

## Henry VI Part 2

### SYNOPSIS

#### *The Second Part of Henry the Sixth*

(probably a collaboration between Shakespeare and another author)

Although there is now peace between England and France, the English court is not united. Suffolk is gaining increasing influence, both at court and with the new Queen Margaret. The English nobles unite in their wish to get rid of the Duke of Gloucester, the Protector. His wife Eleanor, the Duchess of Gloucester, aims for the crown, and is lured by a priest, John Hume, who is in the pay of Suffolk, to consult a witch about her future. When this becomes known, she is put on trial and banished. Gloucester resigns his staff of office, meaning that Henry can become King in his own right.

Somerset returns from France with the news that all the English territories in France have been lost. York and others use this opportunity to blame Gloucester and accuse him of treason. Suffolk, Margaret, the Bishop of Winchester and York all agree that Gloucester should be murdered.

Meanwhile there is a rebellion in Ireland, and York is sent by Suffolk to deal with the crisis. York encourages Jack Cade, a commoner pretending to be Mortimer, to rebel in Kent. Gloucester is murdered, and the King turns against Suffolk, who is then banished and murdered. Winchester, who has now become Cardinal Beaufort, only lives a few hours longer than his old enemy. Cade's rebellion is finally put down, but York returns to claim the crown, supported by his sons Edward, Richard and George, and by the nobles Salisbury and Warwick. On the other side King Henry is supported by Margaret, Somerset, Buckingham and the Cliffords. The Yorkists and Lancastrians fight their first battle at St Albans. The play ends with the King and Queen having to escape to London and the Yorkists confident of victory.

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 2* (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:

Arkangel Complete Shakespeare

[Michael Mitchell]