Henry IV Part 2

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Shakespeare's father was a glove-maker, and Shakespeare received no more than a grammar school education. He married Anne Hathaway in 1582, but left his family behind around 1590 and moved to London, where he became an actor and playwright. He was an immediate success: Shakespeare soon became the most popular playwright of the day as well as a part-owner of the Globe Theater. His theater troupe was adopted by King James as the King's Men in 1603. Shakespeare retired as a rich and prominent man to Stratford-upon-Avon in 1613, and died three years later.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

King Henry IV was born into the House of Plantagenet (on his father John of Gaunt's side) and the House of Lancaster (on his mother's side). Born Henry of Bolingbroke, he later became the tenth king of England (and the first Lancastrian to hold the throne) after deposing King Richard II. Like his character in the play *Henry IV Part 2*, the historical King Henry IV spent much of his reign stamping out rebellions and defending himself against treasonous plots cooked up by historical figures like the Archbishop of York. He was succeeded by his son who became King Henry V.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Henry IV Part 2 is the third play in the tetralogy of Shakespeare plays known as the Henriad, which includes *Henry IV Part 1* and *Henry V* Together, the plays enact the historic rise of the House of Lancaster to England's throne. *Richard II* tracks Henry Bolingbroke's defeat of King Richard II to become King Henry IV; *Henry IV Part 1* and *Henry IV Part 2* track King Henry IV's reign, struggle to keep his throne, and eventual death; and *Henry V* follows the reign of King Henry V, who is still Prince Hal in *Henry IV Part 1*

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *Henry IV Part 2*
- **When Written:** 1596-1599
- **Where Written:** London
- **When Published:** 1600
- **Literary Period:** Elizabethan England
- **Genre:** History play
- **Setting:** England, early 1400s
- **Climax:** King Henry V's turn against Falstaff.
- **Antagonist:** The Archbishop of York, Lord Bardolph, Mowbray, and Hastings.

EXTRA CREDIT

Chimes at Midnight. Orson Welles was so inspired by the character of Falstaff that he based an entire movie around him, starring as the fat man himself. Welles took the title of the film from a line Falstaff says in *Henry IV Part 2* to Justice Shallow—"We have heard the chimes at midnight"—indicating that they had stayed up late in their youth, living life to the fullest.

False Promises. Although the epilogue in *Henry IV Part 2* makes a big show of promising to continue Falstaff's story in *Henry V* the old man does not ever actually appear onstage in that play. His sole mention occurs when another character recounts his death.

PLOT SUMMARY

Rumor delivers the induction to the play, explaining that King Henry IV's side has won the Battle of Shrewsbury and Prince Hal has slain the rebel Hotspur but that rumors spread false news of the rebels' victory. Indeed, the play opens on Northumberland at Warkworth Castle receiving this rumor from Lord Bardolph. When Morton arrives and sets the story straight, Northumberland vows revenge against the king. Meanwhile in London, the Chief Justice scolds Falstaff for ignoring several court summons and tells him he's lucky he became a soldier at Shrewsbury as he'd otherwise be in jail.

Meanwhile in York, the rebels the Archbishop of York, Mowbray, Hastings, and Lord Bardolph plot their rebellion. Back in London, Mistress Quickly prepares to sue Falstaff for bankrupting her but Falstaff is, as usual, able to win back her favor (and more money). Elsewhere in London, Prince Hal jokes around with Poins and, hearing that Falstaff will dine that night with Doll Tearsheet, plans to spy on him. Later, the two sneak into the raucous, drunken tavern dinner Falstaff is enjoying with Doll Tearsheet and Mistress Quickly, catching Falstaff in the act of slandering them. The party breaks up when news arrives that the army is looking for Falstaff (who is technically a captain) and war is near. Lady Northumberland and Lady Percy, meanwhile, have convinced Northumberland to ditch the rebels and escape to Scotland. That night, King Henry IV paces Westminster Castle sleeplessly, soliloquizing about kingly responsibility, dwelling in reminiscences about his troubled reign, and predicting a grim future for his war-torn kingdom.

Falstaff arrives at Justice Shallow's estate in Gloucestershire to draft soldiers for the army and meets the sorry recruits Mouldy, Shadow, Wart, Feeble and Bullcalf, the best of which Falstaff secretly take bribes from, drafting only the worst.

In Gaultree Forest, the rebels are poised for battle when Westmoreland approaches to express surprise that a man of God like the Archbishop would resort to violence. He conveys Prince John of Lancaster's wish for peace. The Archbishop insists he wants peace too, and lays out their extended grievances against Henry IV, all of which trace back to Henry IV's wrongful wresting of the throne from King Richard. Westmoreland delivers the grievances to Lancaster, who warmly offers to redress them all if both sides disband their armies. The rebel leaders happily release their troops and are shocked when Westmoreland and Lancaster then arrest them. Lancaster's side sets out to capture the disbanding rebels and convey victory to the king. En route, he runs into dawdling Falstaff who boasts about his valiance.

When King Henry IV hears about the rebels' defeat, his already **sick** condition worsens. Prince Hal sits beside his bed as he sleeps and, thinking that his father has died, takes the crown and leaves. Waking, the king is furious and accuses his son of being a greedy murderer, but the prince redeems himself by pronouncing his love and promising he has no lust for power. The king gives final advice—launch foreign wars to distract subjects from cooking up rebellions—then dies.

Falstaff hears of the king's death while dining out at Justice Shallow's, but races back to London, merrily proclaiming that all his friends shall have their pick of office in his pal King Henry V's royal court. The princes Lancaster, Clarence, and Gloucester and the Chief Justice, though, face the new king with less enthusiasm, worried that King Henry V will abuse his power and rule England in the same reckless style he has always indulged. They are shocked and impressed, then, when King Henry V proclaims he has put his wild ways behind him. King Henry V applauds the Chief Justice's strictness towards him in the past and encourages him to stay uncompromisingly upright.

Elsewhere in London, Doll Tearsheet and Mistress Quickly are arrested for murder. Soon after, Falstaff and his friends wait excitedly among the crowds to watch the new king's procession. When King Henry V approaches, Falstaff hollers endearments, but King Henry V claims not to know Falstaff, calling him a bad dream. He announces he is not the boy he was, and has Falstaff and all his companions arrested and banished. Lancaster ends the play praising his brother's actions. The king has ensured his old friends will be provided for, even if banished, until they can mend their ways. An epilogue explains Falstaff's story will resume in the subsequent play.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

King Henry IV – The reigning King of England at play's start, King Henry IV, falls gravely **sick** and he dies, passing the crown to his son King Henry V. While alive, King Henry IV is wracked with anxiety about his civil war-torn kingdom and plagued by the rebels' longstanding resentment of his unscrupulous rise to the throne. He laments the burdens of being king, and is full of anxiety about Prince Hal's eventual rise to the throne, given Hal's self-indulgence.

Prince Hal/King Henry V – Starting the play as a drunken, rowdy, fun-loving frat boy, Prince Hal surprises everyone by abandoning his wild ways at his father's deathbed and maturing into the serious, sober, and fair-minded King Henry V. Rather than usher in an era of debauchery and corruption, as many suspect, King Henry V unsentimentally banishes his beloved old friend Falstaff and commits himself to building a strong and moral England.

Sir John Falstaff – As drunken and unscrupulously depraved as he is witty and lovable, Falstaff is Prince Hal's best friend. Though he often expounds with virtuosic elegance about his heroism, uprightness, and worth, Falstaff is in fact constantly scheming to rob and cheat others to his own advantage. Falstaff fully expects that when Hal rises to become king, that he himself will be able to control the law and will get a plum job in the king's court. King Henry V's sudden turn against Falstaff at play's end may demonstrate the young king's newfound moral clarity, but also stands out as the most heartbreaking moment in the play.

The Lord Chief Justice – Dignified, honorable, and unfailingly moral, the Lord Chief Justice is a powerful advisor in King Henry IV's court who imprisons the raucous young Prince Hal for misbehavior. Though the Chief Justice expects King Henry V to lash out at him in revenge, he is pleasantly surprised to be treated by the new king with respect and appreciation.

Lady Percy – The wife of Hotspur, who led the rebellion against King Henry IV in *King Henry IV Part 1* and was killed in that play by Prince Hal during the Battle of Shrewsbury. Lady Percy is bitter at having been made a widow, and shames her father-in-law Northumberland for failing to support his son (i.e. Hotspur) in his rebellion.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Prince John of Lancaster – A son of King Henry IV and Prince Hal's younger brother, Lancaster tricks the rebels the Archbishop of York, Mowbray, and Hastings by promising peace and then arresting them. He is both morally upright and, in that uprightness, somewhat unfeeling or even cruel.

Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland – A rebel and the father

of the late Hotspur, who Prince Hal killed in the Battle of Shrewsbury. Northumberland abandons the other rebels and escapes to Scotland.

The Archbishop of York – A rebel leader who plots the rebellion against King Henry IV with Lord Bardolph, Mowbray, and Hastings. He claims that his support of the rebellion is not in his own interest, but in that of a "**sickened**" England.

Mowbray – A rebel leader who plots the rebellion against King Henry IV with the Archbishop of York, Lord Bardolph, and Hastings.

Hastings – A rebel leader who plots the rebellion against King Henry IV with the Archbishop of York, Lord Bardolph, and Mowbray.

Lord Bardolph – A rebel leader who plots the rebellion against King Henry IV with the Archbishop of York, Mowbray, and Hastings, and is not to be confused with Falstaff's servant Bardolph.

Mistress Quickly – The hostess of the tavern in Eastcheap frequented by Prince Hal and Falstaff, Mistress Quickly is slow-witted and, despite her fury at Falstaff's bankrupting her with his constant money borrowing, remains easy for Falstaff to win back over.

Doll Tearsheet – Falstaff's favorite prostitute, Doll Tearsheet is witty, fun-loving, and very affectionate towards Falstaff.

Ned Poins – Prince Hal's crony and tavern buddy.

Bardolph – Falstaff's manservant.

Falstaff's Page – Falstaff's servant.

Peto – Falstaff's and Prince Hal's tavern buddy.

Earl of Westmoreland – A nobleman and advisor to King Henry IV, Westmoreland helps Lancaster coordinate the arrest of the rebels.

Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester – A son of King Henry IV and Prince Hal's younger brother.

Thomas, Duke of Clarence – A son of King Henry IV and Prince Hal's younger brother.

Justice Shallow – A wealthy judge and old acquaintance of Falstaff's, who Falstaff mocks and exploits for money.

Justice Silence – A judge and old acquaintance of Falstaff's.

Earl of Warwick – A nobleman and advisor to King Henry IV.

Earl of Surrey – A nobleman and advisor to King Henry IV.

Sir John Blunt – A nobleman and advisor to King Henry IV.

Davy – Justice Shallow's servant.

Morton – A messenger to Northumberland.

Pistol – An aggressive ensign who serves under Falstaff in the army.

Fang – An officer Mistress Quickly Prince enlists to help her sue Falstaff.

Snare – An officer Mistress Quickly Prince enlists to help her sue Falstaff.

Mouldy – A recruit Falstaff drafts into the army.

Feeble – A recruit Falstaff drafts into the army.

Bullcalf – A recruit Falstaff drafts into the army.

Shadow – A recruit Falstaff drafts into the army.

Wart – A recruit Falstaff drafts into the army.

Coleville – A rebel captured by Falstaff.

Rumor – Personified rumor, Rumor opens the play by setting the scene.

Lord Marshall – One of the rebel lords against King Henry IV.

Harcourt – A lord who supports King Henry IV.

Lady Northumberland – The wife of Northumberland she convinces her husband to avoid supporting the rebellion against King Henry IV until it is better organized, and in the meantime to flee to Scotland.

Travers Northumberland's servant, who brings news of the defeat of the rebels at Shrewsbury (which occurred at the end of *King Henry IV Part 1*.

Gower – A courtier of King Henry IV.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

LIES, HONESTY, MORALITY

Opening with a monologue delivered by personified Rumor, *Henry IV Part 2* establishes its interest in lies right from the start. The play goes on to examine lies of many varieties, from the collaborative, population-wide lies that are rumors passed from person to person to the calculated, individually conceived lies that are deceptions designed by a single character for a specific purpose. "Rumor is a pipe," Rumor explains, "blown by surmises, jealousies, conjectures, / And of so easy and so plain a stop / That the blunt monster with uncounted heads, / The still-discordant wavering multitude, / Can play upon it." This introduction identifies unproven suspicion and envy as the primary instigators of rumor and, by likening it to a pipe, Rumor connects rumor to the pipes played by Pan, a Greek god and satyr associated with wild crudity. Where Pan's pipes were played by a single creature, rumor's pipes are played by an even wilder beast: the dumb, many-headed monster of an uneasy

human crowd.

