

## SOCIAL BETWEEN FAMILY AND DUTY: SHAKESPEARE’S *HENRY IV, PART 1*, AS A REFLECTION OF THE MEDIEVAL ENGLISH DYNASTY DISPUTES

### AİLE VE GÖREV ARASINDA: ORTA ÇAĞ İNGİLİZ HANEDANLIK ANLAŞMAZLIKLARININ BİR YANSIMASI OLARAK SHAKESPEARE’İN “*IV. HENRY, 1. BÖLÜM*” ADLI OYUNU

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#### Abstract

English history has long been shaped by its royal dynasties and families whose lives have always been a topic of interest for historians, literary critics, and more. Their lives today are the main point of interest in magazines, but history records their decision, family relationships, and disputes as important as the politics of that nation and country. Shakespeare was a favourite writer of Queen Elizabeth I, and his history plays were also popular in his time. He depicted the struggles of the houses of the dynasties: Tudors, Plantagenets, and Stuarts. His play *Henry IV, Part 1*, stages the problems, conflicts, and tensions between royal families, houses, and political responsibility within the framework of medieval English sovereignty. The tense, dramatic narrative that unfolds in King Henry IV’s relationship with his son, Prince Hal, and the challenge to royal authority posed by the Percy Rebellion, interrogates questions of legitimacy and rule, the burdens monarchs carry, as well as the personal costs to their pursuit of empire. It argues that by situating King Henry VI within the historical context of the War of the Roses and the ensuing turmoil following King Henry VI’s deposition, Shakespeare imbues family squabbles with broader aspects of succession, legitimacy, and the struggle to maintain power. The article suggests that the play is not only a study of individual character but also a literary criticism of dynastic rivalry that agitated Tudor England.

**Key Words:** Tudor historiography, Shakespeare, *Henry IV, Part 1*, Medieval Dynasty, Legitimacy, Kingship.

#### Öz

İngiliz tarihi, tarihçiler, edebiyat eleştirmenleri ve daha fazlası için her zaman ilgi konusu olan kraliyet hanedanları ve aileleri tarafından etki altında kalmıştır. Bugün hayatları dergilerin ana ilgi odağı olsa da, tarih onların kararlarını, aile ilişkilerini ve anlaşmazlıklarını o ulusun ve ülkenin siyaseti kadar önemli olarak kaydetmektedir. Shakespeare, Kraliçe I. Elizabeth’in en çok değer verdiği yazardı ve tarih oyunları da o dönem popülerdi. Tudorlar, Plantagenetler ve Stuartlar gibi hanedanların mücadelelerini tasvir etti. *Henry IV, Part 1* adlı oyunu, Orta Çağ İngiliz egemenliği çerçevesinde kraliyet aileleri, hanedanlar ve siyasi sorumluluklar arasındaki sorunları, çatışmaları ve gerilimleri sahneye taşıyor. Bu oyun, iktidarın meşruiyetini, egemenliğin yüklerini ve hanedanlık hırslarının bedelini sorgulayan, Kral IV. Henry ile oğlu Prens Hal arasındaki gerilimli ilişkinin yanı sıra Percy Ayaklanması’nın kraliyet otoritesine meydan okuyuşunu ortaya koyuyor. Bu makale, II. Richard’ın tahttan indirilmesinin ardından başlayan ve Güllerin Savaşı’nın tarihsel zemininde şekillenen istikrarsızlık bağlamında eseri konumlandırarak, Shakespeare’in bu çatışmayı, varislik, meşruiyet ve iktidarın sürdürülebilmesi için kaçınılmaz görünen ahlaki uzlaşımın konularındaki daha geniş endişeleri yansıtmak üzere kullandığını savunmaktadır.

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Böylece bu eser, bireysel karakter incelemesinden çok, Orta Çağ ve erken Tudor İngilteresi'ni rahatsız eden hanedan içi çatışmaların döngüsel doğasına dair bir yorum olarak öne çıkar.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Tudor Tarihi, Shakespeare; *IV. Henry, 1. Bölüm*, Orta Çağ Hanedanlıkları, Meşruiyet, Krallık.

