



King Henry IV, Part 1 (Arden Shakespeare: Third Series) (Pt. 1)

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David Scott Kastan lucidly explores the remarkable richness and the ambitious design of *King Henry IV Part 1* and shows how these complicate any easy sense of what kind of play it is. Conventionally regarded as a history play, much of it is in fact conspicuously invented fiction, and Kastan argues that the non-historical, comic plot does not simply parody the historical action but by its existence raises questions about the very nature of history. The full and engaging introduction devotes extensive discussion to the play's language, indicating how its insistent economic vocabulary provides texture for the social concerns of the play and focuses attention on the central relationship between value and political authority. Kastan also covers the recurrence of the word "honor" in the text and the role that women play. Appendices provide the sources of *Henry IV*, discussions of Shakespeare's metrics, and the history of the manuscript. The appendix on casting features a doubling chart to show which characters may be played by one actor. Photographic images of the original Q0 Fragment, which is assumed to have been printed in Peter Short's printing house in 1598, appear in the fifth appendix. Finally, a reference section provides a list of abbreviations and references, a catalog of Shakespeare's works and works partly by Shakespeare, and citations for the modern productions mentioned in the text, other collated editions of Shakespeare's work, and other related reading.

The Arden Shakespeare has developed a reputation as the pre-eminent critical edition of Shakespeare for its exceptional scholarship, reflected in the thoroughness of each volume. An introduction comprehensively contextualizes the play, chronicling the history and culture that surrounded and influenced Shakespeare at the time of its writing and performance, and closely surveying critical approaches to the work. Detailed appendices address problems like dating and casting, and analyze the differing Quarto and Folio sources. A full commentary by one or more of the play's foremost contemporary scholars illuminates the text, glossing unfamiliar terms and drawing from an abundance of research and expertise to explain allusions and significant background information. Highly informative and accessible, Arden offers the fullest experience of Shakespeare available to a reader.

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