Cruder even then rumors spread throughout a fearful population are self-serving lies invented by an individual to benefit himself by misleading those around him. Falstaff's lies fall into this category as he lies grossly to Mistress Quickly, to Justice Shallow, and to the military to get his hands on others' money. Other lies in the play are more morally complex. Lancaster blatantly lies to the Archbishop of York, Hastings, and Mowbray, promising the rebels that he is negotiating peace when he is in fact setting them up to be arrested. Yet dishonorable as they may be, Lancaster's lies end up saving England from another bloody civil war and sparing the lives of thousands of Englishmen. Prince Hal's lies possess their own complexities. As in *Henry IV Part 1*, the prince's identity is built on an intricate web of calculated falsehood. Though he has previously lived a raucous life of loose morals, that existence was, as he explained to the audience in the preceding play, nothing but a sham. Prince Hal publicly shakes off his partyboy ways when he becomes King Henry V, shocking everyone around him with his new seriousness, maturity, and morality. The court, royal advisors, and, indeed, the English people will certainly benefit from Hal's freshly revealed "true" personality. Still, this "true" personality is bought on the back of a very painful, even coldheartedly cruel lie: as King Henry V, Hal pretends not to know Falstaff and falsely insists that his entire friendship with his beloved companion from *Henry IV Part 1* was nothing but a dream.

Amidst the play's rampant falsehoods, the Chief Justice stands out as the only consistently honest character. Having never restrained himself from criticizing and punishing Prince Hal in the past for his bad behavior, the Chief Justice assumes that he'll be the victim of the young king's revenge when Prince Hal becomes King Henry V at play's end. Yet, to the judge's surprise, King Henry V praises the Chief Justice's rectitude and encourages him never to compromise his honesty, even at the expense of future princes. King Henry V's speech bodes well for his future reign, which looks to be an era governed by honesty, uprightness, and impartial commitment to truth. And yet, in the fall of the corrupt but delightful and somehow humane Falstaff, there is a suggestion that in such moral uprightness something is also lost.

DISEASE

Henry IV Part 2 is a play tainted by literal and figurative **diseases**. Its characters are as sick of body as they are of soul, and its atmosphere as heavy with actual illness as its language is thick with illness' metaphors. King Henry IV's physical sickness stands at the heart of the play. The characters around him initially assume that his sickness is just the side-effect of an anxious spirit and that his body will start to feel better as soon as he can put his mind at ease about the festering rebellions in England. At first, this does seem to be the case when, complaining about his insomnia, Henry IV attributes it to the anxiety surrounding his royal responsibilities. Yet even after King Henry IV receives the good news that the rebels have been arrested in Act IV scene 4, his condition doesn't improve. In fact, it worsens and, just as England seems poised to enter the years of peace Henry has been longing for, Henry himself seems poised to die. Indeed, King Henry IV soon passes away, setting the stage for the rise of King Henry V and the plot of the final play in the Henriad (*Henry V*).

Yet even as the play firmly establishes that King Henry IV's own sickness is not connected to the health or weakness of his kingdom, the play also repeatedly figures his kingdom as a diseased body with ailments of its own. The Archbishop of York describes the English people's response to King Henry IV's reign: "thou, beastly feeder, art so full of [Henry IV], that thou provokes thyself to cast him up." But, he goes on to explain, the population's vomitous inclination isn't just specific to Henry: "so, so, thou common dog, didst thou disgorge thy glutton bosom of the royal Richard; and now thou wouldst eat they dead vomit up, and howl'st to find it." King Henry IV himself calls his kingdom diseased: "O my poor kingdom, sick with civil blows!" Further, the Archbishop describes his and the other rebels' cause as a sickness: "we are all diseased, and with our surfeiting and wanton hours have brought ourselves into a burning fever, and we must bleed for it; of which disease our late king, Richard, being infected, died."

Throughout the play, other characters are likewise plagued by physical and metaphorical disease. In *Henry IV Part 1*, Northumberland claimed to be too physically sick to assist the rebels at Shrewsbury, but, berating him at the start of *Henry IV Part 2*, Lady Percy suggests that he was only feigning sickness. Northumberland then demonstrates that he is spiritually sick of the rebels' cause by refusing to join forces with them yet again. Later, Bullcalf complains about a cold caught while celebrating the royal coronation and Falstaff repeatedly complains of pains in body and spirit, groaning about his overweight, slow-moving body, sending his urine off to be tested for (presumably venereal) maladies, and calling his looseness with money a "consumption of the purse," a "disease…incurable." Even Falstaff's logic seems to suffer from sickness when he perversely attributes Prince Hal's health to unhealthy behavior: it is the prince's overindulgence in wine, Falstaff deduces, that has made Prince Hal so "very hot and valiant."

THE RIGHT TO THE THRONE

The struggle for the English crown that drove the action in *Henry IV Part 1* continues to power the plot of *Henry IV Part 2* as the exhausted King Henry IV keeps on trying to defend his throne against the threatening band of rebels—now lead by the Archbishop of York, Mowbray,

and Hastings—plotting to take it away from him. As in *Henry IV Part 1*, characters endlessly discuss the recent history leading up to Henry IV's reign. The rebels feel that Henry wrongfully usurped the English throne from King Richard II and are determined to depose Henry to avenge Richard's blood. Even as King Henry IV strives to maintain his throne, he is wracked by self-doubt and guilt for his past actions, wondering whether he really *did* act wrongly. "God knows, my son," he tells Prince Hal, "by what by-paths and indirect crook'd ways I met this crown; and I myself know well how troublesome it sat upon my head." The unexpectedly silly twist to King Henry IV's deathbed scene—as Prince Hal assumes that his father is dead and exits the room with the crown so that the king wakes up and grows infuriated, assuming his power-hungry son is eager for him to die—challenges expectations about the throne in another capacity. By depriving the scene of some of its gravity, the play demonstrates that the supposedly solemn, sacred ritual whereby a crown passes from king to prince is in fact just as complex, ego-addled, and human as any father-son relationship.

The struggles surrounding Prince Hal's royal seat are also carried over from *Henry IV Part 1*. As in the previous play, Prince Hal has to contend with the public persona he's built up over years of fooling around with Falstaff and Poins at the tavern. Everyone, including his own father the king, assumes that Hal is just a playboy unfit to take the throne. Indeed, the royal court and advisors are tremendously anxious after King Henry IV dies, assuming that King Henry V will use his new power to play out adolescent revenges. When the new king demonstrates that he has put childish ways behind him and plans to rule by integrity and firm morals, everyone is as shocked as they delighted.

TIME

In exploring disease and the right to the throne, *Henry IV Part 2* also explores the theme of time through the aging body and the aging memory's interpretations of history. Aside from being **sick**, King Henry IV is simply old. He complains frequently about his weary agedness and about the way the years have worn on him, rendering his boisterous, ambitious youth unrecognizable to his current self. Falstaff likewise struggles with his aging human body. Already middle-aged and aging even faster due to gluttony and a drinking habit, Falstaff is continually called out for being old. If *Henry IV Part 1* featured Falstaff as a carefree, young spirit who could frolic in spite of his white hair, *Henry IV Part 2* presents him as a tired man, falling into decay and scrambling pathetically to keep up with his own reckless lifestyle. The Chief Justice ridicules Falstaff for trying to act younger than he is and insists that the old man's body betrays him. "Do you set down your name in the scroll of youth, that are written down old with all the characters of age? Have you not a moist eye? a dry hand? a yellow cheek? a white beard? a decreasing leg? an increasing belly?" the judge asks Falstaff. Spurning his once-beloved friend once he's become King Henry V, Prince Hal, too, expresses disgust at the disharmony between Falstaff's age and behavior: "I know thee not, old man," the prince sneers, "How ill white hairs become a fool and jester!"

Meanwhile, other characters explore time by tracking human memory and noting people's shifting attitudes towards the past. As the Archbishop of York notes reflecting on the fickle likes and dislikes of the English populations: "Past and to come seems best; things present worst." Later, Warwick tries to shake King Henry IV of his grim fixation on magical **prophecies** by insisting that prophecy is no oracular power but simply an insightful reading of history and an educated guess about the future. "There is a history in all men's lives," he explains, "figuring the natures of the times deceased; The which observed, a man may prophesy, with a near aim, of the main chance of things as yet not come to life, who in their seeds and weak beginning lie intreasured. Such things become the hatch and brood of time."

WARFARE

Henry IV Part 1 presented warfare as meaningless bloodshed devoid of grandeur and so too does *Henry IV Part 2* present war in an unfavorable light. Yet while *Part 1*'s extended, gruesome battle scenes illustrated war's senseless violence, this play focuses on war's other negative attributes. *Henry IV Part 2* doesn't feature any actual battles, but instead showcases the gross corruption and dishonorable cruelties that war inspires in people.

Falstaff merrily engages in ignoble fraud to profit at the expense of both military and civilian populations, once again taking bribes from recruits and stocking the army with pathetic excuses for soldiers to line his own pockets. The old man also plans to make off with a hefty military pension by pretending that his limp (caused by gout and venereal **disease**) is the result of battle wounds won in brave combat.

Falstaff may be the play's clown, but serious characters are just as culpable of ignoble military practice. Lancaster only manages to defeat the rebel forces by resorting to underhanded tactics. He dupes the Archbishop of York, Mowbray, and Hastings into thinking he's offering peace, then captures them right as they've let their guard down. Thus, despite the fact that the rebels are the play's villains, the Archbishop, Mowbray, and Hastings actually act more honorably in war than Lancaster does.

King Henry IV, too, turns out to be a less than wholly noble warrior. The crusades through the Middle East that he has supposedly wanted to launch in the name of Christianity are, he reveals, motivated by much less high-minded reasons. In his final advice to Prince Hal, the king explains that foreign wars

are simply the best way to distract one's own subjects from rebellion, a perspective uncomfortably willing to sacrifice the lives of foreigners for the sake of one's own ease at home. Further, the old king admits on his deathbed that his eagerness to attack the Middle East was always rooted in the childish desire to fulfill a personal prophecy. "It hath been prophesied to me many years, I should not die but in Jerusalem; which," he laments, "vainly I suppos'd the Holy Land."

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

SICKNESS

In *Henry IV Part 2*, **sickness** touches every character as the play uses the imagery and vocabulary of diseased bodies to symbolize diseased spirits. Thus, as King Henry IV's body falls prey to mortal sickness, he constantly refers to his pained soul, both of which reflect the ailing spirit of England, war-torn and traitorous. "My poor kingdom," he laments on his deathbed, "sick with civil blows!" The Archbishop of York, too, describes the English people as "all diseased" victims of "a burning fever…of which disease our late King Richard, being infected, died." He compares the population to a sick dog who disgustingly eats its own vomit. Throughout, other characters' myriad ailments—Falstaff's venereal disease, Bullcalf's cold—constantly remind the reader of illness eating away at the nation all around them.

OMENS

As in *Henry IV Part 1*, traditional **omens** and prophetic signs function as controversial symbols in the play. While some characters trust in their power to foretell the future, other characters are more skeptical and seem convinced that any talk of prophetic omens is nothing but silly superstition. While Clarence and Gloucester express serious concern about the bad omens infesting the kingdom, Prince Hal never mentions them and seems confident that the only forces determining a kingdom's future are the wits and actions of that kingdom's leader. Likewise, while King Henry IV places huge stock in the power of decades-old prophecies to shape the future, Warwick laughs off his fears and promises the king that prophecies are nothing but a harmless guessing game.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Simon & Schuster edition of *Henry IV Part 2* published in 2006.

Induction Quotes

Upon my tongues continual slanders ride,
The which in every language I pronounce,
Stuffing the ears of men with false reports. (6–8)

Related Characters: Rumor (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: Ind.6-8

Explanation and Analysis

In the first lines of the play, Shakespeare sets the tone for a drama about the struggle for truth. Over the course of the play, Henry IV and his son, Hal, will try to control their unruly subjects and prove their own legitimacy. In order to do so, they'll have to control rumors; i.e, the flow of information throughout the kingdom.

In other ways, too, Rumor is an appropriate figure with which to begin the play--like an invocation to the Muse in a Greek epic--because of its intimate connection to language. It's suggested that for one to control the kingdom, one must control the rumors and the language of the kingdom. One's legitimacy as king is only as good as everyone agrees that it is, no matter what the real "truth" may be. And for the time being, Rumor roams free--there's a lot of controversy about Henry IV's legitimacy as a monarch, and Henry IV himself doesn't know what to do about it.

