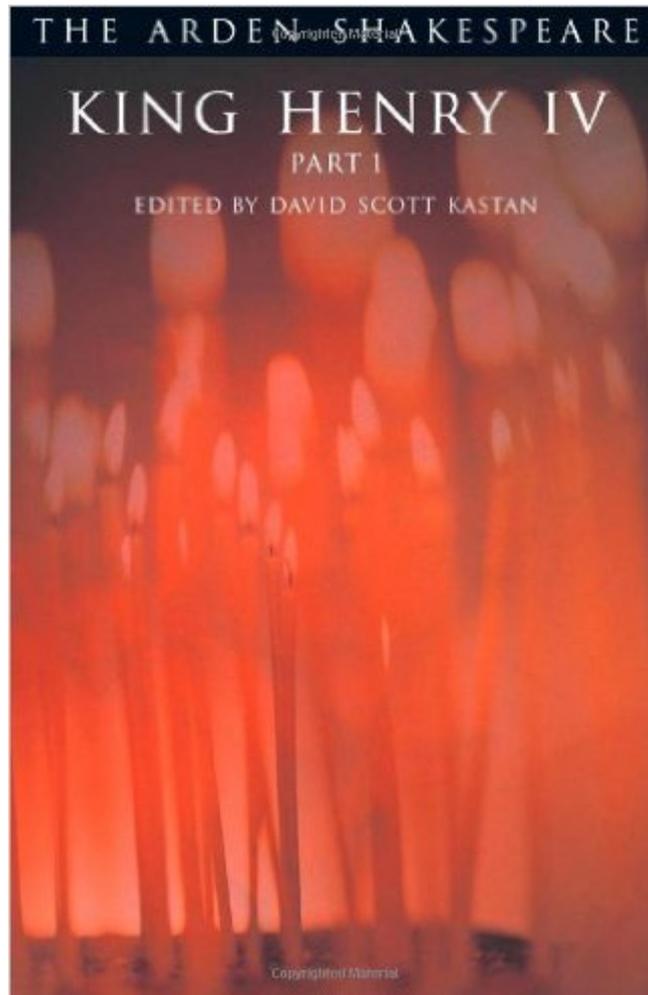


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King Henry IV, Part 1 (Arden Shakespeare: Third Series) (Pt. 1)



Synopsis

David Scott Kastan lucidly explores the remarkable richness and the ambitious design of King Henry IV Part 1 and shows how these complicate any easy sense of what kind of play it is. Conventionally regarded as a history play, much of it is in fact conspicuously invented fiction, and Kastan argues that the non-historical, comic plot does not simply parody the historical action but by its existence raises questions about the very nature of history. The full and engaging introduction devotes extensive discussion to the play's language, indicating how its insistent economic vocabulary provides texture for the social concerns of the play and focuses attention on the central relationship between value and political authority. Kastan also covers the recurrence of the word "honor" in the text and the role that women play. Appendices provide the sources of 1 Henry IV, discussions of Shakespeare's metrics, and the history of the manuscript. The appendix on casting features a doubling chart to show which characters may be played by one actor. Photographic images of the original Q0 Fragment, which is assumed to have been printed in Peter Short's printing house in 1598, appear in the fifth appendix. Finally, a reference section provides a list of abbreviations and references, a catalog of Shakespeare's works and works partly by Shakespeare, and citations for the modern productions mentioned in the text, other collated editions of Shakespeare's work, and other related reading. The Arden Shakespeare has developed a reputation as the pre-eminent critical edition of Shakespeare for its exceptional scholarship, reflected in the thoroughness of each volume. An introduction comprehensively contextualizes the play, chronicling the history and culture that surrounded and influenced Shakespeare at the time of its writing and performance, and closely surveying critical approaches to the work. Detailed appendices address problems like dating and casting, and analyze the differing Quarto and Folio sources. A full commentary by one or more of the play's foremost contemporary scholars illuminates the text, glossing unfamiliar terms and drawing from an abundance of research and expertise to explain allusions and significant background information. Highly informative and accessible, Arden offers the fullest experience of Shakespeare available to a reader.

Book Information

Paperback: 398 pages

Publisher: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare; 3rd edition (November 7, 2002)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1904271359

ISBN-13: 978-1904271352

Product Dimensions: 5 x 1 x 7.7 inches

Shipping Weight: 15.5 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars See all reviews (11 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #73,160 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #51 in Books > Literature & Fiction > British & Irish > Shakespeare > Literary Criticism #128 in Books > Literature & Fiction > British & Irish > Shakespeare > Works #424 in Books > Literature & Fiction > History & Criticism > Criticism & Theory

Customer Reviews

The play needs no commentary by me. This edition is impressive. This is the first Arden Third Series play I've read, and I find it better overall than any other commented version I've used. I bought the Arden Second Series of Henry IV, Part 2, because we're going to both plays this weekend, and the Third Series is not out yet. I was surprised how much better the Third Series is. The typography and layout make it easier to read than any other footnoted edition I've read. The notes are on the same page as the text, where they are easy to refer to, but they are in a smaller font size and in two columns, which differentiates them from the text and makes them less distracting. The headings of the notes are bold, rather than italic, which makes them quicker to locate. The text notes, of interest only to specialists, are in an even smaller font and have been moved to the bottom of the page. The result is that the extensive notes are readily accessible when I need them, yet minimally distracting when I don't. The Introduction is long, but interesting and helpful. Being no expert, I don't judge this editor's views and choices against those of others, but his reasoning is plausible and his approach seems down-to-earth, giving what seems like appropriate weight to the commercial motives and dynamic nature of dramas. The notes explain more than some readers need, but that's better than explaining too little for newcomers to Shakespeare. The illustrations are interesting, and some are helpful. The map of places mentioned and the genealogies should be in every edition. The List of Roles is followed by two pages of notes about the characters.

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