

Henry VI Part 1

SYNOPSIS

The First Part of Henry the Sixth

(probably a collaboration between Shakespeare and another author)

Following the death of his father Henry V, the boy Henry VI is proclaimed King, and his uncles Gloucester and Exeter are chosen as Protectors, to rule until he is old enough. There is conflict between Gloucester and his old rival, the Bishop of Winchester, and their respective supporters. Richard Plantagenet, later Duke of York, establishes a claim to the throne through the Mortimer line of the family. He opposes the Duke of Somerset, Exeter's nephew. Both sides adopt roses for their emblems: white for York and red for Lancaster.

Charles the Dauphin, of France, helped by the mysterious maid Joan la Pucelle (Joan of Arc) dominates the battles in France. The Duke of Bedford, Henry's uncle, is killed, and so is the English captain Talbot, a warrior much feared by the French. His death is a direct result of the feud between York and Somerset, both of whom have failed to supply reinforcements to the English troops.

Fortunes turn, and Joan is captured and burned. An uneasy peace is concluded between the English and French. Gloucester tries to arrange a marriage between King Henry and the Earl of Armagnac's daughter. Meanwhile, in France, Suffolk is enchanted by Margaret, the daughter of the Earl of Anjou. Suffolk woos Margaret to be Henry's queen, and in order to gain her father's consent gives away the territories of Anjou and Maine which have just been conquered.

Suffolk returns to England and persuades Henry to marry Margaret and make her Queen of England, in opposition to the English court.

Media:

DVD:

An Age of Kings (BBC TV 1960), dir. Michael Hayes (a fusion of all the history plays from *Richard II* to *Richard III*)

Henry VI Part 1 (BBC TV Shakespeare 1983), dir. Jane Howell

Not commercially available:

The Wars of the Roses (1965), dir. Peter Hall & John Barton (*Henry VI* & *Richard III* combined as a trilogy, excerpts on YouTube)

The Wars of the Roses (1990), dir. Michael Bogdanov (a filming of the 1987 English Shakespeare Company stage production, uploaded to YouTube)

CD Audio:

Henry VI Part 1 (Arkangel Complete Shakespeare)

[Michael Mitchell]