David Bradley, playing Henry IV, listens to him? Does he really appear to listen? How does he react, how close is he to his father, does he move about or is he still? Does he touch his father?

When the Prince responds with his last speech in the scene how, if at all, does he signal any changes that have occurred in the relationship?

What adjectives would describe their relationship at the start of the scene and at the end?

Falstaff and Prince Harry

The other relationship that in many ways resembles that of a father and son is of course between the young Prince of Wales and the much older figure of Falstaff. In Act 2 scene 4 the two men play a game where firstly Hal plays himself and Falstaff his father, then switches to Hal playing Henry IV, with Falstaff as himself.

In the performance of this 'play within a play', what did the acting tell you about the relationship between these characters?:

From what Hal says, what do we learn about his father, Henry IV?

∑ From what Falstaff says, what do we learn about Falstaff?

∑ How would you describe the relationship between the two men as it is shown in this scene?

What do they look like?

Personal appearance is hugely important to most young people – what they wear, how they look, and their body image are topics of conversation and preoccupation. They are usually sensitive about what they wear, not surprisingly, because clothes signal status, class, occupation, state of mind, gender, age etc. Wearing certain clothes signals belonging to a particular group, and there are many different groups (or factions) in these plays.

How do students imagine the look of the main characters in this play? If setting it in modern dress for example, what would Falstaff wear? How would Hotspur and Prince Hal be distinguished by their clothes? After seeing the play, how did Nicholas Hytner's production present them?

In *Henry IV Part 1* how people look is politically important. For example, see the contrasting descriptions of those people that make up the army of the King, by both Vernon and Falstaff in Act 4:

Vernon:

*All furnished, all in arms;
All plumed like estridges that with the wind
Bated like eagles having lately bathed;
Glittering in golden coats like images*

Falstaff:

*There's not a shirt and a half in all my company;
and the half-shirt is two napkins tacked together
and thrown over the shoulders like a herald's
coat without sleeves*

Why should Shakespeare have Vernon describe the King's forces in this way?

Who do you think he is describing?

What effect might his words have on the rebel leaders?

What effect does Falstaff's description of his men have on us, the audience?

Who are they and how did they get there?

Teaching the plays

In the performance at the National how does designer Mark Thompson use costume to: a) distinguish between the forces of the King and those of the rebels? b) distinguish between those of different status?

Body politics

What people wear and how they wear it form part of the language of performance, both on stage and in life. We all perform different roles both professionally and personally and sometimes dress accordingly. But what we actually look like, our body shape, height, weight, age, colour of hair etc. are given. They are equally if not more significant in how we feel about ourselves, and how others feel about us.

Both plays offer an opportunity for students to discuss how they tend to read and categorise people on the basis of external appearance.

The text in Part 1 clearly describes Falstaff as both fat and old. Look at the Prince of Wales' description of him during the play within the play, in Act 2 scene 4.

*"... There is a devil haunts thee in the likeness of an **old fat** man; a **tun** of man is thy companion. Why dost thou converse with that trunk of humours, that bolting-hutch of beastliness, that **swoll'n** parcel of dropsies, that **huge** bombard of sack, that **stuffed** cloakbag of guts, that roasted Manningtree ox with pudding in his belly, that reverend vice, that **grey** iniquity, that father ruffian, that vanity in years..."*
[our emphasis]

The insults the Prince throws at his friend presume a great deal on the solidity of their friendship because they are potentially very hurtful indeed. Falstaff is old, he does not deny it. He was a student with Justice Shallow 55 years ago, making him at least 70. His immediate and witty response to the Prince's attack comes so readily to mind that it would seem that he is well used to fending off such a barrage of insults. *"If to be old and merry be a sin, then many an old host that I know is damned. If to be fat is to be hated, then Pharaoh's lean kine are to be loved."*

One of the interesting questions about the plays and the performance of Falstaff by Michael

Gambon will be to what extent the actor signals that Falstaff's age and physical condition (he is called "*the hulk*" among other things) is troubling to him. Does he carry his weight lightly; does his outer self determine at least in part the kind of inner man he has become?

Although there is no answer to it in the text, an actor playing the part of Falstaff might ask himself about the psychology of the man. Was Falstaff an overweight boy, and was he bullied because of it? Did this condition mean that he needed to rely on his wit as opposed to his looks as his principal weapon in making his way in the world? Did he need to compensate for his lack of conventional good looks by developing aspects of his personality in order to appeal to others as, for example, a comic, a dare devil or a bully?