Act 1, Scene 1 Quotes

In poison there is physic; and these news,
Having been well, that would have made me sick,
Being sick, have in some measure made me well:
And as the wretch, whose fever-weaken'd joints,
Like strengthless hinges, buckle under life,
Impatient of his fit, breaks like a fire
Out of his keeper's arms, even so my limbs,
Weaken'd with grief, being now enraged with grief,
Are thrice themselves. (13–22)

Related Characters: Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 1.1.150-159

Explanation and Analysis

In this scene, Northumberland has just gotten some bad news: the rebel troops have been defeated by Henry IV, and many of his friends and family members have probably been killed. Northumberland tries, desperately, to spin the bad news as good, arguing that bad news will energize him and force him to fight even harder, in much the same way that a poison can sometimes provide a sick man with strength and fortitude. This is just one of many references to sickness and disease in the play--both the literal diseases of the characters, and the overall sickness of a nation filled with rumors, mistrust, and discord.

Northumberland's speech establishes him as something of a rhetorician: he's trying to use verbal cleverness to save face, despite the clear evidence that he's suffered a major defeat. We're reminded of Falstaff, who also uses language to spin humiliations as blessings--the difference being that Falstaff used his language for relatively-peaceful, selfish reasons, whereas Northumberland tries to use language to continue his rebellion.

Act 1, Scene 2 Quotes

❝ Do you set down your name in the scroll of youth, that are written down old with all the characters of age? Have you not a moist eye? a dry hand? a yellow cheek? a white beard? a decreasing leg? an increasing belly? is not your voice broken? your wind short? your chin double? your wit single? and every part about you blasted with antiquity? and will you yet call yourself young? Fie, fie, fie, Sir John! (155-160)

Related Characters: The Lord Chief Justice (speaker), Sir John Falstaff

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 1.2.181-189

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Falstaff--now an elderly, feeble man--tries to convince the Chief Justice, a local authority, that he's really young and healthy. In a bullying, aggressive tone, the Justice tells Falstaff that he's clearly old, fat, and weak.

It's important to note that the Justice's descriptions of Falstaff's body convey a sense of withering and shriveling up. In the past, Falstaff "inflated" himself with language and rhetoric--and yet his body itself seems to be getting smaller (except for his belly) as it approaches death. There's something heroic about Falstaff's attempts to deny his own weakness: he's like Don Quixote, using imagination (and delusion) to transcend his old age. And yet at the end of the day, Falstaff *is* delusional: he refuses to accept the cold, hard facts of his time and sickness.

❝ A man can no more separate age and covetousness than a'can part young limbs and lechery: but the gout galls the one, and the pox pinches the other; and so both the degrees prevent my curses. (198-200)

Related Characters: Sir John Falstaff (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 1.2.234-238

Explanation and Analysis

Falstaff here continues the discussion of his own disease and his decaying body. Falstaff makes the point that he has suffered from every disease because he's lived a long, successful life: as a young man, he was lustful, and therefore he has venereal disease now. As an old man, he's been greedy and gluttonous, resulting in gout. In short, Falstaff's diseases "tell a story"--he's had a rich life, full of sin but also adventure.

Falstaff's monologue shows his attempts to use language and humor to transcend his own weaknesses. Despite the pain he's probably experiencing, Falstaff finds ways to joke about his problems. For all his amoral, selfish nature, these roguish denials and rhetorical tricks make Falstaff remain (usually) a sympathetic character.

Act 1, Scene 3 Quotes

❝ The commonwealth is sick of their own choice:
Their over-greedy love hath surfeited...
...Thou, beastly feeder, art so full of [King Henry IV]
That thou provokes thyself to cast him up.
So, so, thou common dog, didst thou disgorge
Thy glutton bosom of the royal Richard;
And now thou wouldst eat thy dead vomit up. (87-98)

Related Characters: The Archbishop of York (speaker), King Henry IV

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 1.3.91-103

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, the Archbishop of York, a rebel sympathizer, advises the rebels to begin their attack on Henry IV very soon. The Archbishop argues that the people of England are ready for a new king: everywhere, he can sense that the people are "stuffed" with Henry IV, and are on the verge of vomiting him up.

The Archbishop makes an interesting point when he compares Henry IV to his predecessor, Richard II, whom Henry IV dethroned. In a way, Henry IV is a victim of his own rebellion. By overthrowing Richard, Henry set the precedent for rebelling against the English monarch whenever the people feel "sick" of him--something that would have been nearly inconceivable before Richard's time. Now, Henry IV must suffer the same fate as his predecessor, it would seem: be overthrown by an angry, unruly people.

Act 2, Scene 2 Quotes

Prince Hal: Before God, I am exceeding weary.

Poins: Is't come to that? I had thought weariness durst not have attached one of so high blood.

Prince Hal: Faith, it does me; though it discolours the complexion of my greatness to acknowledge it. Doth it not show vilely in me to desire small beer? (1-5)

Related Characters: Prince Hal/King Henry V, Ned Poins (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 2.2.1-6

Explanation and Analysis

Here Prince Hal makes a simple admission; he's feeling tired. His associate, Poins, is surprised to hear a prince admit to weakness of any kind, and Hal realizes that Poins has a point. Hal realizes that he needs to do a better job of pretending to be strong and majestic. His days of drinking in taverns are drawing to a close. (Now he only desires "small," or barely-alcoholic, beer.)

Hal's admission in this scene proves that he's smart enough to learn from his mistakes. Hal has been drinking in taverns for years, but now the stakes have changed: in a time of civil unrest, Hal needs to step up his game and be a model of composure and leadership. It's Poins' innocent observation that reinforces this crucial point for the young prince.

Act 2, Scene 4 Quotes

Is it not strange that desire should so many years outlive performance? (234)

Related Characters: Ned Poins (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 2.4.265-266

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Hal and Poins, up to their old mischief, disguise themselves as waiters and watch as the elderly Falstaff flirts with Doll Tearsheet, his friend. Poins is bemused--Falstaff is obviously attracted to Doll, and yet he's clearly too old to "perform" with her.

The passage is a good example of how Shakespeare sneaks some pretty bawdy jokes into his play--Poins is making a sex-joke, essentially saying that Fastaff is too old to have sex with Doll. But there's also serious side to Poins's observation: Falstaff's reach often exceeds his grasp, and even after his body begins to decay he continues to speak boldly, live a life of pleasure and excess, etc. Falstaff's refusal to play the part of the sick old man could be interpreted as delusional, heroic, or something in between.

Act 3, Scene 1 Quotes

...O partial sleep, give thy repose
To the wet sea-boy in an hour so rude
And, in the calmest and most stillest night,
With all appliances and means to boot
Deny it to a king? Then, happy low, lie down.
Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown. (26-31)

Related Characters: King Henry IV (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 3.1.26-31

Explanation and Analysis

In this famous speech, Henry IV finds himself unable to

enjoy his life as a king. He has unlimited power over his subjects, and yet he lives in constant fear of being deposed by a jealous rival. Henry IV concludes that being a king isn't much of a gift at all--while he's wide awake late at night, even the lowliest commoners in England get to enjoy their sleep.

Henry IV's speech is interesting in that it echoes a speech given by Richard II in Shakespeare's earlier play. Previously, Henry was a rebel, overthrowing Richard--now he's come to the same fate as Richard: he must spend the rest of his life anxiously defending his position. One important aspect of this is that Henry can't *enjoy* the "game" of politics--he considers it an heavy duty to have to defend his throne from enemies. In this respect, Henry IV will differ greatly from his son, Henry V, who savors every political battle he fights.

> Then you perceive the body of our kingdom,
> How foul it is, what rank diseases grow
> And with what danger near the heart of it. (38-40)

Related Characters: King Henry IV (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 3.1.38-40

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Henry IV approaches his loyal followers, Warwick and Surrey, and tells them that England has become "diseased." England, Henry suggests, has a great "cancer"--a mass of rebels that is rapidly growing, sapping the country of life.

Henry's speech has another implication as well. In some ways, Henry himself is to blame for England's present "disease." By overthrowing Richard II, Henry has set a dangerous precedent for rebellion and insubordination--by sloppily overthrowing the king and failing to control his own people, Henry IV has brought about his own misery, and contributed to the country's sickness. It's up to Prince Hal to restore the kingdom's health.

> Rumour doth double, like the voice and echo,
> The numbers of the fear'd...
> ...Upon my soul, my lord,
> The powers that you already have sent forth
> Shall bring this prize in very easily. (99-103)

Related Characters: Earl of Warwick (speaker), Rumor, King Henry IV

Related Themes:

Page Number: 3.1.100-104

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, the Earl of Warwick tries to pacify his monarch by telling Henry IV that he will be able to maintain his crown. Henry IV has assembled a powerful force, which will be able to defeat whatever rebels are left very easily. Note that Warwick alludes to the power of Rumor (reflecting the Prologue to the play): instead of controlling the public's perception of him, Henry IV has allowed himself to be controlled by public rumors about the size and scope of the rebellion.

In all, Warwick's monologue exposes some of the weaknesses in Henry IV's monarchy. Most basically of all, though, the very fact that Warwick *has* to comfort Henry shows how weak Henry has become. Instead of acting as a model of composure and confidence, Henry has exposed his fears to his closest advisers, allowing more rumors to "trickle down" to the public.

Act 3, Scene 2 Quotes

> Lord, Lord, how subject we old men are to this vice of lying! (263)

Related Characters: Sir John Falstaff (speaker), Justice Silence, Justice Shallow

Related Themes:

Page Number: 3.2.313-314

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Falstaff criticizes two old friends of his, Shallow and Silence, for lying about their pasts. While Shallow and Silence claimed to have once been passionate lovers and great adventurers, Falstaff knows better--back in the day, they were just shy, boring people. Falstaff bemoans old men's tendency to lie about their own experiences, exaggerating and distorting the truth to make themselves appear better than they really are.

It's important to keep in mind that Falstaff himself is the biggest liar of all: we've seen him claim to have defeated an entire army of men all by himself. (In other words, it takes a liar to spot a liar.) Falstaff seems to remain blissfully unaware of his own deceptions--he's lying to himself, as well

as to other people.

Act 4, Scene 1 Quotes

> ...we are all diseased,
> And with our surfeiting and wanton hours
> Have brought ourselves into a burning fever,
> And we must bleed for it; of which disease
> Our late king, Richard, being infected, died.
> But, my most noble Lord of Westmoreland,
> I take not on me here as a physician,
> Nor do I as an enemy to peace
> Troop in the throngs of military men;
> But rather show awhile like fearful war,
> To diet rank minds sick of happiness,
> And purge the obstructions which begin to stop
> Our very veins of life. (54-66)

Related Characters: The Archbishop of York (speaker), Earl of Westmoreland

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 4.1.57-69

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, the Archbishop of York shows himself to be a cunning rhetorician and a great manipulator of other people. York has been asked why he has allowed himself to become involved with a "base insurrection" against Henry IV. York phrases his answer in scientific, medical terms: he says that England as a whole is diseased, and needs to be dispassionately "bled" (a reference to the common medical practice of removing "excess" blood from the sick). In short, York argues that Henry IV's reign is bad for England, and York himself is just a conservative, returning society to its old ways.

Even though it's pretty obvious that York is a radical for rebelling against the king, York skillfully presents himself as the guardian of the "old order." Much like Falstaff and Hal, York is able to "spin" any question to his advantage.

> Construe the times to their necessities,
> And you shall say indeed, it is the time,
> And not the king, that doth you injuries. (105-107)

Related Characters: Earl of Westmoreland (speaker), King Henry IV

Related Themes:

Page Number: 4.1.109-111

Explanation and Analysis

Here the Earl of Westmoreland argues with Lord Mowbray over whether or not a rebellion against Henry IV is really necessary. Westmoreland argues that Mowbray is just eager to fight--he has no real problem with Henry IV, at least not a problem that needs to be settled with outright war.

Westmorland's emphasis on "the times" suggests that Mowbray doesn't have a just reason for rebelling against Henri IV at all--he just thinks he can spin the situation to his advantage and gain some land and wealth for himself. Mowbray, Westmoreland argues, is an opportunist pretending to be a moralist.

