CAPRA COACHING

English Booklet:
Henry IV Part I (Module B)

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Overview:

"Most unsayable of all are works of art, mysterious existences whose lives exist alongside ours"- Rainer Maria Rilke

Module B is critical study whose primary focus is to examine the textual integrity of a novel, play, non-fiction piece or suite of poetry. To deconstruct a text effectively, we need to examine the form, context, values, style and technique integration of your chosen writer. While this may seem incredibly dry, there is another - more enticing - element to the module which breathes life into the study of a literary work: textual integrity. NESA defines this phrase as,

"The unity of a text; its coherent use of form and language to produce an integrated whole in terms of meaning and value."

The question arises, how does a text become unified? How does a literary work become 'whole'? Yes, you are right to think that these questions and definitions are incredibly broad and vague, however it is our job to narrow the scope of this phrase in our study of *Henry IV Part I*. To discover *why* a text is considered cogent, we need to ask ourselves deeper questions to reveal the truth concerning values and ideas communicated by the writer. While you are reading the context, issues and imagery sections of this notebook, consider the following:

1. How does Shakespeare's use of form and language produce images which connect different ideas throughout the text to one resounding meaning or overarching value?

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2. How does Shakespeare's use of form and literary techniques produce an integrated whole in terms of the text's examination of honour, legitimacy of rulership, and morality?
3. Why is this text's use of language and form so effective?
4. Why has this text transcended temporal parameters and entered our modern stages with such force, vigour and power?

Context:

"In the England of Shakespeare, the poet lived in a current of ideas in the highest degree, animating and nourishing to the creative power; society was, in the fullest measure, permeated by fresh thought, intelligent and alive. And this state of things is the true basis of the creative powers… all the books and reading in the world are only valuable as they are help to this. Even when this does not actually exist, books and reading may enable a man to construct a kind of semblance of it in his own mind, a world of knowledge and intelligence in which he may live and work." – Mathew Arnold, The Function of Criticism at the Present Time.

1. Richard II and Henry Bolingbroke

Shakespeare sourced his knowledge of English history from Raphael Holinshed's, *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* (1577; second edition 1587), Samuel Daniel's, *The First Four Books of the Civil Wars* (1595) and *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth* (c.1588).

The history plays are often considered distinctive episodes within English history, defining or remarking upon the discrete socio-political issues evident during a monarch's reign. However, a more cohesive and cogent analysis of the history plays reveal that they are all

"components of a grand providentialist design, whose artistic and political project was to work through the consequences of Bolingbroke's usurpation of Richard II's throne, in a dialectic of order and disorder, rebellion and retribution, and crime and punishment, that

achieves a temporary synthesis in the glorious but brief reign of Henry V, and a final resolution in the enthronement of the Tudor dynasty at the close of Richard III."[1]

Bolingbroke (King Henry IV) deposed Richard II following the death of John of Gaunt. In Shakespeare's *Richard II,* Richard's misrule is emphasised, alluding to his irresponsible conduct as a catalyst of the War of the Roses. Modern historians question the validity of this representation, often suggesting that Shakespeare's vindication was predicated on an understanding of Edward Hall and Samuel Daniel's historiography. Richard II is self-defined in the play as a "good king, great king, and yet not greatly good".[2] This is juxtaposed with Richard's further declaration,

"O that I were a mockery king of snow,

Standing before the sun of Bolingbroke,

To melt myself away in water-drops!"

Richard II's comment in Act 4 Scene 1 effectively equates the celestial image attributed to kingly authority to Bolingbroke. Richard II's deposition justifies Henry IV ascension to the throne, however does not dissolve issues regarding legitimate right to rule. It is this legitimacy issue which is projected onto Henry IV's son, Hal. Tillyard argues that *Henry IV* serves as a bildungsroman insofar as Hal has a choice between Chivalry, Sloth and Vanity. In choosing the former, Hal legitimises his claim. *Henry IV's* place within Shakespeare's history plays is to justify Hal's rightful ascension to the throne, irrespective of Bolingbroke's usurpation.

2. Government Surveillance

You may have noted the motif of 'eyes' which permeate the play. While we can read this term in its figurative sense, there is indeed a contextual purpose for including the motif.

