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Henry IV, Part 2

William Shakespeare · *c. 1597 · original English text*

The rebellion staggers on, the sick king cannot sleep, and Falstaff still hears the chimes at midnight—until a new king, coming from the coronation, says 'I know thee not, old man.' This second part completes the education begun in Henry IV, Part 1: a crown uneasily worn, and a friendship put away.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

Can Hal become Henry V without rejecting the man who taught him the chimes at midnight, and what does a crown cost the head that wears it?

"I know thee not, old man. Fall to thy prayers."

King Henry V · Act V, Scene V, after the coronation

The rebels are put down by a trick as well as by arms; the old king dies having seen his son take the crown from a pillow and then justify the taking. Falstaff, expecting a joke to become a pension, is publicly refused. The refusal is policy and also a wound: 'Presume not that I am the thing I was.' Shakespeare does not make the rejection easy to cheer or easy to condemn. Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown—and uneasy, too, is the friend sent to the Fleet.

KEY CHARACTERS

Prince Hal / King Henry V
The son who completes his turn from Eastcheap to the crown, at a visible cost to fellowship.

King Henry IV
The sick usurper, sleepless under a crown he took from Richard.

Sir John Falstaff
The companion of the chimes at midnight, who cannot believe the joke has ended.

The Lord Chief Justice
A measure of law the new king chooses to keep.

Justice Shallow and Prince John
Country memory and cold policy: two sides of the England Hal inherits.

CHIMES AT MIDNIGHT

> *"Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown."*
> **King Henry IV** · Act III

> *"I know thee not, old man. Fall to thy prayers."*
> **King Henry V** · Act V

Grades 10–12
Read the full text free at classicslaunch.org.

01

Rumour, and a War Not Finished

ACT I

False report runs ahead of the truth. Northumberland, the Archbishop, and the remaining rebels measure their cause against a king who is already ill.

- The induction of Rumour is a warning about news and panic.
- Hotspur is dead, but the fire is not out.
- England is tired, and the king is more tired than England.

02

Eastcheap and Gloucestershire

ACTS II–III

Falstaff recruits, sponges, and idles toward Shallow's orchard. The king, sleepless, names the price of the crown.

- 'We have heard the chimes at midnight, Master Shallow' is companionship and a life already past.
- The recruiting scenes are comic and cruel about who is sent to war.
- 'Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown' is the sick king's inscription on the whole Henriad.

> *"Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown."*
> **King Henry IV** · Act III, Scene I

03

Gaultree

ACT IV, THE REBEL CAMP

Prince John meets the rebel leaders with an offer of redress, then arrests them once the army is dismissed. The victory is cold.

- The stratagem raises a moral question the comedy will not dissolve.
- John's policy is effective and hard to love.
- The play is preparing a king who can also be hard.

04

The Crown on the Pillow

ACT IV, THE KING'S BEDCHAMBER

Hal takes the crown from his sleeping father, thinking him dead, and is accused of hunger for it. The reconciliation that follows is one of the play's great scenes.

- The son's grief and the father's suspicion have both to be spoken.
- Counsel about foreign war is already the next reign's policy.
- Henry IV dies having passed more than a piece of gold.

05

The Old Man

ACT V

Falstaff rides in, sure of favor. The new king, in state, cuts him off and turns him to prayer. The epilogue promises more, and a different kind of play.

- 'God save thee, my sweet boy!' is answered by a public sentence.
- The Chief Justice is retained: law, not Eastcheap, will stand next the throne.
- 'How ill white hairs becomes a fool and jester!' is this text's wording—becomes, not become.

> *"We have heard the chimes at midnight, Master Shallow."*
> **Falstaff** · Act III, with Justice Shallow

A Crown's Cost | Friendship Ended | Rule and Law | Time Passing | Policy and Trickery

What to watch for as you read

GRADES 10–12

1. The hosted text is the original English of Project Gutenberg #1518. Read this with the already mapped Henry IV, Part 1 and Henry V: the rejection of Falstaff is the hinge.
2. Exact: "I know thee not, old man. Fall to thy prayers." And: "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown." And: "We have heard the chimes at midnight, Master Shallow."
3. This text has "How ill white hairs becomes a fool and jester!" (becomes, not become). Quote the form you have.
4. Also exact: "Presume not that I am the thing I was;" and "I have turn'd away my former self;"
5. The Gaultree ruse and the public shaming of Falstaff are moral problems, not only plot mechanics. Do not tidy them into a simple 'Hal grows up'.

Quotations are verbatim from the original English text, Project Gutenberg #1518, the public-domain text hosted at classicslaunch.org/works/henry-iv-part-2/. Citations give book and chapter (or canto and line) so every line can be checked.