> I pawned thee none:
> I promised you redress of these same grievances
> Whereof you did complain; which, by mine honour,
> I will perform with a most Christian care.
> But for you, rebels, look to taste the due
> Meet for rebellion and such acts as yours. (342-346)

Related Characters: Prince John of Lancaster (speaker), The Archbishop of York, Mowbray, Hastings

Related Themes:

Page Number: 4.1.369-374

Explanation and Analysis

Here we're introduced to Prince John of Lancaster as he interacts with the rebels York, Mowbray, and Hastings. Lancaster tricks the rebels into meeting with him as friends--then, when the rebels are all assembled, John breaks his word and has them arrested. Appalled, the rebels ask Lancaster how he could be so dishonest to them. Lancaster simply replies that the rebels are already being dishonest, and opposing God's will--therefore, Lancaster has a duty to bring the rebels to justice by any means necessary.

Ironically, then, Lancaster comes across as the corrupt, dishonest one in this scene, whereas the rebels, in spite of their opposition to Henry IV, come off as morally indignant: they can't believe that Lancaster would go for such a "dirty

trick." At the same time, this act of dishonesty potentially saves thousands of lives (the nameless soldiers who would have died had civil war broken out again), so it arguably is a more moral action on the Prince's part than obeying the traditional rules of honor.

Act 4, Scene 3 Quotes

> ...Lo, where it sits,
> Which God shall guard; and put the whole world's strength
> Into one giant arm, it shall not force
> This lineal honor from me. This from thee
> Will I to mine leave, as 'tis left to me. (43-47)

Related Characters: Prince Hal/King Henry V (speaker), King Henry IV

Related Themes:

Page Number: 4.3.189-195

Explanation and Analysis

In this scene, Prince Hal *thinks*hebecomes the rightful king of England by accepting the crown from his father, the dying Henry IV. (He assumes that his father has just died, but really Henry IV is just asleep.) As Hal puts the crown on his head, he muses on the role of the king, and decides to take up the duty of his new role. Hal will guard his monarchy with skill and cleverness, and one day he'll pass on the crown to his own child, just as Henry IV has passed it on to him.

While this is part of a somewhat comic, ridiculous turn of events, it's important to notice what Prince Hal is doing in his premature acceptance speech: he's *creating* a legacy out of nothing. Henry IV's claim to the throne of England was constantly being disputed during his lifetime: he had to fight off rivals almost constantly. But now that Henry IV is (presumably) dead, Hal resolves to create what Henry IV himself never had: a stable royal lineage. Even if Henry IV's claim to the monarchy was disputed, Hal's claim is stronger, simply because his father was the king (whether justly or not). By the same token, Hal knows that his own son's claim to the throne will be even stronger than his own, since at that point the family's claim to the throne will occupy three separate generations. In short, Hal recognizes the importance of lineage in defending his right to rule.

> Thou hast stol'n that which after some few hours
> Were thine without offense, and at my death
> Thou hast seal'd up my expectation. (101-103)

Related Characters: King Henry IV (speaker), Prince Hal/ King Henry V

Related Themes:

Page Number: 4.3.255-257

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Hal--who has just taken the crown from his father, whom he assumed was dead--learns that his father is still very much alive, and has been listening to everything Hal just said. Hal has made a long speech about power and control, without ever expressing much affection for his father. Henry IV is appalled that Hal could be so insensitive to his own family, and scolds Hal for "stealing" the crown when he could have waited a couple hours to get it legitimately. Henry IV's worst fears are confirmed: Hal really is a greedy, irresponsible brat.

It's been suggested that even up to this point in the play, Hal was an irresponsible brat, just as Henry IV says. It's not until this moment that Hal sees the light: Hal finally begins to recognize the gravity of his challenge as a monarch. He must defend the throne from civil war, honoring his father's memory. (There are also critics who've argued that Hal is leagues ahead of Henry IV, and already has a sophisticated plan for maintaining his power.)

Shakespeare also uses this rather silly scene to undercut the solemnity of kingship and the passing of the crown. While a dying king passing his rule to his son should be a serious, grand affair, here it's marred by this embarrassing mix-up. Thus the play shows that even among monarchs, family relations and human misunderstandings are just as messy and sometimes ridiculous as with everyone else.

> Be it thy course to busy giddy minds
> With foreign quarrels; that action, hence borne out,
> May waste the memory of the former days. (344-346)

Related Characters: King Henry IV (speaker), Prince Hal/ King Henry V

Page Number: 4.3.372-375

Explanation and Analysis

In this prophetic passage, Henry IV gives Hal some good but disturbing advice: the best way to avoid being unrest at home is to focus on trouble abroad. By focusing the people's minds on some external threat or foreign war, Henry IV argues, Hal will be able to solidify his claim to the throne of England.

Henry IV's dying advice shows what he himself always intended to do--indeed, at the start of *Henry IV Part 1*, Henry was planning to go to the Middle East and fight in the Crusades, but then he was interrupted by strife at home. Even if Henry IV was never able to follow his own advice, here he at least passes it on to his son. And as we'll see in *Henry V*, the "sequel" to Shakespeare's play, Henry V will take his father's advice to heart, first engaging England in a serious of religious crusades and then orchestrating a complicated war with France, solidifying his claim to being the "best man for the job" of king.

The advice Henry IV delivers is itself rather disturbing, however. It assumes that foreign lives (particularly those of "heathens," or the Arab targets of the Crusades) are worthless compared to English lives, and callously suggests that maintaining one's power is worth huge amounts of bloodshed. It also relies on the demonization of an "other" in order to promote unity--a tactic of dictators and demagogues everywhere.

Act 5, Scene 2 Quotes

❝ ...what I did in honor,
Led by th'impartial conduct of my soul;
And never shall you see that I will beg
A ragged and forestalled remission.
If truth and upright innocency fail me,
I'll to the King my master that is dead. (35-40)

Related Characters: The Lord Chief Justice (speaker), King Henry IV

Related Themes:

Page Number: 5.2.36-42

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, the Chief Justice mourns the ascent of Prince Hal to the throne of England. Prince Hal has always seemed to despise the Chief Justice, and now that Hal is King Henry V, the Chief Justice is sure that his life will be hellish. The Justice prepares to face Henry V and awaits his punishment for his past of constantly scolding Hal's wild ways.

The Justice's behavior suggests that he still thinks of Henry V as an irresponsible and vindictive person--someone who lets his grudges dictate his political behavior. As we'll see very soon, though, the Justice underestimates Prince Hal. As Henry V, Hal will exercise mercy and justice on all his subjects. Furthermore, it's revealed that he has actually valued the Chief Justice's past criticisms of himself, and so he rewards the Chief Justice rather than punishing him.

❝ So shall I live to speak my father's words:
"Happy am I, that have a man so bold,
That dares do justice on my proper son;
And not less happy, having such a son,
That would deliver up his greatness so
Into the hands of justice." (106-111)

Related Characters: Prince Hal/King Henry V (speaker), King Henry IV, The Lord Chief Justice

Related Themes:

Page Number: 5.2.108-113

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, King Henry V surprises everyone by praising the Chief Justice--the very man who frequently punished Henry when Henry was only the prince, not the king. The Justice claims that he was only honoring the rules of law when he punished Henry. Henry is very impressed with the Justice's explanation, and plans to reward the Justice with a powerful position in court.

Why doesn't Henry enact revenge on the Chief Justice? One reason is that he's still playing his part, drawing out the surprise of how responsible and impartial he has suddenly become. Another is that the Chief Justice represents the force of law. Henry V doesn't need any domestic disturbances right now--his position as the king of England is so unstable that he could be overthrown at any time. In order to cement his status as the rightful king of England, Henry makes it known that he is a just monarch and an agent of law and order. In this way, Henry encourages his subjects to think of him as the most "natural" and legitimate king possible: to be against Henry is to be against law itself.

❝ ...believe me, I beseech you;
My father is gone wild into his grave,
For in his tomb lie my affections;
And with his spirit sadly I survive,
To mock the expectation of the world,
To frustrate prophecies and to raze out
Rotten opinion, who hath writ me down
After my seeming. (122-129)

Related Characters: Prince Hal/King Henry V (speaker), King Henry IV

Related Themes:

Page Number: 5.2.123-130

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Henry V skillfully convinces his subjects to accept his authority as the new king. Henry acknowledges that as a young man he was irresponsible and drunken. But now, Henry insists, he's "buried" his wild oats, along with the body of his own father, Henry IV.

Henry's speech is a skillful piece of rhetoric, because it simultaneously distances him from his father and reinforces his status as the rightful heir to his father's throne. By associating his old behavior with Henry IV (i.e., the image of "burying"), Henry makes it clear that he's a different man than his father--and therefore the people who hated Henry IV shouldn't automatically hate him. And Henry's speech also confirms that he has had a plan all along: just as he claimed in Part I of the play, Henry was being irresponsible as a young man because he wanted to be able to surprise people with the sudden reversal in his behavior. In short, Henry V begins his reign by establishing himself as a just, legitimate, and unique monarch--and the fact that he establishes all this with one speech proves that he's a master politician as well.

Related Characters: Prince Hal/King Henry V (speaker), Sir John Falstaff

Related Themes:

Page Number: 5.5.47-55

Explanation and Analysis

In this most famous scene in the play, Henry V crosses paths with his old friend, Falstaff, whom he used to love getting drunk with, playing tricks on, and talking to. Now that Henry V is a powerful king, he can't risk being seen with his old friend, and here Henry is trying to send the message that he's a just, reasonable monarch; i.e., not the kind of person who would hang out with an old alcoholic like Falstaff, or give favors to his incompetent friends. And so Henry cruelly ignores and insults Falstaff, claiming not to know his old friend at all, but only to have "dreamed" of him once.

Henry V's behavior is both the right move and an incredibly cruel act. Falstaff, for all his faults, was the most lovable (and, traditionally, the most popular) character in the play. So when Henry ignores Falstaff, we can't help but think that he's sold a part of his soul in exchange for the crown. We miss the "old Henry"--the fun-loving teenager who used to get into mischief with Falstaff every night. Henry has gained the throne, and is acting as a just monarch who won't dole out unfair favors to his friends (like Falstaff was expecting), but in the process he's lost something crucial and human.

Act 5, Scene 5 Quotes

❝ I know thee not, old man: fall to thy prayers;
How ill white hairs become a fool and jester!
I have long dream'd of such a kind of man,
So surfeit-swell'd, so old and so profane;
But, being awaked, I do despise my dream.
Make less thy body hence, and more thy grace;
Leave gormandizing; know the grave doth gape
For thee thrice wider than for other men.
Reply not to me with a fool-born jest. (43-52)

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

INDUCTION

Rumor enters wearing garments "painted full of tongues" and introduces himself. "Upon my tongues continual slanders ride…stuffing the ears of men with false reports." He also compares rumor to "a pipe, blown by surmises, jealousies, conjectures…that the blunt monster with uncounted heads, the still-discordant wavering multitude can play upon."

Having the personified Rumor introduce the play establishes the importance of the theme of Lies. By comparing rumor to a pipe, Rumor alludes to Pan, the pipe-playing Greek god of wildness and crudeness. A "discordant" human crowd is, Rumor suggests, as wild as Pan.

Rumor goes on to set the stage for the action of the play: King Henry IV's side has just won the battle of Shrewsbury, crushing Hotspur and his rebel allies. "But what mean I to speak so true at first?" Rumor asks, "my office is to noise abroad that [Prince Hal] fell under the wrath of noble Hotspur's sword, and that the king before the Douglas' rage stoop'd his anointed head as low as death." He explains that he's rumored this false news throughout the land, reaching Northumberland (Hotspur's father) who is "crafty-**sick**." "Rumor's tongues," Rumor concludes, "bring smooth comforts false, worse than true wrongs."

Henry IV Part 2 *starts up right where* Henry IV Part 1 *left off: the Battle of Shrewsbury has just been fought, another chapter in King Henry IV's ongoing struggle against rebels to maintain his throne after he himself deposed Richard II (shown in the play* Richard II*). Rumor has, predictably, spread a false account of the battle's outcome rather than broadcasting the truth. Northumberland's feigned illness introduces the theme of disease.*

ACT 1, SCENE 1

At Warkworth castle, Lord Bardolph arrives and tells Northumberland that the rebels have won the Battle of Shrewsbury; Hotspur has slain Prince Hal; Douglas has killed the Blunts; Lancaster, Westmoreland, and Stafford have run away; and Falstaff has been taken prisoner. Bardolph has heard this news, he explains, from a well-bred gentleman he met on the road. At that moment, Northumberland's servant Travers returns from his own search for news: he's heard from a bloodied and harried gentleman that the rebels have been crushed at Shrewsbury. Bardolph tries to assure Northumberland that the man Travers got his news from was a dishonorable thief of a man who surely spoke lies.