## Introduction

*Henry IV, Part 1* (1597?) is a history play written by William Shakespeare (1564-1616), listed in the First Folio and performed in 1597 (Mowat, 1994, p. x). The play is the second part of a Shakespearean tetralogy, which comprises the plays *Richard II*, *Henry IV, Part 1*, *Henry IV, Part 2*, and *Henry V*. The play is a sequel to *Richard II* and continues the story begun in *Henry IV, Part 2*. The play has two main plots: one follows the rebellion against King Henry IV, and the other follows the adventures of Prince Hal (The Future King Henry V) with Falstaff and others in the London slums. The plots intersect at Prince Henry's court, the court of King Henry IV, and then at the battlefield in Shrewsbury. The play is about the riots that Henry Hotspur started against Henry IV. It ends with the Battle of Shrewsbury, in which Hotspur was killed, and Henry V, the future and popular king of England, made his debut on the battlefield and in court politics. The play, in general, portrays the family relationships among the royal families in England during the reign of King Henry IV, specifically around the years 1402 and 1403. The source for *Henry IV, Part 1*, and for his other histories was the second edition of Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles* (1587), and others include Edward Hall's *The Union of the Two Illustrious Families of Lancaster and York* and Samuel Daniel's poem *Civil Wars* (1595), which is about English history (Mowat, 1994, p. xx). The text of the play is believed to have been written before 1597, as there are numerous references to Shakespeare's Falstaff in the diaries, comments, and books of that time (Weil & Weil, 1997, p. 4).

When Richard II was deposed from power in 1399, a radical change had occurred in the medieval English political order. The idea of the king as the supreme ruler with divine rights and a reflection of God on earth was replaced by a balance of military conquests, interventions from other powerful lords, and parliamentary attempts. The controversy of illegitimacy marked the era of Henry IV. This was both a legal issue and an emotional one for the public viewpoint. Rebellions occurred across the country, and prophecies of divine retribution circulated widely that the killing of Richard II and the usurpation of power would be punished. This instability caused the English dynastic conflicts known as the Wars of the Roses. In this conflict, the Plantagenets (who are the Houses of Lancaster and York) fight for the throne through bloodshed and alliances. By the time Shakespeare wrote *Henry IV, Part 1*, the Tudor dynasty had consolidated its power. However, the memory of civil war remained vivid in the public's mind and the minds of courtiers. Elizabethan historiographers, such as Raphael Holinshed, whose *Chronicles* served as Shakespeare's primary source, framed earlier conflicts as divine punishment for the original sin of Richard's deposition. This is a common narrative that Shakespeare both adopts and complicates for theatrical effect, exploring the uncertainties of power. Thus, the play presents an altered Tudor history and memory, utilizing the past to caution against contemporary political vulnerability.

In Shakespeare's version, King Henry IV presents a tragic paradox of a ruler whose authority is both necessary and naturally doubtful. His opening lament in the play "so shaken as we are, so wan with care," instantly considers kingship not as triumph but as a burden. The kingship is poisoned by guilt over Richard II's murder and undermined by constant rebellion inside the country, enflamed by the houses and dynasties. Unlike Richard, whom his followers believed was led by God and divine intervention, the new king, Henry, must rely on his work, rhetoric, and military force to establish his authority. Shakespeare's play is a form of political theatre that highlights the fragility of noble dissent and uprisings. The play interrogates the most popular medieval political doctrine, the divine right of kings, with a pragmatic alternative. Henry governs not solely by God's grace, but through uneasy alliances and strategic violence. This tension resonates with 15th-century concepts of a mixed rule, featuring a parliament or a privy

council alongside an absolute monarchy. Shakespeare, however, portrays Henry's legitimacy as not being inherited from his birth or his house, but as continually at risk and in question.

According to E. M. W. Tillyard, the most distinguishing feature of the Shakespearean history play is its deep commitment to the Elizabethan order, which is evident through the resolution of a disorder in the monarchy – a rebellion, royal family conflicts, or a conflict within the royal family (1944, pp. 15-18). Another issue is that Shakespeare wrote his history plays in sequence; therefore, they bear a connection to each other. For instance, in the play *Richard II*, King Henry overthrew Richard II, and this fact serves as the reason and shadow of many of King Henry's decisions and motivations in *Henry IV, Part 1*. However, there are also criticisms claiming that Shakespeare's history plays are not linked to each other, but rather separate plays in their own right (Greene, 2002, p. 27). James Calderwood claims that the plays of Shakespeare from *Richard II* to *Henry V* can represent England's transition from medieval to Renaissance culture, from feudal monarchy to Machiavellian politics (1979, p. 1). However, it cannot be stated that the history plays of Shakespeare or any of his tetralogies are grand narratives that all work together on a theme, character, or motivation. Each tells the story of a monarch with his family or royal people around him, dealing with internal and external riots and wars. Each play is a story of its own; some are tragic, while others, such as *Henry IV Parts 1 and 2*, incorporate humorous and non-tragic elements within their plots and texts. Michael Hattaway also maintains that the plays are not a work of collective thinking but were instead written separately (2002, pp. 11-12). He further remarks that each play is a rewriting of another one; therefore, they could not be written in one sitting:

Dramatic history is characterised more by rewriting rather than by repetition. Each history play, that is, rewrites the plays that preceded it. *Richard III*, for example, rewrites the *Henry VI* plays; *Henry IV* rewrites *Richard II*, and *Henry V* rewrites all the history plays that precede it. (p. 16)

Hattaway also argues that, given the role history plays in the reign and death of a monarch, it is understandable and inevitable that they will be associated with tragedy (p. 3). However, in the case of *Henry IV, Part 1*, the hero, Hal, does not die but becomes victorious, and his subplot with the comic Falstaff poses a problem for the tragic genre. Nevertheless, Hattaway argues that only Shakespeare's *Henry VI* is a lifelong history of a king, culminating in his death; the others are only tragic stories in which the kings' reigns are heading towards crisis, either politically or personally (p. 4).

One publication that deals with the same topic as this article is Terrell L. Tebbetts's "Shakespeare's *Henry V*: Politics and the Family." It argues that while psychological criticism has extensively analyzed the family dynamics in Shakespeare's plays, political criticism has largely neglected how the family theme handles the play's political theory (1990, pp. 8-10). This point of view is significant because the text constantly connects Henry V's kingship to familial bonds. This ranges from his reconciliation with his father to his appeals to brotherhood at Agincourt. As well as his marriage to Katherine. Tebbetts suggests that analysing these relationships is essential for resolving the debate regarding the nature of Henry's rule. Specifically, whether his government fosters a "bond" of mutual responsibility or attempts to deconstruct the family in order to replace it with the state (p. 8). The central tension of the play is whether the King makes himself responsible to the state or forces the state to be responsible to him in all aspects, including war, succession, dynasty, finances, and the church. In the reunion part of the play, Henry IV expresses the fear that without the obligations inherent in family structures, "nature falls into revolt" (4.5.65), turning humanity into a predatory wilderness of wolves rather than a cohesive society (p. 9). While Hal reassures his father by acknowledging his "due from lineal honor," historical analysis suggests a period where the state was beginning to absorb functions previously held by the family, complicating the question of whether Henry V establishes a regime of responsible mutuality or one of destructive patriarchy.

Larry S. Champion's "History into Drama: The Perspective of I *Henry IV*" argues that the play reaches a unique, broad historical perspective by intentionally breaking its focus. It

moves away from the psychological analysis found in works like *Richard II* or *Julius Caesar* (1978, p. 185). The play implements a cut-off view by confirming that no single character dominates the action. The line counts are spread almost equally among Prince Hal, Hotspur, and Falstaff, with the title character, Henry IV, speaking the fewest lines. This perspective is further expanded by the simultaneous development and interweaving of three distinct plot strands: the King's political troubles, the rebels, Hotspur, and Hal's life in Eastcheap. Each depicts a different socio-political stratum, collectively ensuring that the "focus remains on the evolving condition of a nation rather than the personal experience" of one protagonist (p. 187). This tactic enables Shakespeare to evaluate the characters against contemporary standards for a monarch. King Henry IV embodies a limited concept of kingship based on effectiveness and the maintenance of civil order. On the other hand, Prince Hal presents a static figure who possesses a more complete vision of kingship. The play's use of these composite and hesitant figures ultimately presents a nuanced dramatic account of England's struggle for unity as it emerged from medieval feudalism.

As its nature, history primarily refers to factual historical events and personalities, albeit with minor inventions and variations. In *Henry IV, Part 1*, Shakespeare remains faithful to the general outline of the history and personalities, but there are also notable differences. First of all, the relationship between Henry IV and his son, Henry V, is a theatrical invention that brings a close-up of the relationship between a father and son, as well as a king and his heir. Secondly, the Shrewsbury Battle ends with the death of Hotspur, but it was not Henry V who killed him; it was an anonymous longbowman (Rackin, 1990, p. 79). The other heroic actions of Henry V, such as his single combat with Henry Percy and saving his father, are also not factual events; these appear to be part of Shakespeare's plan to portray Henry V as the brave and gallant king of England (Saccio, 1990, p. 30). The motivation of the rebels in Wales is also not a true representation (Rackin, 1990, p. 81). Barbara Mowat states that this kind of rewriting, with family relationships in the foreground, pulls us into the play (1994, p. xv). Hotspur, Henry, and Hal are not distant figures as they are portrayed in the chronicles; their personal feelings, struggles, and dilemmas are revealed to us, making them more alive and relatable. Secondly, the focus on the family relationships "reminds us that the wars for control of England, Scotland, and Wales in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were basically family struggles" (p. xv).