In *Henry IV Part 2* Falstaff's reaction to his old student companion Shallow's behaviour in Act 3 scene 2 seems to smack of a man getting his own back in return for insults about his size levelled at him years before. Safely alone he accuses Shallow of lies and exaggeration, and then focuses on what Shallow looked like as a young man: *"...like a man made after supper of a cheese-paring. When 'a was naked, he was for all the world like a forked radish, with a head fantastically carved upon it with a knife."*

What is honour?

Audiences have traditionally warmed to Falstaff because, perhaps like them, he is more inclined to be human than heroic, knows how to enjoy himself, and would prefer, given a choice, to be at home or in the pub rather than risking his life on a muddy and dangerous battlefield on behalf of a cause he knows little of and cares for even less. However, recognisable and understandable as Falstaff's instinct for self-preservation is, his attitude towards self-sacrifice and the rhetoric that surrounds it is not unproblematic.

Get your students to look at the speech he makes at the end of Act 5 scene 1 of Part 1. His words raise the question of whether or not there is ever a cause worth fighting or even dying for. In the midst of this battle, in which his young friend is risking his life, and when the King has just issued the rallying cry *"...God befriend us*

Teaching the plays

as *our cause is just*”, Falstaff does not go off to fight but ponders his situation. He is alone; and temporarily at least, safe. Should he fight and not worry about the death the Prince has said he owes to God? If he fights, what is he fighting for: the honour of King and country, or his own self-esteem? What, he ruminates, does the word *honour* actually mean?

“Well ’tis no matter; honour pricks me on. Yea, but how if honour prick me off when I come on? How then? Can honour set a leg? No. Or an arm? No. Or take away the grief of a wound? No. Honour hath no skill in surgery then? No. What is honour? A word. What is in that word honour? What is that honour? Air – a trim reckoning! Who hath it? He that died a Wednesday. Doth he feel it? No. Doth he hear it? No. ’Tis insensible then? Yea, to the dead. But will it not live with the living? No. Why? Detraction will not suffer it. Therefore I’ll none of it. Honour is a mere scutcheon...”*

* A scutcheon was a painted shield with a coat of arms that identified a nobleman.

Order v chaos; individual freedom versus social responsibility

In Part 2 the deadly struggle and war of words continue between the nobility; interspersed with the domestic humour and chaos of ordinary lives being lived out in the tavern and the orchard. There are voices other than Falstaff’s that remind us of the human cost of war, not least that of Northumberland as he grieves at the news of his son Harry Hotspur’s death at the start of Part 2.

Other voices make us aware of the fact that the leadership acknowledges what unresolved quarrels between great men can lead to. For example, one of the King’s key allies, Westmorland, asks at the close of Act 4 scene 1 why the Archbishop (one of the leading rebels) should be contemplating civil war:

*“Wherefore do you so ill translate yourself
Out of the speech of peace that bears such grace
Into the harsh and boisterous tongue of war,
Turning your books to graves, your ink to blood,
Your pens to lances, and your tongue divine
To a loud trumpet and a point of war?”*

Earlier in the play Morton, also one of the King’s men, has already told us the answer. Like those who today claim to lead holy wars, the bishop exploits his position and *“turns insurrection to religion;/Supposed sincere and holy in his thoughts/He’s followed both with body and with mind,/And doth enlarge his rising with the blood/Of fair king Richard, scraped from Pomfret stones;/Derives from heaven his quarrel and his cause...”* (Part 2, 1, i)

The quarrel between the rebels and the King never appears to be sufficient cause to justify hundreds if not thousands of men making the supreme sacrifice. Nonetheless, they do quarrel, and as a result many die. If nothing else, these deaths remind us that unless quarrels within a society can be resolved peacefully, everyone will suffer, and that to avoid them in the first place it is necessary to have strong and legitimate leadership. The problem for the King throughout both plays is that some people question his legitimacy as King, and also that his heir, the Prince of Wales, appears to value his individual freedom more than his duty and obligation as a Prince and future King to lead his people by example.

