

# Henry IV, Part Two

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## INTRODUCTION

2 *Henry IV*, printed in 1600 as *The Second Part of Henry the Fourth*, was not reprinted until it was included in somewhat revised form in the 1623 Folio, with the same title. Shakespeare may have started to write it late in 1596, or in 1597, directly after 1 *Henry IV*, but have laid it aside while he composed *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. As in 1 *Henry IV*, he drew on *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth*, Holinshed's *Chronicles*, and Samuel Daniel's *Four Books of the Civil Wars*, along with other, minor sources; but the play contains a greater proportion of non-historical material apparently invented by Shakespeare.

Like 1 *Henry IV*, Part Two draws on the techniques of comedy, but its overall tone is more sombre. At its start, the Prince seems to have regressed from his reformed state at the end of Part One; his father still has many causes for anxiety, has not made his expiatory pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and is again the victim of rebellion, led this time by the Earl of Northumberland, the Archbishop of York, and the Lords Hastings and Mowbray. Again Henry's public responsibilities are exacerbated by anxieties about Prince Harry's behaviour; the climax of their relationship comes after Harry, discovering his sick father asleep and thinking him dead, tries on his crown; after bitterly upbraiding him, Henry accepts his son's assertions of good faith, and, recalling the devious means by which he himself came to the throne, warns Harry that he may need to protect himself against civil strife by pursuing 'foreign quarrels'±±the campaigning against France depicted in *Henry V*. The King dies in the Jerusalem Chamber of Westminster Abbey, the closest he will get to the Holy Land.

In this play the Prince spends less time than in Part One with Sir John, who is shown much in the company of Mistress Quickly and Doll Tearsheet at the Boar's Head tavern in Eastcheap and later in Gloucestershire on his way to and from the place of battle. Shakespeare never excelled the bitter-sweet comedy of the passages involving Falstaff and his old comrade Justice Shallow. The play ends in a counterpointing of

major and minor keys as the newly crowned Henry V rejects Sir John and all that he has stood for.