The play includes one of the most famous Shakespeare characters, Falstaff, who is a fool and a corrupt figure full of witty remarks. His role is even declared on the cover of the original poster of the play, saying "With the humorous conceits of Sir John Falstaff". As his name suggests, he deals with a lot of "false stuff" in the play. He is a sir, but at the same time a thief and a liar. In fact, Sir John Falstaff was originally named Sir John Oldcastle in the early seventeenth-century manuscripts of the play, as documented by letters and other sources (Mowat, 1994, p. 235). It is claimed that Shakespeare was forced to change the name because Sir John was a Protestant martyr and Falstaff was a representation of one of his descendants (p. 235). Sir Oldcastle was a knight of Henry IV who fought in France and other places. At the time, his reputation was hotly debated in England because Hal, as King Henry V, had him put to death during his reign, which sparked speculation that he was a traitor of some kind (p. 236). There are also discussions that Sir John was a "Lollard," which meant a Protestant at the time, who supported the idea that the Bible should be available in English to all people (p. 236). Sir John was also called Lord Cobham. As his martyrdom was debated at the time, it is conclusive that it is no coincidence he is portrayed in *Henry IV, Part 1*. This was known as the Oldcastle Controversy in literary discussions up to this point.

Falstaff is a controversial character in such a play, which tells the heroic actions of a future king. Actually, Hal leaves Falstaff at the taverns and decides to become the son of his father and heir to his kingdom; therefore, it can be stated that Hal's leaving symbolizes his rejection of becoming a Falstaff in the future. Falstaff's corrupt character is scolded and ridiculed by Shakespeare in the play. He is a man born out of Eastcheap taverns, where the lowlife of London is situated (Mowat, 1994, p. 244). At the battle scene, Falstaff pretends to be dead while Hal prevails over the bodies of Hotspur and Falstaff (5.4. 219), which is a symbol of Hal's victory over lowly and corrupt life and character. Suddenly, Falstaff stands up, which suggests that he

was a coward trying to avoid a fight. In the battle scene, similarly, Hal lets Falstaff lie about the killer of Hotspur (5.4. 221). Falstaff stabs the dead body of Hotspur to claim the reward. Hal lets him lie about this. Another important detail about Hal is that in his soliloquy in the first tavern scene, he declares that he will be in Eastcheap to create a misleading impression and then make a more dramatic comeback (1.2. 25). Hal and Hotspur's competition to become the patriarch is a central storyline in the play. We see differences between these characters that are competing for the throne. In fact, the misleading strategy of Hal works because Hotspur undermines his opponent, Hal, with the words of Vernon, who looks down on the unruly prince and claims that he would not show up on the battlefield (5.1. 193). Another difference between Hal and Hotspur is that Hotspur grew up in mansions and castles, like a proper nobleman. In contrast, Hal spent most of his time in Eastcheap, where he mostly encountered and interacted with common people on the streets.

The central theme of the play is the father-son relationship between Henry IV and his heir, Prince Hal, who is destined to become Henry V on the English throne. The beginning of the play is dark for Henry IV because his eldest son, Hal, lives a common life in the slums of London along with his lower-class friends, which worries King Henry IV. Especially, he compares his prince with Hotspur, who seems more determined and capable. Unlike Prince Hal, Henry IV overthrew Richard II and gained access to the throne; therefore, he was anxious that Hotspur would prove more gallant than Prince Hal and capture the throne. Here, the relationship between Hal and Falstaff is seen as a foil to the actual father-son relationship between Henry IV and Prince Hal. He chats with him and spends most of his time with Falstaff instead of learning politics in the court with his actual father. On the other side, Hotspur and his father, Northumberland, struggle for control and dominance of England by bringing their minds and forces together. Hotspur and Hal are two candidates for the throne, and they strive for their prestige among the people of England. Hotspur is commanded and supervised by his uncle, Worcester, as they attempt to make their way to the crown. Richard II announced that Hotspur's brother-in-law, Mortimer, was his heir. Henry IV executed Richard II and took the throne. Therefore, Hotspur claims the throne for himself. The start of the rebellion lies in Mortimer, who was captured by Owen Glendower and made a husband to his daughter. King Henry was frustrated and declared Mortimer a traitor. After that, he rejected Hotspur's request for ransom, and the war began. Hotspur declares war on the King after that.