In Part 2, Act 4 scene 5, Henry IV gives a vivid idea of why good leadership matters. Why it may be sometimes necessary to use force to defend order if only to stave off the anarchy and chaos that lies so close to the surface of this and all societies. The key message throughout Part 2 would appear to be that we need leaders, whatever their faults: without them, anarchy threatens us all. Unless his adolescent son, Prince Hal, learns how to behave as a responsible adult, as a leader, as a King, his father fears the worst for everyone else:

*“Harry the Fifth is crowned! Up vanity!
Down royal state! All you sage counsellors, hence!
And to the English court assemble now,
From every region, apes of idleness!
Now, neighbour confines, purge you of your scum!
Have you a ruffian that will swear, drink, dance,
Revel the night, rob, murder, and commit
The oldest sins the newest kind of ways?
Be happy, he will trouble you no more.
England shall double gild his treble guilt;*

Teaching the plays

*England shall give him office, honour, might;
For the fifth Harry from licence plucks
The muzzle of restraint, and the wild dog
Shall flesh his tooth on every innocent.
O my poor kingdom, sick with civil blows!
When that my care could not withhold thy riots,
What wilt thou do when riot is thy care?
O, thou wilt be a wilderness again,
Peopled with wolves, thy old inhabitants.”*

At the end of Part 2, following the coronation, Falstaff calls after Henry V, but instead of fulfilling his old companion's hopes of him, Henry fulfils those of his father:

*“I know thee not old man. Fall to thy prayers.
How ill white hairs becomes a fool and jester.
I have long dreamt of such a man,
So surfeit-swelled, so old, and so profane,
But being awaked I do despise my dream.”*
(V, iv)

If he is to be believed, the new young King has crossed over from being an adolescent without responsibility to a public man with very many responsibilities. He has woken up to the political realities he inherited from his father. *“I have turned away my former self”* he claims, and now turns towards the performance of leadership so long expected of him. In *Henry V*, Shakespeare shows just how successful he is to become.

Discuss leadership with students.

What makes a good leader?

What qualities does s/he need to possess?

Who today do they think of as a good leader?

Are there personal stories that might be shared in which students tell of situations in which they were in the role of leader, or where they thought they were led?

Have they ever been misled, and if so, how and by whom?

**Peter Reynolds
March 2005**

Preparing the National's productions

Samantha Potter provides an insight to the decisions and preparations made before rehearsals, and to the role she plays as Staff Director on the production.

Pre-rehearsal preparations

Prior to going into rehearsals many major decisions need to be made about a production. With these productions of the *Henry IV* plays, Nicholas Hytner had to decide how he wanted to set the plays, what the design will be, how many actors he is going to use and who he is going to cast in each role, and the plays need to be cut so that they are a palatable length for performance.

Setting: Period and Style

Nick Hytner and Mark Thompson (the Designer) have made several fundamental decisions about the style of the production, which will inform how we are going to set them. Nick feels that these plays cannot be updated to a modern setting as they are specifically about the medieval world. They are also about England and need to be set in this country. Moving them to another contemporary country would diminish them. The presence of civil war, both prior to Part 1 and during the plays, is absolutely crucial to the central themes. The battles – which are pivotal to the plot – have to be sword fights, as they involve single people in actual physical combat, most particularly in the Hal and Hotspur duel. There is a theme running through both plays about misinformation and the difficulty of communication in the medieval world; epitomised in the opening of Part 2, when Northumberland is given completely incorrect information about the outcome of the rebellion. All of these factors constitute a strong argument for a historical setting.

However, the plays also consist of themes and characters that are completely relevant to a contemporary audience and are surprisingly modern on a variety of levels. For example the various father-son relationships; the idea of accepting responsibility; and the notion that guilt derived from one's actions can become overpowering, are all ideas which a modern audience can understand. Not to mention that

the banter in the tavern scenes could be taken from a pub in East London today.

With Mark Thompson, Nick has chosen a setting to accommodate the historical aspects of the play whilst allowing the contemporary aspects to feel relevant. There are some eclectic objects in the set – for instance, we will use big leather armchairs – but none of the items actually dates from after the Second World War. Mark is also going to use modern fabrics for costumes (including motorcycle leathers for the armour), but he is going to use them in a way that looks medieval. Visually the play will look medieval, but feel universal, and Nick will aim to draw contemporary-feeling performances from the actors: he wants the verse to be spoken in a very easy-sounding way.

In terms of design, Nick also has one very clear image for starting Part 1. He feels it is crucial to make clear that these plays are occurring in a country which has been ravaged by civil war for many years, and that as a direct result of the in-fighting, the country is both poor and dishevelled. This is referred to in King Henry's first speech: "*So shaken as we are, so wan with care; Find we a time for frighted peace to pant.*" Nick wants to reinforce this by giving the audience a very clear visual image of the state of the country. He is intending to start the play with the King walking through a battlefield to further clarify where we are at the start of the play.

