

SOUTHWEST *Shakespeare* COMPANY

proudly presents



**DEATH** of **KINGS**  
SEIZE THE CROWN

## STUDENT GUIDE

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## QUICK FACTS:

# THE HISTORY PLAYS

### THE FIRST AND THE LAST...ALMOST

Shakespeare's canon is almost perfectly book-ended by a history play. He first emerged in the theatre scene between 1589 and 1590 with *Henry VI Part I* and his SECOND to last play, *Henry VIII* was produced in 1613. *Two Noble Kinsmen* was the last play penned by Shakespeare, produced in 1614.

**DON'T FORGET ED!** When the First Folio (the first complete works) came out in 1623, ten of the eleven history plays were present. "But wait, guide, there are only 10 histories: two tetralogies and the other two," you might be saying. Well, in the 1990s, scholars reached a consensus and added *Edward III* to the canon, but they're pretty sure Shakespeare wasn't the only person involved in the penning of the play.

### A TETRA- WHAT NOW?

"Tetralogy" is a term used by scholars to refer to the clusters of histories within the canon. The first tetralogy, or "the early histories" were written between 1589-1593. This tetralogy includes *Henry VI Parts I, 2, and 3* along with *Richard III*. The second tetralogy, or "The Henriad" came about between 1595-1599 and includes *Henry IV Parts I and 2, Henry V, and Richard II*.

### PRIMED FOR PATRIOTISM

1590 England was a pivotal time in history for several reasons. Unrest was starting to fill the air as unwed and heirless Queen Elizabeth grew older, the world had a collective hard eye on the crown. England is fresh off its' 1588 victory in the Spanish Armada; spirits and English pride are high. English history was now well documented and available in the form of Raphael Holinshed's 1587 written account, *The Chronicles of England, Ireland and Scotland*. What does all of this mean? History plays became all the rage; they were like patriotic war movies for Elizabethan England.

### HISTORICAL COMEDY?

Falstaff, one of Shakespeare's most beloved comedic characters first appeared in *Henry IV Part I*. Shakespeare was not one to repeat a role with the exception of the episodic Histories of Henry IV and VI. Falstaff was so popular, that Queen Elizabeth asked Shakespeare to write a play about Falstaff in love. So he did. In 1597, Falstaff reappeared in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

### HALLMARKS OF A HISTORY

Though Macbeth was a real Scottish king and Julius Caesar did rule Rome, *Macbeth* and *Julius Caesar* are in the tragedy category. King Lear wasn't even a real person. So how can you tell when you've chosen a history play? The main location of every play is England and focuses on the political landscape of the current king. Who's king? Look at the play title. All of the history plays take broad strokes: instead of focusing on one person or a single line of action, a history play will span a sequence of events during a period of history with the main theme focused on the unification and glory of England along with stark reminders of civil war and the turmoil that comes with it.

### THE HOLLYWOOD EFFECT

If you're looking for an accurate historical account of World War II on which to base your history project, don't watch *The Inglorious Basterds*. Shakespeare's histories, like a LOT of Hollywood period movies, focus more on good story and less on being super historically accurate. Event timelines are altered, locations changed, and made up characterizations of historical figures (more on this on the next page) led to great theater that also pleased the Crown.

### ALL THE RAGE

Have you ever noticed story trends in movies? Back around 2012, disaster movies were being produced left and right because the Mayan earth ending prediction was a global hot button. It's no coincidence Shakespeare's canon is history heavy in the beginning. Between roughly 1586-1606, the number of history play offerings outnumbered all other genres. But all good things come to an end. Soon audiences began craving stories set in different countries centered around "real" people- you know, lords and ladies. Shakespeare was on the pulse of society: he hit the London scene with *Henry VI Part I* in 1589 and the last installation of the Henriad was produced in 1599.