Lord Bardolph's insistence that his, rather than Travers', account of the Battle of Shrewsbury is correct relies on an absurd presumption: that truth is more apt to be spoken from the mouths of the well-bred and grand than from the mouths of the lower-born and unkempt. As the audience well knows, the noble gentleman Lord Bardolph met was lying or mistaken. The bloody, messy state of the man Travers met on the road alludes to the grim and ugly violence of warfare.

Morton enters and Northumberland says he can tell just from Morton's facial expression that tragedy has come to pass for "the whiteness in thy cheek is apter than thy tongue to tell they errand." Northumberland assumes his son (Hotspur) and brother (Worcester) are dead. When Morton doesn't immediately contradict Northumberland's fears about Hotspur, Northumberland laments, "what a ready tongue suspicion hath! He that but fears the thing he would not know hath by instinct knowledge from others' eyes that what he fear is chanced." Still, he pleads with Morton to "tell thou an earl his divination lies, and I will take it as a sweet disgrace and make thee rich for doing me such wrong."

Northumberland's confidence that he can see the truth in Morton's face introduces a recurring motif of the Lies theme whereby characters presume (sometimes rightly, sometimes wrongly) that the body is able to depict more accurate images of the truth than the mouth is able to convey in words.

Morton finally conveys his news, though he apologizes for having to "force you to believe that which I would to God I had not seen." Hotspur has been slain by Prince Hal, Douglas and Worcester have been captured, and the rebel troops are all disbanded. King Henry IV's side is victorious and Lancaster and Westmoreland are currently leading troops towards Northumberland.

Telling the truth may be the "right" thing to do, but that doesn't mean it's pleasurable, for the teller or for the listener. Morton's painful truth telling introduces another ongoing motif of the play: the difficulty of moral rectitude and the discomfort of doing the "right" thing.

Northumberland replies that "in poison there is physic; and these news, having been well, that would have made me **sick**, being sick, have in some measure made me well." He seethes that his "limbs, weakened with grief, being now enraged with grief, are thrice themselves" and resolves to wreak bloody havoc in revenge for his son's death. Lord Bardolph and Morton coax Northumberland to restrain himself and keep his honor.

Northumberland's twisted logic intertwines the themes of Lies and Disease. An undesirable "sick" truth functions as a kind of steroid, swelling Northumberland's body with an empowering rage.

Morton reminds Northumberland that he knew the terrible odds Hotspur faced going into battle, that he'd been advised how dangerous the battle would be for his son, and that Northumberland had okayed the battle anyway. "[W]hat did this bold enterprise bring forth," Morton asks, "More than that being which was like to be?"

Morton advises Northumberland not to lie to himself: Northumberland knew, Morton reminds him, that the odds against Hotspur were never good. His son's death is just the fulfillment of what was always a likely outcome.

Morton informs Northumberland that the Archbishop of York is rallying more rebel troops against King Henry IV and that his troops will fight better than Hotspur's, for Hotspur's soldiers fought "with queasiness…as men drink potions," since the "word 'rebellion' did divide the action of their bodies from their souls." The Archbishop, by contrast, has convinced his troops to embrace rebellion as if it were "religion" and so his troops "[follow] both with body and with mind," convinced that they must avenge King Richard and save the "bleeding land, gasping for life" under King Henry IV's reign. Northumberland calls for everyone to begin preparing defenses and plotting revenge. All exit.

The Archbishop of York, a minor character in the previous play, will here emerge as one of the major actors in the struggle for King Henry IV's throne. Morton distinguishes between Hotspur's and the Archbishop's soldiers as between diseased and healthy men: where Hotspur's soldiers were "queasy" and drugged into combat, the Archbishop's are strong and self-motivated. The description of the land as "bleeding" introduces the frequent motif of England as a diseased nation, with a suggestion that the sickness began when Henry Bolingbroke became Henry IV by deposing the "rightful" king Richard II.

ACT 1, SCENE 2

On a London street, Falstaff asks his page what the doctor has said about Falstaff's urine. The page replies that the doctor said the urine itself was healthy, but that the man who produced the urine must be infested with myriad **diseases**.

Falstaff enters as a sick man seeking medical attention. His ailing health in this play stands in contrast to his robust heartiness in the previous play and forms a major tenet of the Disease theme.

Falstaff tells his page that, though many men may try to make fun of him, he himself is wittier than any of them. He then criticizes the page for being tiny, Prince Hal for being so young, and the tailor Dumbleton for demanding a guarantee of payment before making the new clothes Falstaff's ordered.

Mocking Prince Hal for being young, Falstaff introduces the theme of Time, much of which circles around issues of age and aging.

The Chief Justice enters and Falstaff identifies him as the man who imprisoned Prince Hal after the prince hit him during an argument. Falstaff at first pretends to be deaf. The Chief Justice calls Falstaff's bluff (saying he's only deaf to that which he doesn't want to hear) and Falstaff pretends to be concerned about the Chief Justice's health, saying he'd heard the Chief Justice was **sick**. Continuing to try to distract the Chief Justice, Falstaff says he's heard Prince Hal has gotten paralyzed and rants about all the diseases he's read about in Galen's medical text.

The Chief Justice epitomizes moral rectitude in this play and thus receives a fitting introduction through Falstaff's anecdote: the Chief Justice is not afraid to act honestly or to maintain the law even against royalty. Falstaff's fake deafness and mumbling about health issues carries on the theme of Disease, as well as the way he uses subterfuge to evade justice or the law. Falstaff's humorous actions make you root for him even as he evades the law. He is a kind of loveable scoundrel.


The Chief Justice will have none of Falstaff's nonsense and says Falstaff must be deaf since he hasn't reported to the judge's office when he's summoned him in the past and isn't listening now (Falstaff concedes that he has the **disease** of not listening, then continues to ramble on). The Chief Justice reminds Falstaff that he sent for him a long time ago and that he's charged with debt, corruption of Prince Hal, and the robbery at Gad's Hill. He says it's lucky for Falstaff that he fought in the Battle of Shrewsbury for he'd otherwise be in the stocks.

The piercing moral eye of the Chief Justice can see right through Falstaff's lies and he won't let the old man forget the truth about his crimes and vices no matter how much Falstaff tries to reinvent himself as a noble war hero. Falstaff's "disease" of not listening is not physical deafness but spiritual disregard for respecting society's ethical standards.


Falstaff accuses the Chief Justice of being too old to understand his youthful ways but the Chief Justice balks at Falstaff's claim to be young, elaborating the long list of Falstaff's physical attributes that prove he is old. He shakes his head at what a terrible influence Falstaff is on Prince Hal and observes that King Henry IV has separated Falstaff from the prince. Yes, Falstaff replies that he is leaving the prince and going off to war like the fearsome, noble soldier that he is. "Well, be honest, be honest," the Chief Justice advises Falstaff. Falstaff asks to borrow money, which the Chief Justice refuses, then exits.

Falstaff may try to act young but, as the Chief Justice points out, his ailing body betrays his agedness. Falstaff tries to rescue his dignity by resorting to another lie: his false persona as an honorable war hero.




Alone with his page, Falstaff laments that old age comes with greed like youth comes with lechery, thus the old suffer from gout just as venereal **diseases** plague the young. He asks his page how much money he has and, hearing he doesn't have much, laments "this consumption of the purse…the disease is incurable." He gives his page letters to deliver, one of which is for old Mistress Ursula, whom he has promised to marry every week since his hair first started graying. The page exits.

Falstaff's lament intertwines the themes of Time and Disease by attributing each stage of life its own spiritual and physical ailments. To be a spendthrift, as Falstaff points out, is to suffer from a spiritual sickness. Mistress Ursula is just one of the many women Falstaff lies to for his own advantage.

Alone on stage, Falstaff complains about the pain in his toe, which must be caused either by his gout or his venereal **disease**. It's a good thing, he reflects, that he's been to war, as he can claim his poor health is the result of battle wounds and demand a pension. "I will turn diseases to commodity," he decides, and exits.

Falstaff's speech compactly showcases his diseased body and spirit: as he suffers physical illness, Falstaff's sick spirit will try to profit from that illness by pretending he has fallen ill from noble actions rather than from vices.

ACT 1, SCENE 3

At the Archbishop's castle at York, the Archbishop is gathered with the other rebels Mowbray, Lord Marshall, Hastings, and Lord Bardolph to discuss their strategy against King Henry IV. They're still unsure whether Northumberland will send soldiers to strengthen their troops and Mowbray and Lord Bardolph argue that they should ensure they have a strong enough army before they charge into battle (after all, Hotspur got killed and lost the Battle of Shrewsbury because he recklessly launched war without enough soldiers).

The rebels' discussion presents the strategic, calculating side of warfare that takes place off the battlefield rather than the bloody, dramatic parts of warfare that occur in battle.

Arguing that they should launch their rebellion despite being uncertain about Northumberland's support, Hastings points out that King Henry IV's own troops are pretty weak, since he is also busy fighting in Wales and France and that the recent civil wars have bankrupted him.

The rebels' discussion continues to present warfare as something more than violent combat: here, war is described as a matter of economics, planning, and coordination.

The Archbishop determines that they should launch their rebellion. The English people, he says, are "**sick** of" King Henry IV. He then goes on to lambast the English for being a gluttonous, idiot dog, a "beastly feeder…so full of [Henry IV]" that it vomits the king, just as its "glutton bosom" once vomited King Richard, "and now thou wouldst eat thy dead vomit up." The past and the future always seem "best," the Archbishop reflects, and the present, "worst." All exit to prepare their troops.

The Archbishop's gruesome description of the English people crucially connects the themes of Disease and the Right to the Throne: in his metaphor, the English people are grossly sick, incapable of making healthy decisions about their leader. The Archbishop's explanation of people's dislike for the present is an important insight for the Time theme.

ACT 2, SCENE 1

In a tavern in Eastcheap, Mistress Quickly discusses her lawsuit against Falstaff with the officers Fang and Snare. She is taking legal action because Falstaff owes her a lot of money. Falstaff, his page, and Bardolph enter and, when Fang tries to arrest him, everyone gets involved in the ensuing skirmish.

Fed up with Falstaff's abusive dishonesty, Mistress Quickly hopes to enlist the moral rectitude of the law to punish the old man's immorality.

The Chief Justice enters. Mistress Quickly immediately tries to get the Chief Justice on her side, explaining that Falstaff has unfairly bankrupted her and has lied about promising to marry her. The Chief Justice shames Falstaff and insists that he pay Mistress Quickly back her due even as Falstaff protests that Mistress Quickly is a dishonorable madwoman and that he is too important to bother with her.

Morally upright as ever, the Chief Justice sees the truth of the situation and understands that Mistress Quickly is the victim of the case. Like Lord Bardolph in Act 1, Falstaff's protests rely on the faulty logic that only honorable people can speak truth.

Falstaff takes Mistress Quickly aside to talk matters over for a bit in private. In the meantime, Gower enters and gives the Chief Justice a letter. Falstaff and Mistress Quickly reenter in cheerful spirits. Falstaff has somehow persuaded Mistress Quickly to drop her suit, lend him even more money, and set him up with his favorite prostitute, Doll Tearsheet, that night.

Falstaff may be morally despicable, but he is undeniably appealing. Mistress Quickly's choice to embrace Falstaff's charms rather than the chilly rectitude of the Chief Justice plays out a recurring tension in the play: should one side with lovable immorality or unlovable morality?

Mistress Quickly, Fang, Snare, Bardolph, and the page exit. The Chief Justice talks with Gower about King Henry IV's plans for his troops, which he is marching up to join Lancaster's forces before they face off with the Archbishop of York and the rebels. The Chief Justice ignores Falstaff's repeated interjections to try to find out what's going on and reminds Falstaff that he should be recruiting soldiers as he's supposed to do instead of loitering about. All exit.

The Chief Justice continues to harbor no illusions about Falstaff: he knows that the old man has no real stake or place in the war and thus doesn't bother filling him in on any serious battle plans.

ACT 2, SCENE 2

In London, Prince Hal complains about being tired to Ned Poins, who replies that he thought princes were too well bred to get tired. Prince Hal reflects that it does indeed reflect poorly on his stature that he gets tired, as it does that he craves cheap beer. In fact, Hal goes on, his stature is diminished simply by knowing such a poor, badly dressed, whore-addicted lowlife as Poins. When Poins chides Hal for chattering on so light-heartedly while King Henry IV lies **sick**, Hal replies that it wouldn't be appropriate for him to air his grief while hanging out in such "vile company," but that his "heart bleeds inwardly." Besides, Hal points out, everyone would think Hal was a hypocrite if he showed his grief, since he's spent his life so publicly at odds with his father the king.

