



# HENRY IV

## PART ONE

### STUDY NOTES

## Module B: Critical Study of Literature

In this module, students develop detailed analytical and critical knowledge, understanding and appreciation of a substantial literary text. Through increasingly informed and personal responses to the text in its entirety, students understand the distinctive qualities of the text, notions of textual integrity and significance.

Students study one prescribed text. Central to this study is the close analysis of the text's construction, content and language to develop students' own rich interpretation of the text, basing their judgements on detailed evidence drawn from their research and reading. In doing so, they evaluate notions of context with regard to the text's composition and reception; investigate and evaluate the perspectives of others; and explore the ideas in the text, further strengthening their informed personal perspective.

Students have opportunities to appreciate and express views about the aesthetic and imaginative aspects of the text by composing creative and critical texts of their own. Through reading, viewing or listening they critically analyse, evaluate and comment on the text's specific language features and form. They express complex ideas precisely and cohesively using appropriate register, structure and modality. They draft, appraise and refine their own texts, applying the conventions of syntax, spelling and grammar appropriately.

Opportunities for students to engage deeply with the text as a responder and composer further develops personal and intellectual connections with the text, enabling them to express their considered perspective of its value and meaning.

There will be one question which will require a sustained response.

### Section II — Module B: Critical Study of Literature

**20 marks**

**Attempt Question 2**

**Allow about 40 minutes for this section**

These questions are examples of the types of questions that may be asked in Section II. This is NOT a sample paper.

Your answer will be assessed on how well you:

- demonstrate an informed understanding of the ideas expressed in the text
- evaluate the text's distinctive language and stylistic qualities
- organise, develop and express ideas using language appropriate to audience, purpose and form

#### Example A (20 marks)

Falstaff has been labelled as one of 'nature's predators'.

Write an extended response in which you challenge or affirm this view regarding Falstaff in Shakespeare's *King Henry IV, Part 1*.

## 1 Henry IV: Sources

Shakespeare relied heavily upon Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (2nd edition, 1587) in constructing *Henry IV, Part I*. The Furness Shakespeare Library has an online facsimile of the *Chronicles (Henry IV)*, and, in particular Holinshed's account of Henry IV. But Shakespeare also used the epic poem *The Civil Wars Between the Two Houses of York and Lancaster*, written in 1595 by the English dramatist, poet, court writer, and diplomat, Samuel Daniel. Although it cannot be classified as a source per se, it is clear that Shakespeare also relied upon the doctrine of Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527), as found in his masterpiece, *The Prince*. The changes that Shakespeare made reflect a theme common throughout all his history plays: a monarch's license to rule is not based simply on his or her divine right of succession, but also on his or her ability to shoulder the responsibility that comes with divine appointment -- to lead the people wisely, placing the welfare of the nation above personal desire.

Shakespeare tells us that, after Bolingbroke has seized the crown, he feels it necessary to voyage to the Holy Land to wash the blood off his guilty hands (*Richard II*, V.vi.45-55). But Holinshed reports that Henry went on a crusade only during the final year of his reign, and there is no mention of why Henry decides to leave, other than to destroy the infidels. While it is obvious that Henry feels remorse for his actions, it is not likely that this is the sole motivation for his sojourn abroad. His true reason for leaving is better seen in his speech which opens *Henry IV, Part I*:

*So shaken as we are, so wan with care,  
Find we a time for frighted peace to pant,  
And breathe short-winded accents of new broils  
To be commenc'd in stronds afar remote.  
No more the thirsty entrance of this soil  
Shall daub her lips with her own children's blood . . .  
Those oppos'd eyes/Which like the meteors of a troubled heaven,  
. . . Did lately meet in the intestine shock  
And furious close of civil butchery,  
Shall now in mutual well-beseeming ranks  
March all one way . . .(I.i.1-15)*

Henry may be remorseful for usurping the throne and ordering the murder of Richard, but his method of penance seems to be too charged politically for guilt to be the main reason for his actions. Henry is using the crusade as a way "to busy giddy minds with foreign quarrels" (*Henry IV, Part II*, IV.v.213). "The crusade will serve . . . to calm the political passions which he has himself exploited . . ." (Derek Traversi, *Shakespeare: From Richard II to Henry V* [Stanford: 1957], p.51), and it might serve as the foundation for a solid reign. In this instance, the connection to Machiavelli is striking:

*Nothing enables a ruler to gain more prestige than undertaking great campaigns . . . In our own times Ferdinand of Aragon, the present King of Spain is a notable example. . . This man attacked Granada at the beginning of his reign, and this campaign laid the foundations of his state. First of all, he began the campaign . . . when he was not afraid of being opposed: he kept the minds of the barons of Castile occupied with that war . . . and, meanwhile, he was acquiring prestige. . . Moreover, he continued to make use of religion, resorting to a cruel and apparently pious policy of . . . hunting down the Moors . . . he [also] attacked Africa; he invaded Italy; and recently he has attacked France.(Machiavelli, p.77)*

Henry is the archetypal Machiavellian ruler, and his attempt to wage a crusade is sheer brilliance according to Machiavellian doctrine. However evident Henry's abilities are in the above passage, no scene in the play illustrates Henry's political astuteness better than when Henry confronts his son, Hal, in *Henry IV, Part I*. The basis of this scene comes from Holinshed. He writes that the tales Henry had heard about Hal "brought no small suspicion into the king's head, least his son would presume to usurp the crown . . ." (Holinshed, p.154). It is then reported that they reconcile. Shakespeare, building upon this historical reconciliation, includes a speech by Henry who describes how he achieved power:

*Opinion, that did help me to the crown,  
Had still kept loyal to possession,  
And left me in reputeless banishment,  
A fellow of no mark nor likelihood.  
By being seldom seen, I could not stir  
But like a comet I was wondered at;  
That men would tell their children 'This is he.'  
Others would say, 'Where? Which is Bolingbroke?'  
And then I stole all courtesy from heaven,  
And dressed myself in such humility*

*That I did pluck allegiance from men's hearts . . . (III.ii.42-52 )*  
*. . . The skipping king, he ambled up and down,*  
*With shallow jesters, and rash bavin wits,*  
*Soon kindled, and soon burnt, carded his state,*  
*Mingled his royalty with cap'ring fools . . .*  
*Enfeoff'd himself to popularity [low company] . . .*  
*So when he had occasion to be seen . . .*  
*. . . seen, but with such eyes*  
*As sick and blunted with community,*  
*Afford no extra gaze,*  
*Such as is bent on sun-like majesty,*  
*When it shines seldom in admiring eyes . . . (III.ii.60-78)*

The key reason why Henry's political abilities are essential to govern successfully is given in the above passage. Henry, because of his desire to keep the favor of the common people, will perform any action, and assume any persona. It does not matter if he is insincere, as long as he conveys the right sentiment to the people, as long as he appears "merciful, trustworthy, upright, humane, and devout" (Machiavelli, p.63). He understands that "the common people are impressed by appearances . . . [and that] everywhere the common people are the vast majority and the few are isolated when the majority and the government are at one." (Machiavelli, p.63). His political sophistication, i.e. his awareness of the necessity of the people's support, will lead him to make decisions based on what will benefit the state and the common men and women, unlike Richard, "the skipping king", who turns a blind eye to the needs and wants of his subjects, and repeatedly makes foolish decisions based on envy, avarice, and gullibility. The contrast between the characteristics of a good versus a bad ruler, outlined in *The Prince*, can apply directly to Richard II and Henry IV as presented in the tetralogy: "one is considered . . . effeminate and weak, another indomitable and spirited; one affable, another haughty; one lascivious, another moderate; one serious, another frivolous . . ." (Machiavelli, p.55). It should be noted that, as Lily B. Campbell points out, in Holinshed's *Chronicles*, after Henry comes to the throne, he seems to lose his political savvy, and incurs the wrath of many subjects:

*But yet to speake a truth, by his proceedings, after he had attained to the crowne, what with such taxes, tallages, subsidies, and exactions as he was constrained to charge the people with . . . [the people] did sundrie times rebell against him, he wan himself more hatred . . . than had been possible for him to haue weeded out and removed . . .*  
*"(Holinshed, p.157).*

In *Henry IV, Part I*, however, Shakespeare does not indicate that Henry has lost his rapport with the common people, or his political sophistication. In the play a handful of his nobles rebel, but it is because they are power hungry, not because Henry is an ineffectual ruler. Moreover, while the play does not mention any of the political mistakes Henry makes in Holinshed's *Chronicles*, there are several instances in the play that support the claim that Henry has not lost his abilities as a competent and intelligent leader. In the play, Shakespeare places more emphasis on Henry's role in crushing the rebellion at the end of *Henry IV, Part I* than does his sources. In Holinshed, Henry is whisked away by the Earl of March, who "perceiving [Hotspur's] purpose, withdrew the king from that side of the field" (Holinshed, p.146) so that he would be safe. But, in the drama, Henry IV is at the front, in command, and ready to fight alongside his son Hal. Henry IV has the final word in *Henry IV, Part I*, assuring us that he himself will see to it that the rebels are subjugated:

*Myself and you, son Harry, will towards Wales,*  
*To fight with Glendower and the Earl of March.*  
*Rebellion in this land shall loose his sway,*  
*Meeting the check of such another day,*  
*And since this business so fair is done,*  
*Let us not leave till all our own be won. (Henry IV, Part I, V.iv.39-44)*

Henry's mastery of the Machiavellian rules on successful leadership is what would enable him to be the consummate monarch if it were not for his illegitimacy.

Usurping the crown is the cause of Henry IV's troublesome rule. Not only does the crime plague his thoughts, but it seems to have cursed his reign with rebellion, and tainted future generations. In Holinshed's *Chronicles*, the Bishop of Carlisle gives a speech before parliament in support of Richard as he does in *Richard II*. Holinshed reports that Carlisle "a man both learned and wise, and stout of stomach, boldly shewed forth his opinion concerning that demand; affirming that there was no amongst them worthy to meet of give judgment upon so noble a prince as King Richard . . . (he said) there is not so rank a traitor, nor so errant a thief [than Bolingbroke] . . . I say, that the duke of Lancaster, whom ye call king, hath more trespassed to King Richard than King Richard hath doone . . . to

him . . . (Holinshed, p.116). Carlisle's outrage is clear in the *Chronicles* and passage bears great resemblance to Carlisle's speech in the play. However, Shakespeare adds the following dialogue:

*My Lord of Hereford here, whom you call king,  
Is a foul traitor to proud Hereford's king.  
And if you crown him, let me prophesy,  
The blood of England shall manure the ground  
And future ages groan for this foul act. . . .  
Disorder, horror, fear, and mutiny  
Shall here inhabit, and this land be call'd  
The field of Golgotha and dead men's skulls.  
O, if you raise this house against this house,  
It will the woefullest division prove  
That ever fell upon this cursed earth. (Richard II, IV.i.135-148)*

In the drama, Carlisle does not only oppose Henry's assent to the throne, he prophesies that England shall pay dearly for crowning Henry. Once again we see a reflection of Tudor doctrine that warns against rebellion, with disturbers of the social order about 'to disinherit their innocent children and kinsman their heirs forever.' (*Sermons*, p.511). The houses Carlisle refers to are those of Lancaster and York, and the trouble their division brings is the War of the Roses. But this will have the effect of dividing the larger 'house' which is England herself, and therefore, Carlisle's words are also reminiscent of the biblical teaching found in Mark, 3.25: "And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot continue/And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot continue."

It is not just the future generations that will suffer as a result of the usurpation. Henry's reign itself will be plagued with disorder, despite his political abilities. In a meeting with Northumberland, not found in any of Shakespeare's sources, Richard warns that "The time shall not be many hours of age/More than it is, ere foul sin gathering head/ Shall break into corruption. Thou shalt think/though he divide the realm and give thee half/It is too little, helping him to all." (V.i.57-60). Richard's prophesy is accurate. Those nobles that helped Henry to the throne who 'knowest the way to plant unrightful kings/ wilt know again' and they will turn on Henry as Henry turned on Richard.

The rebellion of Henry's allies in *Richard II* comes early in *Henry IV, Part I*. Henry's plans to travel to the Holy Land are interrupted by the trouble brewing at home. While it is true that these men all have personal reasons for rebelling, we cannot help but think that there is divine guidance at work, fulfilling Richard's prophesy, causing Henry's reign to be tumultuous. The structure of the plays certainly supports this theory. Richard II died in 1400, and Shakespeare ends *Richard II* with Henry just beginning his reign. But at the start of *Henry IV, Part I*, it seems that no time has passed since the death of Richard. The excursion to the Holy Land is still in Henry's mind, and the action seems to take up right where it left off in *Richard II*. However, in the sources, it is reported that the opening scene in the play occurred years after Henry obtained the crown. Henry, in the drama, is immediately faced with the rebellion prophesied in *Richard II* once he takes office, and this subsequently gives a greater credibility to the idea that the rebellion is more a divine punishment than a simple, typical uprising that could happen to any king at any time.