The father-son focus is apparent, especially in scenes 2.4 and 3.2. In scene 2.4, the king sends for the prince and when Falstaff tells him about the news he becomes anxious (2.4. 76). Prince Hal and Falstaff act like a father and a son to prepare the prince for his talk with his father in the court in other words they prepare a role-play (2.4. 80). Falstaff scolds Hal thus he will be ready with quick replies. Falstaff flatters himself as the king but Hal refuses and takes the role of the king himself and destroys Falstaff with his wit (2.4. 81). In scene 3.2, Hal meets his father who accuses and scolds him for his non-royal behavior in London bars (3.2. 131) and warns him that if he is to become king he should be careful about his reputation among the royal families and people of England (132). There, Henry resembles Hal to Richard II, whom he overthrew, and he is disgusted by the common people just like Hal (3.2.135-7). King continues to scold with Hotspur comparisons, and Hal breaks into an emotional speech, where he rejects all accusations and claims that he will be victorious against Hotspur, whom his father seems to both hate and respect at the same time (3.2.138).

At the core of the play resides the emotionally problematic relationship between Henry IV and Prince Hal. The political problems and personal conflicts merge to convey the emotional core of the plot and ethos. Henry blames Hal for his tavern adventures and loses his trust and belief in him, saying: "O, that it could be proved / That some night-tripping fairy had exchanged / In cradle-clothes our children where they lay!" (1.1.85-87). Hal seems to have reformed, but his soliloquy in Act 1, Scene 2, reveals a deliberate strategy to "falsify men's hopes" before dazzling them with redemption. These acts and words also reveal a fact about the Renaissance traditions of princes and their authorities. The education of princes is a principal issue, and their education holds significant importance for the fate of dynasties. Discipline or experience is one of the first

issues in their training. Additionally, austerity or cunning tends to lead more to a Machiavellian concept of holding power and shaping politics in the era. Moreover, the kingly Henry and the surrogate Falstaff, who are Hal's dual real and foster father figures, represent competing models of authority: one bound by duty and statecraft, the other by affection and mirth. Hal's eventual rejection of Falstaff in *Henry IV, Part 2*, highlights the tragic cost of kingship: to rule, one must sacrifice love for the sake of legitimacy.

The Percy rebellion of Northumberland, headed by Hotspur and Worcester, carries not only literary but also political force. Once Henry's allies in Richard II's deposition, the Percys now turn against Henry, using him to expose the instability and lack of any rule of skill following usurpation. Hotspur is passionate and honourable. Taking up arms against Hal from the very start, he is a nobleman without flexibility for fame. In Act 5, Scene 4 of *Henry IV, Part 1*, the famous duel that Hal wins, he takes an omen from. It is a visual manifestation of inherited nobility being bested by artificial kingship. At the same time, however, this triumph is ambiguous: Hal kills the very concept as well. It is as if redemption demands he rid himself not only of his past sins but also of a competitive claim to legitimacy. In sum, the revolt of the Percys represents a common pattern throughout the Middle Ages: once any king has been deposed, those wrongly named usurpers from the top downward; it is unlike what we know. The process of depression would be one that Shakespeare traced through his table of English history plays.

In this play, we can feel Shakespeare's thoughts and literary commentary on medieval and Tudor political culture. Written as the Elizabethan era drew to a close, *Henry IV, Part 1* subtly realizes the English people's anxiety about national cohesion and what will happen once Elizabeth passes on, for one who might not be so tolerant of their Protestantism. The nation is also concerned about its lack of strength in comparison to powerful Spain. With the queen being unmarried and childless, it faced another dynastic crisis comparable to what had occurred in 15th-century England. In portraying a kingdom fraught with rebellion, ambiguous legitimacy, and intergenerational strife, Shakespeare's play touched a deep chord with its original audience. Moreover, the play is a commentary on the very concept of stable sovereignty: kingship becomes not a sacred institution, but simply a performance that is hazardous, relying on authority and violence to suppress dissenting voices. However, Shakespeare does not take a moralistic line. Rather than moralising, his tone is complex; he shows how sacrificing love for a man's duty and, in turn, rewarding deceit is necessary to maintain public order. Thus, he bridges the gap between the medieval past and modern management of things by reminding us that the ghosts of dynastic strife continue to stalk the bodies politic.