Hal's discussion with Poins elaborates on the Right to the Throne theme by laying out Prince Hal's conflicted relationship to his royal identity: though the prince is technically next in line to the throne, his high stature is debased by the company he keeps, by his own crass behavior, and by his lifelong antagonism towards his father the king.

Bardolph enters with Falstaff's page, who has a letter for Prince Hal from Falstaff. In the letter, Falstaff pretentiously affects the language of a noble, calling himself a knight and warning Hal against Poins, whom Falstaff claims is trying to trick the prince into marrying his sister. Poins is infuriated. Hal contrives a plot for him and Poins to spy on Falstaff's dinner with Doll Tearsheet that night by disguising themselves as drawers (waiters). The two of them make fun of Doll Tearsheet's promiscuousness, and Prince Hal observes that his disguising himself like a waiter is just like Jove disguising himself as a bull.

Prince Hal and Poins plan to punish Falstaff's lie—of pretending to be more noble than he is—with another lie, by disguising their identities. Comparing himself to the Greek god Jove, Hal alludes to the common contemporary belief that royalty was a divine right bestowed on a king and his progeny, as well as alluding to Jove's tendency to sometimes disguise himself when he visited mortals. Hal seems, then, to be implying that his disguising of himself does not diminish his native royalty or greatness, it just hides it.

ACT 2, SCENE 3

At Warkworth castle, Northumberland, Lady Northumberland, and Lady Percy are discussing Northumberland's plans to join forces with the rebellion. Against his wife's protests, he cites his need to uphold his word and honor. Lady Percy acidly points out that he didn't seem to care about breaking his word to his own son when he failed to deliver the supporting troops he'd promised to Hotspur at Shrewsbury. If it weren't for Northumberland's broken promise, Lady Percy points out, Hotspur would still be alive and she wouldn't be widowed. Northumberland is ashamed. Lady Northumberland suggests he run away to Scotland for now and can come back to assist the rebels once they're more organized. Northumberland reluctantly agrees.

Northumberland's discussion with his widowed daughter-in-law Lady Percy (who was the wife of Hotspur) connects the themes of Lies and Warfare, revealing that Northumberland's cowardly lying (to avoid involving himself in the Battle of Shrewsbury) resulted in grave military and personal consequences: the battle was lost and his son was killed. Yet Lady Percy's criticisms aren't enough to persuade Northumberland to join the rebels this time, as his wife's advice to protect himself by running away (along with the face-saving lie that he can always return) is what Northumberland agrees to.

ACT 2, SCENE 4

At the tavern in Eastcheap, Doll Tearsheet, Mistress Quickly, and Falstaff enter completely drunk and Falstaff makes fun of the women for being **diseased** prostitutes while the women make fun of Falstaff for being fat and a thief. Pistol enters with Bardolph and Falstaff's page. After lewdly insulting Doll Tearsheet, Pistol draws everyone into a messy brawl. Bardolph throws Pistol out and the women coo fawningly over Falstaff, sitting on his lap and promising to sleep with him later.

The scene is a pageant of vice and moral corruption (i.e. diseased spirits), but it's also a lot of fun. Again, the play presents a complex vision of immorality: it may be wrong, but it's certainly appealing. Falstaff, the most immoral character in the play, is also its most delightful.

Prince Hal and Poins enter, disguised as waiters. Not realizing that the prince and Poins are in the room, Falstaff starts ranting insults against the two of them, calling them stupid and shallow. Prince Hal says aside to Poins that they should beat Falstaff up in front of his beloved Doll Tearsheet. Doll Tearsheet and Falstaff nuzzle affectionately and she says she prefers him to all young men.

Falstaff's insults have some truth to them—Prince Hal and Poins do act rather foolishly and shallowly—but Falstaff will only utter this truth while he thinks the two men are out of earshot.

Prince Hal and Poins emerge, no longer in disguise, and Hal calls Falstaff out for having just insulted him in front of "this honest, virtuous, civil gentlewoman" Doll Tearsheet. Mistress Quickly chimes in earnestly that Doll Tearsheet is just as virtuous as Hal says. Hal says he's going to force Falstaff to confess to slandering the prince.

Hal accuses Falstaff of slanderous lies even as he himself performs a kind of inverse slander: by praising the immoral prostitute Doll Tearsheet for being "virtuous," he is in fact only mocking her. Mistress Quickly, though, is too slow-witted to get the joke.

Falstaff insists that he wasn't slandering Prince Hal at all, that he only "dispraised [Hal] before the wicked, that the wicked might not fall in love with thee; in which doing, I have done the part of a careful friend and a true subject." Well, Hal retorts, now Falstaff is slandering all his friends and companions just to save his case with the prince. Falstaff continues to elaborate insults for Bardolph, his page, Mistress Quickly, and Doll Tearsheet.

Falstaff's virtuosic eloquence makes him as good as ever at talking his way out of a pinch: here he uses perverse logic to demonstrate his innocence. Hal, nearly as witty as Falstaff, won't let his friend off the hook so easily and shifts his accusation to match Falstaff's shifted slanders.

Peto, a drinking buddy of Falstaff and Hal, enters and tells everyone that King Henry IV is in Westminster and that a dozen army captains are out looking for Falstaff. Prince Hal exclaims that he feels terrible for wasting "precious time" given the conflict developing in England and exits with Poins, Peto, and Bardolph, who enjoins Falstaff to leave with them, as all the army captains are looking for him. Falstaff tells the women to observe "how men of merit are sought after" while "the undeserver" can rest. Mistress Quickly and Doll Tearsheet tearfully bid Falstaff goodbye as he exits. From offstage, Bardolph calls Doll Tearsheet over to Falstaff. All exit.

Prince Hal's sudden remorse further demonstrates his conflicted royal identity: even as he obviously enjoys fooling around at the tavern, part of him feels he should be engaged in more serious matters. Falstaff, meanwhile, is incorrigible, and keeps on propagating the false image of himself as a worthy, noble warrior.

ACT 3, SCENE 1

At Westminster castle, King Henry IV can't sleep. He sends for the Earl of Surrey and Earl of Warwick and, alone onstage in his nightgown, soliloquizes about the difficulties of being king. While his poorest, lowliest subjects can enjoy gentle sleep, he, the king, is denied the pleasure of sleeping. "Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown," he laments.

Right after the fun, raucous tavern scene presents all the charms of immorality, King Henry IV's grim soliloquy catalogues the pains of morality: Henry tries to be a good, ethical king, but his rectitude has not brought him personal happiness. Neither has kingship, which raises the question not just of who has the right to be king but who would actually want to be king?

Warwick and Surrey enter and King Henry IV asks them if they "perceive the body of our kingdom how foul it is, what rank **diseases** grow and with what danger near the heart of it." Warwick tries to comfort him saying it is "but as a body yet distempered" whose "strength may be restored with good advice and little medicine."

Like the Archbishop of York, King Henry IV sees England and its people as a body permanently disfigured by grave ongoing disease. Warwick tries to cheer the king up by insisting that any diseases England might be suffering are only temporary, curable.

King Henry IV is inconsolable, and cries that the passage of time changes everything, setting off vast transformations by sheer chance. If "the happiest youth" truly realized the havoc that would be wreaked by time, he would "sit him down and die." The king thinks how recently Richard, Northumberland, Percy, and himself were all friends. He remembers a **prophecy** Richard once gave that Bolingbroke (Henry IV) would rise to the throne via Northumberland and that the sin of that action would "break into corruption." Indeed, the king concludes, that prophecy has come to pass.

King Henry IV's laments encompass critical concerns of the Time theme by describing time as a cruel, fatal opponent to human happiness—time always brings death. The king's anxiety about Richard II's long-ago prophecy demonstrates his faith in the power of prophecy, one aspect of the complex symbolic role that omens inhabit in the play.

Warwick assures King Henry IV that every man's life is a form of history and that studying that history enables men to predict the future with a degree of accuracy. Richard thus simply made an accurate guess—not a **prophecy**.

Warwick's rationalism and refusal to believe in prophetic power presents the omens symbol in another light. Prophets, he explains, are just ordinary people who have taken care to observe events over time.

King Henry IV says he's heard that the Archbishop and Northumberland's troops number fifty thousand soldiers. Warwick assures the king that "rumor, like an echo, doubles the size of our enemy's army" and that the rebels surely don't have so many troops on their side. He promises the king that his own troops are sufficient and shares the good news he's heard that Glendower is dead. Warwick begs him to get some rest, since his insomniac hours are only making his **sick** body sicker. The king agrees to go to bed, taking comfort in the idea of getting to go on his crusades once the civil war is over.

King Henry IV's and Warwick's conversation highlights another aspect of warfare: fear and rumor. As each side fears the other side's force, details get blown out of proportion. Warwick reminds the king (and the audience) that the king is not only sick of spirit (being depressed and anxious) but sick of body too. As in the previous play, King Henry IV dreams of engaging in foreign wars even as he loathes civil ones.

ACT 3, SCENE 2

At old Justice Shallow's estate in Gloucestershire, he and Justice Silence reminisce fondly about their rowdy youth as law students while the men they've gathered to join Falstaff's army—Mouldy, Shadow, Wart, Feeble, and Bullcalf—stand by. Shallow and Silence were friends back then with Falstaff, whom they are expecting to arrive soon. Bardolph enters followed shortly after by Falstaff, who greets them and prepares to assess the army recruits the justices have rounded up for him.

The aged judges' fond reminiscences about their youth elaborate the theme of Time by presenting another image of old age.

Shallow and Silence present Mouldy, Shadow, Wart, Feeble, and Bullcalf, each of whom tries to contrive an excuse about why he can't serve in the army. Bullcalf claims to be "**diseased**," having caught a cold while celebrating the king's coronation. Falstaff enlists them all, making fun of their names and ignoring their excuses. He then has a drink with the justices and the three reminisce about their youthful escapades. Falstaff, Shallow, and Silence exit to dinner.

A pageant of lies: the recruits make up dishonest excuses within the framework of Falstaff's thoroughly dishonest recruiting strategy. Bullcalf's (probably made-up) cold that he says he caught at King Henry IV's coronation ceremony strikes a comic chord in the ongoing motif of a diseased England.

Bullcalf, Mouldy and Feeble give Bardolph bribes to buy their way out of serving in the army. Falstaff, Shallow, and Silence reenter. Bardolph whispers to Falstaff about the bribes. Shallow asks Falstaff which four men he'll pick for his army, encouraging him to choose Bullcalf, Mouldy, Feeble and Shadow, but Falstaff refuses them all and ignores Shallow's advice that those four are the most able men. "Care I for the limb, the thews, the stature, bulk, and big assemblance of a man? Give me the spirit," Falstaff insists. He picks the scrawny Wart and Shadow, professes satisfaction, and bids the justices farewell. Shadow and Silence exit, and Bardolph leads the recruits away.

Falstaff's dishonest plot plays out (to his own profit) and, as usual, he has an elegantly articulate argument prepared to defend his moral standing. His duplicity perverts the military values of camaraderie and patriotism into myopic selfishness.

Alone on stage, Falstaff vows that he'll expose Shallow and Silence as frauds when he returns. "Lord, how subject we old men are to this vice of lying," he reflects, noting how the two justices now reminiscing about their wild youths were in fact back in those days they brag about nothing but nerdy weaklings, insatiably horny and pathetically out of touch with the times. Well, Falstaff reflects, perhaps he'll befriend Shallow upon his return in order to take advantage of his wealth. Falstaff exits.

Falstaff's own prodigious dishonesty may make him particularly good at noticing the lies of others. His condemnation of the justices connects the themes of Lies and Time: the aging human memory itself is a liar, he explains, tricking old people into aggrandizing their youths.

ACT 4, SCENE 1

The Archbishop, Mowbray, and Hastings gather in Gaultree Forest. The Archbishop reveals that he's gotten a chilling letter from Northumberland explaining that he's gone to Scotland to raise the troops he unfortunately wasn't able to raise in England. A messenger enters to inform the men that the enemy troops are fast approaching and look thirty thousand men strong. Westmoreland enters and conveys Lancaster's greetings, then asks the Archbishop why such a noble, peaceful man of the church is involving himself in "base and bloody insurrection."