[1] Routledge guide

[2] Act 4 Scene 1

"One minute or less into 1 Henry IV , there arrives an arresting definition of agency. King Henry's speech deploring civil conflict specifies not subjects, countrymen, or soldiers but 'eyes', that 'of one substance bred | Did lately meet in the intestine shock | And furious close of civil butchery'. These 'opposèd eyes', he hopes, will now 'March all one way, and be no more opposèd | Against acquaintance, kindred and allies' (I.i.9, 11–16). Those traumatizing eyes, close and butchering and still on the march, are a matter of more than an apparently quaint synecdoche: for a warfare of the deadly gaze accurately figures a world of hostile espials, of potentially lethal social penetrations, active at the heart both of the play, and of the political climate of contemporary London.

Remarkably, the crises of that precise juncture – 1 Henry IV was almost certainly written and first performed somewhere between the later part of 1596 and the autumn of 1597 – have yet to be taken fully into account in mapping the tense political coordinates of this drama. For this was a time of an almost unprecedented and semi-hysterical government surveillance of commoners: and it proved, for any mutinous-seeming pauper or labourer, apprentice or servant, a bloody period of immediate whippings on the open street, and even a killing season in the many months when martial law was unleashed." [3]

3. Morality Plays

Theatre has served as "society's principal mechanisms for resolving social and psychological conflict".[4] Morality plays epitomise theatre's attempted discussion and ailment of social issues which arise in a community. Morality plays are a form of allegorical drama whereby abstract qualities are personified as main characters and present a lesson about moral conduct. The Vice figure in morality plays is, essentially, the personification of wickedness. For this reason, Aaron from Titus Andronicus, Edmund from King Lear and Iago from Othello, are termed 'vice' characters, as they embody deceptive, demonic behaviour. Shakespeare comments on the vice caricature in Richard III:

"Thus, like the formal Vice, Iniquity,

[3] Chris fitter, page 99

[4] Wertz, Dorothy. "Conflict Resolution in the Medieval Morality Plays." The Journal of Conflict Resolution 13.4 (1969): 438.

I moralize two meanings in one word." [5]

Shakespeare communicates the vice's primary ability, to create multiple meanings within one phrase, thereby manipulating all those around him. It is this capacity to say one thing, yet mean many others, which often leads to a characterisation of Hal or Falstaff as a Vice figure. When reading the text, particularly Act 1 Scene 2 and Act 4-5, consider the following quote:

"The comic, undignified devils of the mystery plays become the "vices" of the moral play, who degenerate from supernatural demons into riotous clowns, with so much audience sympathy that in the end, when sound church doctrine demands their punishment, they often escape." [6]

4. Machiavelli

Niccolo Machiavelli's seminal text, *The Prince,* was dedicated to Lorenzo the Magnificent, Italian statesman, de facto ruler of the Florentine Republic. In this text, he elaborates on the different ways an individual can usurp and maintain political power within hereditary or mixed monarchies. He also details the duties of a Prince, and how to govern a city which was previously under different governmental authority and laws. Below are some excerpts which are applicable to our study of *Henry.*

"There are fewer difficulties in holding hereditary states, particularly those long accustomed to the family of their prince, than new ones. The reason is that in such states it is sufficient only for the prince to maintain the customs of those who ruled before him, and to deal carefully with circumstances as they arise. In this way a prince of average powers can maintain himself in his state unless he loses it by some extraordinary and excessive force. If he loses it in this way, whenever anything unfortunate happens to the one who took it from him, he will get it back." – Chapter 2

[5] William Shakespeare, Richard III, (c. 1591), Act III, Scene 3, line 6.

[6] Wertz, Dorothy. "Conflict Resolution in the Medieval Morality Plays." The Journal of Conflict Resolution 13.4 (1969): 439.

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"But the difficulties occur in a new principality, particularly in mixed principalities where there is a new addition to an old state. These difficulties arise chiefly from an inherent problem which is there in all new principalities. People change their rulers willingly, hoping to better themselves, and this hope induces 3 them to take up arms against their prince. However they are deceiving themselves, because they afterwards find by experience they have gone from bad to worse. This is partly a result of another natural and common necessity, which is that those who have submitted to the new prince have to support his army and suffer infinite other hardships which he must put upon his new acquisition. In this way, you not only have enemies in all those whom you have injured in seizing that principality, but you also are not able to keep those friends who put you there because you cannot satisfy them in the way they expected. You cannot take strong measures against them, feeling bound to them. For, although one may be very strong in armed forces, yet in entering a state one always needs the cooperation of the local people."- Chapter 3

In many readings of *Henry*, we can examine the extent to which political strategies described above may be influencing Worcester, Hotspur, Hal and/or Henry. The adjective, Machiavellian, is now used in modern lingo to describe sneaky, cunning behaviour , and lacking a moral code. Try to avoid using the adjectival form, as you want to analyse the extent to which Shakespeare's contextual reading of The Prince would have influenced the characterization of Hal.

