

THE DUBUQUE SHAKESPEARE PROJECT

at the Carnegie Stout Library, Dubuque, IA

Winter 2025

MAKING OF A LEADER

Henry IV – Part 1

Synopsis: The usurper Bolingbroke from Richard II is now Henry IV and is beset with external and internal threats. The rebels led by The rebels led by erstwhile ally Northumberland and his son 'Hotspur' join forces with the Welsh Glendower posing the external threat. The crown prince Hal is meanwhile carousing in disreputable Eastcheap in the company of the dissolute Falstaff, drinking and thieving while his father King frets and worries.

Discussion Topics:

- Fathers and sons in various combinations occupy a central role in Henry IV-1. King Henry and Hal, Falstaff and Hal, Henry Percy and Hotspur are some the pairings. How does Shakespeare develop themes of paternal influence through multiple pairings?
- Beyond father-son pairings, the play consistently emphasizes familial relationships both in the King's circle and between the rebels. One of the few women's roles is Kate Percy, a brilliantly sketched character that matches her husband Hotspur. How does Shakespeare employ these characters and relationships to comment on how the political becomes personal?
- If the play can be considered as a 'coming of age' play for Prince Hal, two outsize figures dominate the play: Falstaff and Hotspur. During the Battle of Shrewsbury, Hal pays tribute to both. How do these larger-than-life figures inform the themes of the play, especially Honor?
- The Eastcheap of the Henriad plays is an almost mythical place bursting with colorful characters and dominated by the bulky Falstaff. What roles do Eastcheap and Falstaff play in the story of Hal and how do they create their own narrative?

Folger Text Link: <https://www.folger.edu/explore/shakespeares-works/henry-iv-part-1/>

Kanopy Film link: <https://www.kanopy.com/en/product/5332684?vp=dubuque&frontend=kui>

Other resources to consider:

The Hollow Crown, 2012 BBC series, Ep. 2 (Jeremy Irons as Henry IV)

My Own Private Idaho, 1991 Gus Van Sant film inspired by HIV

Chimes at Midnight, 1965 Orson Welles film centered on Falstaff

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