Casting

In Part 1 there are 37 characters; 51 characters in Part 2, which totals 88 characters throughout. We calculated that we can do the play with 28 actors - 23 men and five women - which requires some actors to play more than one role. We had to decide not only how this doubling within the casting would work (very few actors are only playing one part), but also had to bear in mind that we need to understudy every part as well. So with the women, for example, one could technically do the play with only three women playing lots of parts, but this would leave no-one to understudy the larger

Preparing the National's productions

parts. We have decided to use five actresses, who play fewer parts but some of whom also understudy.

Once we decided how many actors we can use, we apportioned them to characters, which meant working out the 'doubling'. A lot of this is dependent on who we have chosen. For example, Adrian Scarborough is going to play both Pains and Silence, which is not a usual double as Silence has to be extremely old and Pains a young man, but it is a double made possible by using a particularly versatile actor. Essentially we have cast the play by selecting people to play the larger roles initially and when we had the final cast list, we were able to work out the additional doubling of the smaller parts, taking into account the actors' particular strengths as well as the sheer maths of who is available at which point. The casting of the play has been a very organic process, building up actors who complement one another.

Once the play is fully cast and all of the principal roles assigned, we had to work out which roles can be understudied by each actor – an even more difficult logistical problem because, whilst the majority are able to understudy other parts, they still have to cover all of the 88 parts within both plays. When working out the understudying, we always have to bear in mind how it will affect the rest of the play if someone has to cover someone else, and it is always the aim to disrupt the play as little as possible. We try to find understudy roles for actors which they could play in addition to the principal parts they already play, were someone to fall ill, rather than having to have everyone change parts to cover

one person's absence.

Cutting the Play

Nick has decided that he needs both plays to run at under three hours which requires us to cut between 300 and 400 lines from each play. The cutting has been a very objective exercise, essentially based on two factors – removing repeated information which doesn't progress the story, and removing sections which are extremely difficult for a modern audience to understand. Nick cut 300 lines out of both plays before rehearsals started but is continuing to cut some lines during initial rehearsals.

The Book

Bella Merlin is writing a book about the production, *With the Rogue's Company*, covering the whole period from pre-production through to the opening night. She started work prior to rehearsals, primarily trying to establish how people think the production will shape up. She interviewed Nick Hytner and several of the actors about what each person is expecting of the productions, and will continue to update with members of the company throughout the process to see how they develop.

Samantha Potter
March 2005.

Preparing the National's productions

Henry IV Part 1 previews in the Olivier Theatre from 16 April and opens on 4 May 2005

Henry IV Part 2 previews in the Olivier Theatre from 26 April and opens on 4 May 2005

Samantha Potter is producing a full background pack to the production, to be launched online at www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/edu in the middle of April 2005. The background pack will look in detail at the National's rehearsal and production process for *Henry IV Parts 1 and 2*.

The National Theatre is using the Penguin Shakespeare versions of the text. These, along with *With the Rogue's Company* (published with Oberon Books, priced £12.99, available from May), and other publications, can be purchased from the National's Bookshop.

www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/bookshop

T: 020 7452 3456

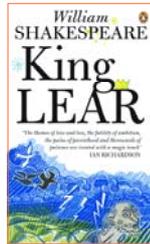
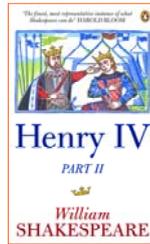
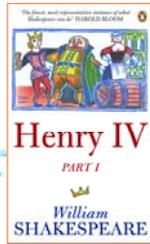
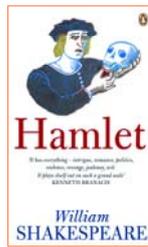
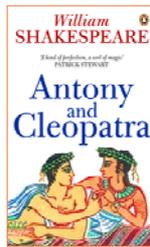
F: 020 7452 3457

bookshop@nationaltheatre.org.uk

BRINGING SHAKESPEARE TO LIFE FOR A NEW GENERATION...

'Shakespeare – the nearest thing in incarnation to the eye of God'

Laurence Olivier



7 APRIL 2005 will see the relaunch of the Penguin Shakespeare series -
the most popular editions of Shakespeare's plays available -
with a stunning new look and a wealth of new editorial material.

NT Used and recommended
by the Royal National Theatre

www.penguinshakespeare.com

Available from the National Theatre Bookshop in April

read more