# DEATH of KINGS

SEIZE THE CROWN




## A BRIEF WALK THROUGH HISTORY

**SHAKESPEARE'S HISTORY  
PLAYS IN HISTORICAL  
SEQUENCE:**

\* not the order in which the plays were written

King John	England is at war with France, then the throne is usurped by...
Richard II	He thinks he's a great king. He is NOT. So he seizes the crown to...
Henry IV Part I	...a good man, but a rebellion, led by Hotspur, threatens the crown. We meet Falstaff.
Henry IV Part II	Henry IV dies, Prince Hal (now Henry V) grows into a noble leader and denies Falstaff.
Henry V	100 Years War (England v. France)...particularly the Battle of Agincourt
Henry VI Part I	100 Years War. Joan of Arc is in this one! The Wars of the Roses begins.
Henry VI Part II	Wars of the Roses continues...
Henry VI Part III	Wars of the Roses continues...and culminates with Henry VI being killed by...
Richard III	The greatest villain in the House of York. The Wars of the Roses comes to an end.
Henry VIII	Basically the story of Queen Elizabeth's dad, ending with Elizabeth's birth.

**THE  
WARS  
OF  
THE  
ROSES**



The two houses involved in this war, Lancaster and York, were both descendants of Edward III (remember that play that Shakespeare *might* have written?) and their houses were represented by roses, hence the name. So who gets the crown? Well, team Lancaster did in the form of Henry VI, but the Yorks, among others, felt like Henry was not a good leader. The battles wage until Richard III is killed by Henry Tudor, aka Henry VII, Henry VIII's dad and Queen Elizabeth's grandpa..

When are we? 1455-1485

The origin of the English crown can be traced back to France. It kind of makes sense that by the 14th century they were both fighting to find a national identity. A lot of the battles were over French lands owned by English lords. One of the most notable battles was that of Agincourt; dramatized by Shakespeare in Henry V, the vastly outnumbered English defeat the French, beginning a shift in momentum for England. Also notable, House of Plantagenet divided due to this war...beginning the York/Lancaster rivalry...

When are we? 1337-1453




**THE  
REBELLION**

So the reign of Henry Bolingbroke, aka Henry IV, was riddled with rebellion pretty much constantly while battles were waging in 100 Years' War. Henry had a lot on his plate. Why so much rebellion? Well, Henry was basically *given* the crown by Richard II, who stole the crown from John. People weren't happy about Henry being in charge, most notably Henry Percy, aka Hotspur, leader of the rebellion beginning in 1402. Thanks to his sons, Henry was able to defeat every rebellion that arose.

When are we? 1399-1413

**King John and Richard II are the only two plays in Shakespeare's works to be written completely in iambic pentameter; you know, "ba-bum ba-bum ba-bum ba-bum ba-bum."**

**DID  
YOU  
KNOW?**

The history plays in the order they were written:

*Henry VI Parts I, II, and III, Richard III, (Edward III?), Richard II, King John, Henry IV Parts I and II, Henry V, Henry VIII*



# DRAMATIS PERSONAE

(psst...that's Latin for "persons of the drama" or, cast of characters as we know it.)

King Richard II	<i>God's gift to the world.</i>
Henry Bolingbroke, becomes Henry IV	<i>Worn down from battle.</i>
Prince Henry, a.k.a Hal, becomes Henry V	<i>Party boy turned awesome king.</i>
John Falstaff	<i>The jovial disgraced knight.</i>
Henry Percy, a.k.a Hotspur	<i>Honorable, hotheaded rebel.</i>
Lady Percy	<i>Kate, the wife of Henry Percy.</i>
Princess Katharine	<i>Charles VI of France's daughter.</i>
Alice	<i>Nurse (nanny) to Katharine.</i>
King Henry VI	<i>Nice guy, not good king material.</i>
Charles the Dauphin	<i>The ambitious prince of France.</i>
Joan la Pucelle (Joan of Arc)	<i>A bold and fierce warrior.</i>
Suffolk	<i>Super into Margaret, kidnaps her.</i>
Margaret	<i>Agrees to and marries Henry VI.</i>
King Edward IV	<i>Team York and power hungry.</i>
Richard, Duke of Gloucester, becomes Richard III	<i>Murders his way to the crown..</i>
Lady Grey, becomes Queen Elizabeth	<i>Not THAT Lizzie, Ed IV's wife.</i>
Lady Anne	<i>Woored by and marries R. III.</i>
Richmond, becomes Henry VII	<i>The man who kills Richard III.</i>
Chrous 1- Vernon/Prince Edward	<i>A rebel/Anne's first hubby.</i>
Chrous 2- Montjoy/Nobleman	<i>French royal messenger</i>
Chrous 3- Bastard of Orleans	<i>Introduces Joan to Charles VI.</i>
Chorus 4- Reigner	<i>General under Charles VI.</i>