Plot:

The play is often divided into two separate plots, the first regarding Henry IV and Hal's family conflict (domestic level) and the rebellion waged against Henry IV (state level).

Act	**The Court/Rebels**	**The Tavern/Gad's Hill**
Act 1	King Henry IV, after describing his intent to complete a crusade, Henry IV is informed of the welsh prince's (Owen	Hal sits in Boar's tavern drinking with thieves and criminals, namely Falstaff. He plans, with his fellow thieves, to commit a

	Glendower) successful rebellion in the south. Hotspur, in the north, is detaining Henry's soldiers despite his purported alliance with the king. Hotspur and the Percy family were an integral element to the overthrowing of Richard II and the consequent success of Henry IV's ascension to the throne. Hotspur is thus summoned back to court to explain his conduct. Once Hotspur arrives, he explains that Henry has failed to repay the debt he owes to the Percy family. Henry exits, and Hotspur's family explain the rebellion.	robbery on Gad's hill. Falstaff exits, believing the plan to remain intact. However, Hal and Poins surmise a second plan, one where they pretend to leave Falstaff and co to their own devices, and subsequently accost Falstaff. Poins and Hal will then, ironically, steal from the thieves.
Act 2	Hotspur and Lady Percy discuss the rebellion.	The robbery at Gad's hill takes place successfully, and Hal's plan works: Falstaff is tricked into believing they are being robbed by strangers. On return to the tavern, Falstaff boasts, claiming that their booty was stolen by hundreds, as opposed

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		to only two. He also claims to have fought with the thieves, while we know that they ran immediately from the scene. Hal reveals Falstaff's duplicity in a mocking yet friendly way. Hal and Falstaff take turns enacting mimeses, whereby each character takes a turn at assuming the role of King Henry IV and Hal. This moment of meta-theatre prepares Hal for his discussion with the King in the following act.
Act 3	Mortimer, Glendower and Worcester discuss the arising difficulties surrounding the rebellion. While there was originally much support from the Scots and the Welsh, the defectors of those who had been summoned to fight instigate the need to commence war against Henry IV immediately so as to ensure that they will not have time to inform the king of the rebellion.	Henry IV confronts Hal and informs him of the war to come. Following Hals exit, Henry explains his preference for Hotspur as valiant son as opposed to Hal, as the former would redeem Henry's honour. Hal drafts all those in the Tavern to the war.

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Act 4	The rebels prepare for battle, and hotspur is titled, "King of honour". Word comes that Hotspur's father is ill and will not attend the battle. Hotspur is left to lead the army in this battle. The rebellion have a discussion which attempts to justify their war, "Then to the point. In short time after, he deposed the king; Soon after that, deprived him of his life; And in the neck of that, task'd the whole state"- Act 4 Scene 3, Hotspur.	Falstaff conscripts "ancients, corporals, lieutenants, gentlemen of companies—slaves as ragged as Lazarus in the painted cloth," into his battalion.
Act 5	Henry IV gives Worcester the option of evading war, as he claims he will have mercy. Worcester does not pass this message onto Hotspur, and the rebellion continues to prepare for battle. Hal saves the Kings life in battle, and kills Hotspur. Falstaff plays dead to avoid being killed by Douglas. Hal exits the stage and Falstaff stabs Hotspur in the leg, thereby claiming that he killed Hotspur. Hal's honour is redeemed and Henry IV continues to be King.	

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Preliminary issues to discuss:

1. **Rightful possession of the Crown (legitimacy)**

Due to Henry IV's usurpation, Mortimer challenges the King's rule. Those who once allied with Henry have put into question Henry's authority. The Percy's and Hotspur believe that it is acceptable to take the "crack'd crown" from one who has illegally ascertained the throne. If Henry IV is considered a legitimate ruler (as Shakespeare would so have us believe in Richard II), then it would be considered unacceptable by Elizabethan standards to supersede the one who holds the crown. Throughout the play, we see Henry's trepidation and questioning of his own legitimacy, not only due to the origins of his power but also the heir to which he must give the throne: Hal.