Having feigned illness to dodge the Battle of Shrewsbury, Northumberland makes up another lie to again avoid joining the rebels. War, Westmoreland's question implies, is a crude, distasteful action and inappropriate to such a noble, respectable man as the Archbishop.

The Archbishop, replies, "we are all **diseased**, and with our surfeiting and wanton hours have brought ourselves into a burning fever, and we must bleed for it; of which disease our late King Richard, being infected, died." He himself, the Archbishop continues, is neither a doctor nor an enemy of the peace. Instead, he's putting on a show of war in order to get people to give up their vices and clear the "obstructions which begin to stop our very veins of life." He has considered matters very carefully and concluded that their grievances outweigh any harm they might cause by going on the offense, leaving them no choice but rebellion since King Henry IV has refused to listen to their grievances. They don't want to break the peace, the Archbishop concludes, they merely want to establish a better peace.

The Archbishop is almost as elaborate and cunning an excuse-maker as Falstaff. Here, he blames his individual actions on a national disease of the spirit plaguing everyone in England. He and the rest of the rebels consider their military rebellion defensive—to protect themselves from what they see as an illegitimate king—rather than offensive, the way King Henry IV and his side see it. At heart of the debate is what makes a king legitimate, as Henry IV deposed Richard II not simply for reasons of ambition but because many were unhappy with Richard.

Westmoreland balks at the Arcbishop's claim that King Henry IV has denied the rebels his attention and protests that the rebels have no legitimate cause to raise rebellion. He and Mowbray bicker about whether Mowbray deserves any recompense for the long-ago exile of his now-deceased father, Norfolk, during King Richard's reign. Back then, Henry IV—who was still Bolingbroke at the time—accused Norfolk of treason, leading to his exile. Though, as Westmoreland points out, Henry IV has restored all of Norfolk's old land to Mowbray, Mowbray still blames Henry IV for his father's death and wishes that King Richard hadn't called off the duel that had been scheduled between Norfolk and Bolingbroke, since Norfolk would have won. Westmoreland scoffs at the claim, reminding Mowbray that Bolingbroke was strappingly strong back then and fiercely beloved by all Englishmen.

Westmoreland articulates King Henry V's side's perspective on the rebellion: that it is an unprovoked and inappropriate attack, and not the well-meaning defense the rebels claim it is. Westmoreland and Mowbray's intricate, petty argument demonstrate how absurd and complex the tensions surrounding King Henry IV's throne have become and also shows how differently time (history) is remembered by different characters.

Westmoreland steers the conversation back towards the present and informs the rebels that Prince John of Lancaster will happily hear their grievances and do his best to negotiate peace. Mowbray gripes that Lancaster is only being politically savvy by agreeing to listen to the rebels once the rebels threaten war. Westmoreland retorts that Lancaster's mercifulness is thoroughly genuine and not motivated by fear. He takes the Archbishop's list of grievances and exits to deliver it to Lancaster. Mowbray keeps grumbling but the Archbishop and Hastings insist that things are looking up, that the king's side is exhausted and will indeed negotiate peace with them. Westmoreland returns and summons the rebels to meet personally with Lancaster between the two camps.

Note Westmoreland's insistence on the genuineness of Lancaster's generosity towards the rebels. Mowbray's and the Archbishop's and Hastings' respective unwillingness and willingness to accept the prince's peace offering represent two different emotional strategies in war: never trust any compromise made by the enemy, or trust that all good faith offers will be upheld, even by an enemy.

The Archbishop, Mowbray and Hastings proceed to their meeting with Lancaster. Lancaster chides the Archbishop, a devoted man of God, for turning against the king, God's "substitute." Again, the Archbishop protests that he longs for peace but has no choice but to rebel, given the circumstances.

Through Lancaster's scolding, the play again alludes to the common contemporary belief that a king's throne was a god given right.

Lancaster tells the rebels that he has accepted all their grievances, swearing "by the honor of my blood" that it's all just a misunderstanding, and that King Henry IV will redress them immediately as long as the rebels disband their troops. The Archbishop says, "I'll take your princely word for these redresses." "I give it you, and will maintain my word," Lancaster replies. Hastings orders the rebel troops disbanded. The rebels, Lancaster, and Westmoreland drink happily together. Hastings briefly exits and returns to announce that the rebel troops are all disbanded and merrily heading home.

Note Lancaster's doubly reiterated insistence that he is telling the truth. The Archbishop and rebels, in turn, trust that his words are true because they believe that the prince's noble royal standing vouches for his honesty. Thus the play once again presents characters who equate nobility with moral rectitude.

Hearing this news, Westmoreland immediately arrests Hastings, the Archbishop, and Mowbray. "Is this action just and honorable?" Mowbray asks. "Was your rebellion just and honorable?" Westmoreland replies. The Archbishop accuses Lancaster of breaking his faith. Lancaster retorts that he never swore his faith, he merely promised to redress the rebel's grievances, which he is now doing in the best possible way. The rebels are getting, he claims, exactly what they deserve, and sends them off to execution. He calls for his troops to capture the disbanding rebels. "God, and not we, hath safely fought today," Lancaster exclaims. All exit.

Lancaster's betrayal of the rebels is one of the most shocking moments in the play and shows just how cruel and cold "doing the right thing" can seem. Indeed, Lancaster's defense of his betrayal—that he is simply acting to protect the throne and the English people, that the rebels were scheming criminals and thus don't deserve to be well-treated—may make moral sense, but it nevertheless feels ruthless and inhumane.

ACT 4, SCENE 2

Battle trumpets sound. Falstaff and the rebel Coleville enter and meet one another. Falstaff pronounces that Coleville will soon be imprisoned. As soon as Coleville realizes he's facing Sir John Falstaff, he surrenders. Lancaster, Westmoreland, and Blunt enter and Lancaster accuses Falstaff of dragging his heels to avoid action as usual. Falstaff protests that he's been moving as quickly as his old body allows him, then rambles on pompously about his courage and heroic acts, pointing to his prisoner Coleville as evidence and comparing himself to Julius Caesar. Lancaster ignores Falstaff and sends Coleville off to be executed. All exit but Falstaff.

Falstaff's deceptions—pretending to be a grand war hero, making up excuses to avoid fighting—are immoral, but they nevertheless possess a charm and warmth that Lancaster's cold morality in the prior scene lacked. Again, the play offers a complicated portrait of the contradictions between morality and selfishness, corruption, and pleasure.

Alone on stage, Falstaff gives a speech about wine: Lancaster is too serious and doesn't like him, but it's no wonder because the young prince doesn't drink wine. Boys who don't drink wine always turn out anemic, girlish, foolish, and cowardly. Boys who do drink wine grow valiant and strong, like Prince Hal who owes his courage to wine consumption (not to his father King Henry IV, who is, Falstaff claims, a coward). If Falstaff has sons, he resolves, he'll make sure they "addict themselves to sack." Falstaff exits, planning to stop off at Shallow's to swindle him out of some money before heading home.

Falstaff's perverse reasoning links the themes of Lies and Disease by attributing Prince Hal's robust health to an unhealthy drinking habit.

ACT 4, SCENE 3

In the palace in London, King Henry IV lies **sick** in bed. He asks his son Humphrey Duke of Gloucester about Prince Hal and Humphrey replies that Hal is out hunting. The king then asks his other son Thomas Duke of Clarence why he isn't accompanying his brother Hal. Prince Hal, Thomas admits, is accompanied by Poins and his tavern pals. Hearing this, the king grows enraged, furious at his son's lowlife company and despairing over England's inevitable ruin once it is ruled by Prince Hal. Warwick pipes up to defend Hal, explaining that the king underestimates his son, that the prince associates with lowlife scoundrels simply to study them and thus prepare to be a better ruler. King Henry IV is unconvinced by Warwick's claims.

King Henry IV's ailing and diseased body focuses the theme and symbol of Disease. The king and Warwick have opposite perspectives on Prince Hal's right to the throne. For the king, Prince Hal's behavior automatically renders him unworthy of the crown. For Warwick, Prince Hal's admittedly un-royal behavior could in fact be part of a perfectly defensible ruling strategy.

Westmoreland arrives and conveys the news of Lancaster's victory over the Archbishop, Mowbray, and Hastings. Harcourt arrives and conveys the news that Northumberland and Lord Bardolph have been defeated too. King Henry IV wonders "wherefore should these good news make me **sick**?...I should rejoice now at this happy news" but "am much ill," and faints.

If it seemed possible that King Henry IV's disease was simply due to stress about his kingdom, there is no possibility of such an explanation now. Even after hearing that his throne is safe, the king's body continues to sicken.

As King Henry IV lies unconscious, Clarence and Gloucester discuss the grim **omens** that have plagued the kingdom recently: babies conceived without fathers or born horribly deformed; erratic seasons and weather; flooding rivers. "The old folk, time's doting chronicles," say that the last time the land was riddled with such omens was when the princes' great-grandfather King Edward died. King Henry IV regains consciousness and is carried to bed.

The truth or falsity of omens remains an ongoing question (and symbol) in the play. Whereas Falstaff described the old as lying fools, the princes describe the old as venerable historians.

Prince Hal enters and, hearing King Henry IV is bedridden, says he'll sit with his father while his father sleeps. Clarence, Gloucester, and Warwick leave the two of them along. Seeing the crown lying on the pillow beside his father, Hal calls it "polished perturbation, golden care" that prevents the king from ever sleeping as soundly as a lowly commoner. Noticing that a feather by his father's mouth isn't moving, Prince Hal assumes his father is dead and says that he owes his father grief and tears, which his filial love will pay in plenty. His father, in turn, owes him his crown, which Hal places on his head, reflecting that the strongest arm in the world wouldn't be strong enough to wrest it off him. Then he, in turn, will pass it onto his own son. Hal exits.

The crown itself, Prince Hal's musings suggest, is a kind of ailment, damaging the health of anyone who wears it. England's throne was traditionally passed down from father to his eldest son, thus Prince Hal becomes king once his father dies.

King Henry IV wakes and cries out for Clarence, Gloucester, and Warwick, who enter. Hearing that Prince Hal has been sitting with him and noticing the crown gone, the king concludes that his son is nothing but a greedy murderer, eager for his father to die so that he might inherit his wealth and power. Warwick insists that Hal is a loving son and reports that he's been sobbing in the next room. Prince Hal enters and everyone else exits.

King Henry IV's anger reveals some of the anxieties and frustrations experienced by a king towards his eldest son: he wonders whether his son would prefer him dead so that he could reign in full power. At the same time, the ridiculousness of the misunderstanding instills some comedy into the grave scene and turns King Henry IV from stately monarch to a frustrated dad.

King Henry IV accuses Prince Hal of wishing him dead. "O foolish youth," he exclaims, "Thou seek'st the greatness that will overwhelm thee" and, in stealing the crown, has simply stolen a right that would have been freely given to Hal a half an hour hence, for Henry is almost dead. Prince Hal's theft has simply confirmed King Henry IV's expectations: Prince Hal has never loved his father and may as well be a murderer, so much has he longed for his father's death. Rising to become King Henry V, Prince Hal will render England a foolish, lazy, indecorous, drunken, frolicsome, thieving, murderous, criminal wilderness where "the wild dog shall flesh his tooth on every innocent. O my poor kingdom," Henry cries, "**sick** with civil blows!"

Prince Hal's action has filled King Henry IV with despair on two accounts: first, the king is devastated because he feels his son never loved him and was more interested in inheriting his father's power than in preserving the old king's life; second, the king is heartbroken by the thought of the disordered shambles his kingdom will be thrown into under the wild reign he imagines his son will hold over England.

Prince Hal cries out for King Henry IV's pardon, handing back the crown and swearing his enduring allegiance to his father. Hal explains that, thinking his father was dead, he was wracked with grief and had spoken to the crown to upbraid it for being "worst of gold" and, where other precious things "[preserve] life in medicine potable" the crown "has eat thy bearer up." Hal explains that he put on the crown, then, to fight against it, the enemy who murdered his father, and derived no joy or delight from it for himself.

Again, Prince Hal describes the crown in terms of disease, comparing it to a parasite that eats away at its host. He describes his action not as the cruel usurpation his father believed it to be but as a heartfelt effort to protect his father against threat.

Moved by his son's speech, King Henry IV forgives Prince Hal and imparts his final advice lovingly: "God knows, my son," he says to the prince, "By what bypaths and indirect crook'd ways I met this crown, and I myself know well how troublesome it sat upon my head," but its blemished acquisition will be buried with King Henry IV and the crown will sit much more firmly and easily on Prince Hal's head. Still, he warns Prince Hal to be wary of civil unrest and of the rebels that have plagued King Henry IV's entire reign. The best way to ensure peace in the Prince Hal's reign will be to launch crusades abroad, so people don't have enough idle time to grow restless, nurture grudges, and turn traitorous at home: "busy giddy minds with foreign quarrels; that action…may waste the memory of former days." Prince Hal promises to protect the crown to the best of his ability.