# DEATH of KINGS

SEIZE THE CROWN

*Bookended by the Richards, The Death of Kings: Seize the Crown highlights some of the most dynamic scenes and characters in eight of Shakespeare's ten (or eleven) history plays. Along with this, playwright Irwin Appel cleverly utilizes the Greek convention of a Chorus. This group acts as the thread that connects these eight individual plays into one seamlessly flowing timeline encompassing a century of English history and a decade of writing.*

The action begins with Richard II relinquishing the crown to the soon-to-be Henry IV. After the death of Richard II, we move into the world of Henry IV. We meet the young, disappointing Prince Hal carrying on with the gregarious Falstaff before moving onto the story of Hotspur, the rebellion, and the first of many battles. Hal grows up, owns his destiny, ditches Falstaff and becomes Henry V after his dad dies.

Henry has grown into a very good king and he decides to go to war with France over the lands over which the English crown had claim. King Charles VI of France responds by sending...tennis balls. It's on. Henry V leads England to an unexpected victory in the battle of Agincourt.

Following this, we move onto meeting the French ladies Katharine and Alice. Henry meets and woos Kate and they marry. Henry V passes away making way for Henry VI.

The 100 Years War is still waging. The Bastard of Orleans introduces King Charles VI to the savior of France: Joan of Arc. Unfortunately, things do not go well for Joan or France.

We then move onto Suffolk who has taken a fancy to and subsequently kidnaps Margaret. He decides to get close to Margaret by suggesting to both she and Henry VI that they marry; they decide it's a good idea and do!

Now this marriage makes a bunch of English lords mad, most importantly, house York. The War of the Roses begins. Henry VI ends up in prison and, because of a deal, the crown does not pass to his son Edward, but to Edward IV, the oldest son in the house of York. He meets and marries Lady Elizabeth Grey.

Soon-to-be Richard III kills Henry VI and King Edward IV. With the crown up for grabs, Richard sets to wooing Lady Anne, the grieving daughter-in-law of Henry VI and his son Edward, both of whom were killed by Richard himself. After a couple of more deaths, Richard finally kills his way to the crown.

Lady Grey, now widowed Queen Elizabeth arranges for her daughter, also Elizabeth, to marry Richmond. Richmond is the guy who finally kills Richard III, and he takes the crown becoming Henry VII (You know Queen Elizabeth during Shakespeare's time? That's her grandpa.)



MEET

# Irwin Appel

He took some time to answer a few questions for our SSC Student Guide:



He's the guy who adapted Shakespeare's history plays to create and direct:



## What is it about Shakespeare that lights you up?

I love that Shakespeare provides a wonderful platform for artists to be infinitely creative, to take risks, and to explore our own humanity. Nothing "lights me up" more than seeing young people connect with Shakespeare and feel that they too can identify with the characters and have ownership in these great plays. Often, young people feel Shakespeare does not speak to them, and I love nothing more than to see the light go on in a student's eyes when they understand an image or piece of text in a visceral way for the first time. I hope you will all feel that way when you see *The Death of Kings: Seize the Crown!*

## Can you talk to us a little bit about the evolution of *The Death of Kings*? Where did you get the idea to write this play?