In terms of gender equality, the play is poor in the number of female characters, and there is no direct or clear representation or criticism of gender issues. One issue is that the anti-Welsh propaganda is carried out through Welsh women who are likened to monsters, threatening demonic figures like witches (1.1. 13-14). There is Lady Mortimer and a hostess in Eastcheap who were treated bawdily and insultingly by Falstaff (1.2. 17-18). Additionally, Barbara Mowat notes that Hotspur is sometimes treated as feminine due to his warrior-like style (1994, p. 254). For instance, Northumberland says "this woman's mood" for the passion and aggression of Hotspur in his pursuit of the throne (1.3. 27). Lady Percy is another character who cares about Hotspur and his reputation in society; she tries to save Hotspur and supports him in his struggle to become the king. However, she is harsh in her speeches with Hotspur; she calls him a "mad-headed ape" once when she was angry with him (2.3. 67), and tells him, "I'll break thy little finger Harry, / An if thou not tell me all things true" (2.3. 67).

An article written on this subject is J. L. Simmons's article, which argues that Shakespeare's history plays are constructed as masculine narratives in which women function primarily as disruptions to patriarchal continuity. In *Henry IV, Part 1*, this anxiety manifests in the contrast between Mortimer, whose marriage to Glendower's daughter renders him foolish and politically impotent, and Hotspur, who adopts a hyper-masculine, boyish persona to resist the effeminizing influence of the domestic sphere (1993, pp. 441-443). Simmons states that the text actively suppresses female power to prevent history from dissolving into a grotesque comedy of

male humiliation. Consequently, Prince Hal is insulated from women to preserve his political sustainability, developing in a single-sex position where he need not negotiate with the feminine voice. However, Simmons notes that this exclusion leaves Hal with a transsexual ineptitude, visible when he fails to successfully parody the heterosexual dynamic between Hotspur and Lady Percy, revealing the limitations of his homosocial world (pp. 460-461). Ultimately, the story's attempt to contain female disruption fails. Even the triumphant marriage relies on a crooked female inheritance that foreshadows the return to chaos under Henry VI, proving that the masculine historical narrative cannot fully suppress the threatening woman.

The story of *Henry IV, Part 1*, has transcended the scope of historical drama and evolved into a profound reflection on the importance of personal friendship, strength, and leadership. Running parallel to each other, the two histories follow Hal's growth and the Percy revolt, which reveal Shakespearean England in its most realistic light. The play reminds us that every king is both the son of a king and the successor to him, with the sins of his father weighing heavily upon him and the demands of his people. In the figure of Hal, who is a half-prodigal son, half politician/poet, Shakespeare captures the fulfillment of any ruler, which is a painful betrayal of self, by necessity a metamorphosis. Thus, rehearsal for the king. To shed old personality and gain this new one, eh, quite good metaphorical stuff really. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the play not only represents an interpretation of medieval dynastic struggles but also examines the human costs of rule. A question as relevant to court times as to any other phase faced with the paradoxes of government is also relevant.

In conclusion, *Henry IV, Part 1* is a play that tells a heroic story, examines the early 15th-century English society, and especially the royal families. The royal family's struggles led to death and war throughout the rest of the country. Shakespeare's *Henry IV, Part 1* masterfully encapsulates the essence of medieval England, weaving together the complex political, social, and cultural fabric of the era. Through the lens of historical intrigue, the play presents a nuanced portrayal of the power struggles, familial tensions, and societal dynamics that characterized the medieval period. The characters, from the valiant yet troubled Prince Hal to the rebellious Hotspur, embody the conflicting loyalties and ambitions that drove the historical narrative of England during this time. By drawing on historical events and figures, Shakespeare not only entertains but also invites contemporary audiences to reflect on the cyclical nature of power and the enduring relevance of the past. As a conclusion, *Henry IV, Part 1* stands as a testament to Shakespeare's genius in capturing the spirit of an era while exploring universal human experiences. The play's intricate depiction of medieval England's intrigues serves as both a historical reflection and a mirror to the ongoing complexities of political and personal life. Through its rich characterizations and enduring themes, Shakespeare's work continues to resonate, reminding us of the timeless interplay between history and human nature.

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