Even as he has defended his throne against the rebels, King Henry IV's dying words reveal that he, too, had doubts about his right to the crown. After all, if the throne is given to someone by God, then what right did Henry have to depose Richard II, no matter what Richard's sins might have been. Still, he believes that his turning over that crown to Prince Hal will bury the tensions of the past—that a "clean" inheritance of the throne will wipe away the "messiness" of his own ascension to the throne. His military advice to his son—to pursue foreign wars in order to distract his subjects from dwelling in past grudges and fomenting unrest—is highly problematic, of course, as it completely disregards the value and rights of foreign peoples, even as it suggests throwing away the life of common soldiers as a way to maintain power.

Lancaster and Warwick enter to bid King Henry IV last farewells. The king asks what the name of the room where he fainted was and, hearing it's named "Jerusalem," marvels at the unexpected fulfillment of a long-ago **prophecy** that he "should not die but in Jerusalem, which vainly I supposed the Holy Land." He asks to be carried into that room to die. All exit.

King Henry's long held aspiration to launch crusades looks even more questionable after this revelation: the king was motivated, it seems, not by religious faith but by the childish desire to fulfill a personal prophesy.

ACT 5, SCENE 1

Falstaff, Falstaff's page and Bardolph have arrived at Justice Shallow's estate in Gloucester where the justice is trying to coax them into staying for dinner while simultaneously attending to details of various legal and financial matters presented to him by his servant Davy. For one of these cases, Davy begs Justice Shallow to rule in favor of his friend William Visor. Justice Shallow protests that Visor is an "arrant knave" with many suits against him, but Davy insists that it doesn't matter what Visor is, it only matters that Davy, the justice's loyal servant for eight years, is making a request: "if I cannot once or twice in a quarter bear out a knave against an honest man, I have a very little credit with your Worship," Davy protests. Justice Shallow agrees to rule in Visor's favor. Davy exits. Justice Shallow exits, leading Bardolph and Falstaff's page into the estate.

Justice Shallow's behavior reveals that he doesn't possess the Chief Justice's moral rectitude: whereas the Chief Justice acts according to ethical principles regardless of the parties involved, Justice Shallow allows himself to be persuaded by Davy into favoring the guilty Visor instead of Visor's innocent victims. The Chief Justice would likewise never agree with Davy's reasoning that loyal servants deserve immoral favors from their masters.

Alone on stage, Falstaff mocks Justice Shallow. His servants, watching him, become "foolish justices" while he among them becomes "a justice-like servingman." Falstaff reflects "that either wise bearing or ignorant carriage is caught, as men take **diseases**, one of another. Therefore let men take heed of their company." He thinks happily of how he will make Prince Hal buckle with laughter by telling stories about the justice. "O, it is much that a lie with a slight oath" can do, Falstaff observes. Falstaff exits.

Falstaff likens behavior and personality to a kind of disease that is contagious to those around it. With his usual lack of qualms about honesty, Falstaff plans to fudge the details of his account of Justice Shallow (to add "a lie" to the true "oath" of the story) in order to make Prince Hal laugh. Though notice also how much Falstaff seems to care for and love Hal.

ACT 5, SCENE 2

At the palace in London, Warwick informs the Chief Justice that King Henry IV is dead. The Chief Justice says he wishes he, too, were dead, for Prince Hal so loathes him that his life under the new king will be hell. Lancaster, Clarence, and Gloucester enter. Warwick wishes Hal was more like his brothers Lancaster and Clarence. The princes express their condolences to the Chief Justice for losing his friend, the king, and for having to face his inevitably grim new life under Prince Hal. The Chief Justice replies that he will always act with "truth and upright innocency," or else die.

Although the Chief Justice dreads the bad treatment he is convinced he'll soon receive from a resentful Prince Hal, he nevertheless stands true to his morals and his unyielding commitment to honesty. Unlike Falstaff, he doesn't plan to try to wiggle out of anything.

Hal, now King Henry V, enters and, seeing his brothers' nervous expressions, tells them he understands sorrow at King Henry IV's death but that they shouldn't be worried about his rise to the throne. He'll rule with fatherly and brotherly love and will make them happy. Looking around and still seeing many anxious faces, King Henry V singles out the Chief Justice, whose face looks most anxious of all and confronts him about the "great indignities" the justice has made him suffer in the past.

As Northumberland could read the truth off of Morton's face, so too can King Henry V perceive his brothers' thoughts through their mute expressions. The princes are, of course, as worried as the Chief Justice that King Henry V will rule with wild immoderation and force everyone to suffer at his hand. King Henry V, though, claims otherwise.

The Chief Justice responds that he always acted according to the law and as the representative of King Henry IV, whose power was vested in him. When Prince Hal broke the king's laws, he punished the prince accordingly. The Chief Justice asks King Henry V to imagine if one of his future sons breaks the laws, whether he'll want to let a disrespectful son of his spurn his officers and make light of his authority.

Ever truthful, the Chief Justice does not try to suck up to the newly crowned King Henry V, but instead speaks honestly about his past actions and asks the king to consider those actions rationally.

King Henry V replies that the Chief Justice was absolutely right to have behaved as he did and that he's going to keep him on in his court. He asks the Chief Justice to be as bold and just with his sons in the future as he was with him in the past. Addressing everybody, King Henry V says that his past behavior has been buried with King Henry IV: "the tide of blood in me hath proudly flowed in vanity till now. Now doth it turn and ebb back to the sea…and flow henceforth in formal majesty…And let us choose such limbs of noble counsel that the great body of our state may go in equal rank with the best governed nation." All exit.

King Henry V's response to the Chief Justice articulates the moral rebirth that Prince Hal always claimed to be working towards in secret. Here, King Henry V is the fair and upright ruler he promised to become. His description of England again likens the nation to a human body, but this time the body, no longer diseased, is strengthening and regaining health. It is almost as if Henry V has fabricated his own rebirth—from immoral, unhealthy youth to moral, righteous king, as a way to illustrate or embody the rebirth of England that he hopes to enact under his rule.

ACT 5, SCENE 3

At Justice Shallow's estate in Gloucestershire, Falstaff, Bardolph, Justice Silence and Justice Shallow eat, drink, and joke around, making bawdy jokes and giddily toasting one another. Falstaff's page and Davy attend them. Pistol arrives and announces the news that King Henry IV has died and King Henry V reigns. Overjoyed, Falstaff immediately prepares to ride off to London, exclaiming that everyone will have their pick of office in the new court for "[t]he laws of England are at my commandment." He hurries to leave, sure that "the young King is **sick** for me."

In Falstaff's mind, King Henry V will be no different than his old friend Prince Hal: which is to say, immoral, fun loving, and quick to hand out favors to his friends. And Falstaff himself plans to bestow these favors on his own friends.

ACT 5, SCENE 4

On a London street, two beadles arrest Mistress Quickly and Doll Tearsheet, saying that the women have been involved in several murders. The women struggle violently. Doll Tearsheet claims to be pregnant and warns the beadles that they will cause her to miscarry. The beadles accuse her of stuffing her dress with cushions to feign a pregnancy. The beadles say that the man the women and Pistol beat is now dead. Doll Tearsheet demands to be brought to a judge. All exit.

A strange interlude. Though there has been no prior allusion to Mistress Quickly and Doll Tearsheet's murders, the scene may be intended to emphasize a tightening of the law under King Henry V. If Prince Hal was endlessly indulgent of these women's dishonest vices, King Henry V is not.

ACT 5, SCENE 5

Grooms strew rushes on another London street in preparation for King Henry V's coronation procession. Falstaff, Justice Shallow, Pistol, Bardolph, and Falstaff's page stand excitedly in the crowds waiting to see the new king. Falstaff wishes he'd had time to have new clothes made, but convinces himself that his ragged, travel-worn appearance will just show how eager he was to see the prince and how deep his devotion to him is. Pistol informs Falstaff that Doll Tearsheet has been arrested and Falstaff says he'll set her free.

Falstaff's made-up story about his clothes is technically a lie, but it's made in the spirit of tenderness and compassion for his friend, Prince Hal, and makes the old man seem more, not less, lovable.

King Henry V enters with the Chief Justice and Falstaff shouts "my sweet boy!" "my heart!" trying to get his attention. King Henry V asks the Chief Justice to speak to "that vain man." The Chief Justice is shocked to hear the king refer to his old friend this way and asks if he knows what he's saying. King Henry V then turns to Falstaff himself and says, "I know thee not, old man…How ill white hairs become a fool and jester. I have long dreamt of such a king of man, so surfeit-swelled, so old, and so profane; but being awaked, I do despise my dream." He tells Falstaff "the grave doth gape for thee thrice wider than for other men." He declares that he has "turned away my former self" and hereafter banishes the "misleaders" that used to keep him company, forbidding them from coming within ten miles of his person on pain of death. He instructs the Chief Justice to carry out this restraining order. King Henry V and the Chief Justice exits.

King Henry V's turn against Falstaff is the most painful moment in the play. As with Lancaster's turn against the rebels, the action is morally correct while still managing to feel devastatingly cold and cruel. In one sense, King Henry V has become the upright, ethical ruler that is making the best choice for England. In another sense, King Henry V has become an inhumane jerk, insulting Falstaff's appearance and age and showing no concern for his longtime friend.

Falstaff reassures Justice Shallow and the others not to get upset at King Henry V's behavior. "I shall be sent for in private to him," Falstaff explains, "he must seem thus to the world. Fear not your advancements." Justice Shallow, though, wants Falstaff to pay him back a thousand pounds he's borrowed from him immediately, since he doubts Falstaff's going to be coming into the plum position that Falstaff was so sure of receiving under the new king. Falstaff says he can't pay the debt now, but he gives his word to pay it later. He reiterates that King Henry V's words were "but a color," a passing pretense, and cajoles his friends to come to dinner with him.

Though Falstaff is still trying to hold onto his prior assumptions about King Henry V's reign, his claims sound defensive and hollow and Justice Shallow certainly doesn't trust them. Falstaff seems suddenly old, suddenly weak, and his eloquence no longer sustains him—he cannot lie away this new truth that Henry V has brought into being.

The Chief Justice enters with Lancaster and officers and order Falstaff and his friends arrested. Falstaff, Justice Shallow, Falstaff's page, Bardolph, and Pistol are taken offstage by the officers. Lancaster expresses approval for King Henry V's behavior. The king has ensured that his old friends will be well provided for, he says, but has banished them till they can "appear more wise and modest to the world." He notes that the king has called his parliament to order and predicts that they will be invading France within the coming year. They exit.

Lancaster's clarification on Falstaff and company's banishment—that King Henry V has made sure to ensure their safety, even as he has exiled them—seems designed to redeem King Henry V in the eyes of the Falstaff-loving audience and make the king's morality seem warm, and not just ruthlessly moral.

EPILOGUE

The epilogue enters, apologizes for the inadequacies of the play, and says he'll make up for the lousiness of the play by performing a dance to entertain the audience. He promises that Falstaff's story will be picked up again in the next play, which will also include King Henry V's future wife Katherine. He promises, too, that Falstaff is not based on the historic Sir John Oldcastle, for Falstaff will "die of a sweat" in France whereas Oldcastle died a martyr. He exits.

The "truth" of Falstaff's character was a sticky issue in Shakespeare's day. The character was based on a real-life man, John Oldcastle (in fact, "Falstaff" was originally "Oldcastle" in the play), but Oldcastle's relatives were understandably upset by the portrait and this epilogue seems written to assuage their anxieties.

HOW TO CITE

To cite this LitChart:

MLA

Ross, Margaret. "*Henry IV Part 2*." *LitCharts*. LitCharts LLC, 9 Jun 2014. Web. 21 Apr 2020.

CHICAGO MANUAL

Ross, Margaret. "*Henry IV Part 2*." LitCharts LLC, June 9, 2014. Retrieved April 21, 2020. https://www.litcharts.com/lit/henry-iv-part-2.

To cite any of the quotes from *Henry IV Part 2* covered in the Quotes section of this LitChart:

MLA

Shakespeare, William. Henry IV Part 2. Simon & Schuster. 2006.

CHICAGO MANUAL

Shakespeare, William. Henry IV Part 2. New York: Simon & Schuster. 2006.