Believe it or not, as much as I enjoy Shakespeare, I may even have been more influenced by my favorite episodic television shows such as *The Sopranos*, *Breaking Bad* and *The Wire*. I love getting to know characters over longer arcs and being able to be more involved in their full journeys. When I first read Shakespeare's history plays, I loved *Henry IV, Part One*, but I found myself restless during much of *Henry IV, Part Two*. I thought to myself, "what if I put them together and cut out the 'boring' parts?" I sometimes have a short attention span! I relied on my intuition and research about what should remain and what could be cut from the plays. I also knew I wanted to tell the story of the full eight-play arc that begins with *Richard II* and ends with *Richard III*. The *Henry VI* plays became some of my favorites, and they fit together like a great season of the TV shows I love! Also, the more I worked on the plays, plus the more I traveled and did research, the more excited I became about creating *The Death of Kings*. I thought it would be especially fulfilling to an audience to experience in only one showing certain characters such as Prince Hal, Falstaff, Queen Margaret and *Richard III* – characters they would normally only get to follow in multiple plays.

## Will you share with us one of your most memorable theater moments?

I started out as an actor, and some of my most memorable moments have been playing great roles, especially in Shakespeare, such as Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*, Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and Prospero in *The Tempest*. I was also starring as the title role in *Richard III* in Santa Barbara in 2001, and in the middle of our rehearsal process, the events of September 11 occurred. We were all horrified and devastated and didn't know whether to continue, but we decided "the show must go on," and we chose to keep rehearsing. On opening night, I experienced something I had never felt before in my career: the audience was not in the mood to enjoy *Richard's* story. I could feel how sad the audience was so soon after 9/11, how sad we were as a country. I'm glad we went on with the show, and I have had good nights and bad nights on stage, but I never had an experience like this one where larger world events so strongly affected a theatrical event in which I was a part.



Photos by David Brazemore

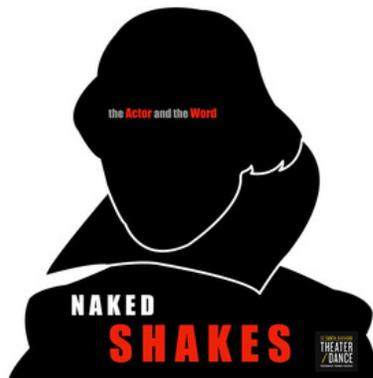
## What was it like developing this piece with UC Santa Barbara?

It was crazy! The Death of Kings actually comprises three plays. Part One: I Come But For Mine Own condenses Richard II, Henry IV, Parts 1 and 2, and Henry V. Part Two: The White Rose and the Red comprises Henry VI, 1, 2 and 3, and Richard III. In Santa Barbara, I directed both plays at the same time to be performed in repertory. I wanted them to both stand alone as individual plays; this meant audiences could see them in either order, on back to back nights or even in the same day if they liked. I was so exhausted afterwards! Each play was huge on its own, but two at the same time was ridiculous! Fortunately, they turned out really well, especially due to the amazing creative team of designers, actors and crew. It was thrilling to work on this with our finest students! The show you are seeing, The Death of Kings: Seize the Crown, actually began as a workshop production or “trailer” for the main two plays. However, Seize the Crown turned out to be an exciting play in its own right, and we not only performed it at UC Santa Barbara, but also at the Prague Shakespeare Company’s Summer Shakespeare Intensive in Europe before being thrilled to perform at Southwest Shakespeare!



## Anything else you would like to share with us?

I have a company in Santa Barbara called Naked Shakes, and we have been doing Shakespeare plays for fourteen years. This very provocative title, Naked Shakes, really refers to an emphasis on the actor and the word. I believe if you take a group of well-trained actors, a bare stage, a rich text and very simple elements, you can make transformative magic happen on stage. In The Death of Kings: Seize the Crown, watch how we use the quarterstaves, or “sticks:” sometimes they are weapons, other times they take on different physical properties based on how the actors endow them. Naked Shakes believes in the collective imagination of actor and audience, and we are very excited to welcome all of you into the Naked Shakes world!



*Excited for the performance yet?!*

**Want to learn more about The Death of Kings and see some more REALLY cool production shots? Check out this awesome link Irwin created for UC Santa Barbara:**

[ucsb.app.box.com/s/t36un5zm25u0x0sx49v4qtr9e1bsxvha](https://ucsb.app.box.com/s/t36un5zm25u0x0sx49v4qtr9e1bsxvha)