

SHAKESPEARIENCE!

© 2017 Shakespearience

Henry the Fourth, Part One

CHARACTER/ACT BREAKDOWN

KEY CHARACTERS:

Henry IV...*King of England*

Prince Hal...*son of King Henry*

Henry (Harry) Percy...*also called Hotspur, son of the Earl of Northumberland*

Sir John Falstaff...*a coward, thief, wit and friend to Prince Hal*

Owen Glendower...*a Welsh chieftan and rebel The King Henry*

Edmund Mortimer...*a rebel against the king*

Earl of Douglas...*a Scottish rebel against the king*

ACT ONE:

The play opens with King Henry IV planning a holy crusade to Jerusalem to atone for the murder of King Richard II, but his plans are interrupted by reports of war on England's borders.

Owen Glendower has defeated an English army and captured it's commander, Edmund Mortimer.

Happier news arrives, however...in Scotland, the young Hotspur has the upper hand against the Earl of Douglas, a great Scottish soldier. King Henry is VERY pleased with Hotspur's smarts and ferocity, especially given his own son Hal has been up to no good – displaying disreputable behavior. The young men are the same age, but while Hotspur defends England and wins fame and glory, Hal is off partying with the lowlifes of London...particularly Sir John Falstaff.

Turns out that Hotspur is not quite as perfect as Henry thinks...he violates custom by refusing to turn over to the king his Scottish prisoners of war. You see, Hotspur wants ransom money for Mortimer, and the king will not pay. Mortimer is Hotspur's brother in law (his wife, Kate Percy's brother), so naturally he feels strongly

about the issue.

Hotspur's friends and relatives try to reason with him, but he won't budge, earning his nickname.

Although Hotspur helped King Henry gain the throne, he now believes that Mortimer is the rightful heir to the throne. He plans to return to Scotland, this time as an ally against King Henry and England.

ACT TWO:

Falstaff and other friends of Hal rob some pilgrims who are on their way to Canterbury. While enjoying their spoils and loot, Hal and another of his friends disguise themselves and surprise Falstaff and the others, who run away in fear.

To Hal, this is a game. He knows that Falstaff will greatly exaggerate what happened, and he looks forward to having some fun at Falstaff's expense.

Meanwhile, Hotspur prepares for war. He is extremely determined, so much so that his wife Kate is awakened regularly by him talking about battle in his sleep.

The king calls for Hal, and he must answer the royal summons.

ACT THREE:

The rebels count their chickens before the eggs are laid, let alone hatched. They have divided England into three parts: the West for Glendower and the Welsh, the South for Mortimer, and the North for Hotspur.

Hotspur annoys Glendower by quibbling over boundaries, but finally they come to a shaky agreement.

They have not even begun the battle, but are fighting amongst themselves about who will have what when they have won.

Meanwhile, Hal reports to his father, who dresses him down for his wanton behavior. In fact, he repeatedly compares him with Hotspur...the father to son classic of "why can't you be more like so and so...".

Hal apologizes and promises to show his true self on the battlefield.

ACT FOUR:

The rebel army is having problems, even though the battle has not begun:

The Earl of Northumberland (Hotspur's dad) is ill and cannot march with the army to battle.

Glendower and the Welsh army are detained and it will be another 14 days before they can join the main forces.

The rebel army also learns that King Henry has mobilized a very large army...Hotspur (true to his name, again) welcomes the fight.

Falstaff must lead the others into battle, as must any knight...he gathers 150 soldiers who are unfit for battle, somewhat like himself.

Following the forms of warfare and rebellion, the king sends a demand of Hotspur to know specifically why he is rebelling against the king. Hotspur replies that Henry overstepped his bounds by deposing Richard and taking the throne himself; then he refused to ransom Mortimer. Hotspur thinks that Henry is unsuited to be the King of England.

ACT FIVE:

So, Hotspur has sent the Earl of Worcester as his representative to the king. Hal offers a compromise, instead of outright civil war, single combat between he and Hotspur. Henry also offers to pardon the other lords and all who would fight against their king.

Worcester does NOT bring this offer back to Hotspur for fear that he would take it...this is because he doesn't trust Henry's generous offers of amnesty. He fears that, in time, Henry would find ways to take revenge on the rebels. Instead, Worcester lies and tells Hotspur that the king wants the battle.

In the battle, many lords and knights dress as the king to confuse the rebels. Douglas kills several of them, each time thinking that he has killed the king. Hal also distinguishes himself in battle, although wounded and bleeding, he refuses to retire until the battle is won.

Finally, Douglas finds the REAL king and they fight. Douglas gets the upper hand, but Hal rescues his father. Douglas retreats,

but Hotspur enters and he and Hal FINALLY battle one on one. Meanwhile, Falstaff and Douglas meet and fight, until Falstaff falls over and pretends to be dead.

Hal kills Hotspur and goes to report his triumph, however, Falstaff gets up and finds the body... he carries it back to the king so that he can claim to have killed Hotspur.

Hal has matured and has come to show his true nobility... In response to Falstaff's false claims, he calmly tells the truth. He also frees the Scottish prisoner, Douglas. He shows himself to be the true prodigal son, courteous and righteous.