In addition to the external trouble he faces as king, Henry IV has to face his inner distress and guilt over his crime of usurpation. In a scene unique to Shakespeare, we see King Henry in his nightgown, unable to sleep, lamenting that 'uneasy lies the head that wears the crown.' (IV.v.31) This scene exemplifies the mental state of Henry. He is depressed, afraid, and suspicious of everyone, even his son. His disturbed conscience is most likely a result of ordering the murder of another human being, but it also stems from his realization that he does need the divine right to rule – a truth that he ignored on his journey to power. His mental unrest is due to the guilt he feels over usurping a crown intended only for those who are ordained by God through the law of primogeniture. If Henry had lived much longer, it seems likely that his mental state, which is a direct result of being illegitimate, would have destroyed him, and inevitably hindered his decision-making abilities, which would have been bad for England.

Because he is not the rightful heir to the throne, Henry's reign is tainted with disorder, both civilly, and in his own mind, and these problems hurt the nation and the people – this is why Henry fails as king. Without this necessary license to govern, it seems likely that, no matter how many rebellions Henry could defeat, that many more would arise as part of his divine punishment. Although he is a strong, intelligent leader, and has all the savvy and sophistication needed to have a successful rule if that were the only criteria, that fact that he is illegitimate hinders his ability to be the perfect monarch.

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“Yea, there thou makest me sad and makest me sin  
In envy that my Lord Northumberland  
Should be the father to so blest a son,  
A son who is the theme of honour's tongue;  
Amongst a grove, the very straightest plant;  
Who is sweet Fortune's minion and her pride:  
Whilst I, by looking on the praise of him,  
See riot and dishonour stain the brow  
Of my young Harry. O that it could be proved  
That some night-tripping fairy had exchanged  
In cradle-clothes our children where they lay,  
And call'd mine Percy, his Plantagenet!  
Then would I have his Harry, and he mine.  
But let him from my thoughts. What think you, coz,  
Of this young Percy's pride? the prisoners,  
Which he in this adventure hath surprised,  
To his own use he keeps; and sends me word,  
I shall have none but Mordake Earl of Fife.”

**Henry IV** [Act I, Scene I, 77 – 94]



“I am not yet of Percy's mind, the Hotspur of the north; he that kills me some six or seven dozen of Scots at a breakfast, washes his hands, and says to his wife 'Fie upon this quiet life! I want work.' 'O my sweet Harry,' says she, 'how many hast thou killed to-day?' 'Give my roan horse a drench,' says he; and answers 'Some fourteen,' an hour after; 'a trifle, a trifle.' I prithee, call in Falstaff: I'll play Percy, and that damned brawn shall play Dame Mortimer his wife.”

**Prince Hal** [Act II, Scene IV, 88 – 95]



I will redeem all this on Percy's head  
And in the closing of some glorious day  
Be bold to tell you that I am your son;  
When I will wear a garment all of blood  
And stain my favours in a bloody mask,  
Which, wash'd away, shall scour my shame with it:  
And that shall be the day, whene'er it lights,  
That this same child of honour and renown,  
This gallant Hotspur, this all-praised knight,  
And your unthought-of Harry chance to meet.  
For every honour sitting on his helm,  
Would they were multitudes, and on my head  
My shames redoubled! for the time will come,  
That I shall make this northern youth exchange  
His glorious deeds for my indignities.

**Prince Hal** [Act III, Scene 2, 132 – 146]



“Anow my whole charge consists of ancients, corporals, lieutenants, gentlemen of companies, slaves as ragged as Lazarus in the painted cloth, where the glutton's dogs licked his sores; and such as indeed were never soldiers, but discarded unjust serving-men, younger sons to younger brothers, revolted tapsters and ostlers trade-fallen, the cankers of a calm world and a long peace, ten times more dishonourable ragged than an old faced ancient: and such have I, to fill up the rooms of them that have bought out their services, that you would think that I had a hundred and fifty tattered prodigals lately come from swine-keeping, from eating draff and husks. A mad fellow met me on the way and told me I had unloaded all the gibbets and pressed the dead bodies.”

**Falstaff** [Act IV, Scene II, 20 – 32]



Why, then I see

A very valiant rebel of the name.

I am the Prince of Wales; and think not, Percy,

To share with me in glory any more:

Two stars keep not their motion in one sphere;

Nor can one England brook a double reign,

Of Harry Percy and the Prince of Wales.

**Prince Hal** [Act V, Scene IV, 60 – 66]