Studying the motif of blood throughout the text may prove a useful guide when examining ideas surrounding legitimacy, see below for examples.

There's neither honesty, manhood, nor good

fellowship in thee, nor thou camest not of the blood

royal, if thou darest not stand for ten shillings.- Falstaff, Act 1 Scene 2

"My blood hath been too cold and temperate,

Unapt to stir at these indignities,

And you have found me; for accordingly

You tread upon my patience: but be sure

I will from henceforth rather be myself,

Mighty and to be fear'd, than my condition;

Which hath been smooth as oil, soft as young down,

And therefore lost that title of respect

Which the proud soul ne'er pays but to the proud."- Henry IV, Act 1 Scene 3

"I cannot blame him: was not he proclaim'd

By Richard that dead is the next of blood?"- Worcester, Act 1 Scene 3

God pardon thee! yet let me wonder, Harry,

At thy affections, which do hold a wing

Quite from the flight of all thy ancestors.

Thy place in council thou hast rudely lost.

Which by thy younger brother is supplied,

And art almost an alien to the hearts

Of all the court and princes of my blood"- Henry IV, Act 3 Scene 2

2. Hal's transformation

Hal's journey from an ostracised son who resides in the Boar's tavern to a stately prince worthy of the Crown propagates much of the actions on stage. Hal's reputation in the court is defined as 'degenerate',

"But wherefore do I tell these news to thee?

Why, Harry, do I tell thee of my foes,

Which art my near'st and dearest enemy?

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Thou that art like enough, through vassal fear,

Base inclination and the start of spleen

To fight against me under Percy's pay,

To dog his heels and curtsy at his frowns,

To show how much thou art degenerate."- King Henry, Act 3 Scene 2

Dramatic irony is apparent in this scene, as the audience are aware that Hal intends to redeem his irresponsible behaviour:

"I know you all, and will awhile uphold
The unyoked humour of your idleness:
Yet herein will I imitate the sun,
Who doth permit the base contagious clouds
To smother up his beauty from the world,
That, when he please again to be himself,
Being wanted, he may be more wonder'd at,
By breaking through the foul and ugly mists
Of vapours that did seem to strangle him.
If all the year were playing holidays,
To sport would be as tedious as to work;
But when they seldom come, they wish'd for come,
And nothing pleaseth but rare accidents.
So, when this loose behavior I throw off
And pay the debt I never promised,
By how much better than my word I am,
By so much shall I falsify men's hopes;
And like bright metal on a sullen ground,
My reformation, glittering o'er my fault,
Shall show more goodly and attract more eyes
Than that which hath no foil to set it off.
I'll so offend, to make offence a skill;
Redeeming time when men think least I will."- Hal, Act 1 Scene 2

Hal's use of meter is of primary importance in Act 1 Scene 2, as we see his dialogue oscillate between prose and iambic pentameter. The former is spoken to those on stage (Poins, Falstaff), the latter spoken only to the audience following the exit of characters from the tavern. We see here that Hal intends to pursue a journey of maturation despite appearances. You may wish at this juncture to consider the extent to which this reflects Machiavellian principles outlined in the context above. We can, however, read this as less a duplicitous, malicious act and more of a political tactic so as to lower expectations which surround his actions.

Hal redeems his jovial yet irresponsible behaviour when saving his father from an assailant, Douglas, thereby redeeming his 'honour' and capacity as a dutiful Prince.

"Stay, and breathe awhile:

Thou hast redeem'd thy lost opinion,

And show'd thou makest some tender of my life,

In this fair rescue thou hast brought to me."- King Henry, Act 5, Scene 4

3. Falstaff

Falstaff's origins are in debate. Was he a purely fictional creation? Was he based on the political leader of the Lollard party and friend to Henry IV, John Oldcastle? The latter question is somewhat answered in the text, as Hal describes Falstaff as 'my old lad of the castle' (Henry IV, I.ii.41). If Falstaff originated from Oldcastle, the character can be seen to align with proto-Puritan doctrines.[7] Through this lens, we see Falstaff as a

[7] Proto puritan meaning the origins of puritanism. Puritanism refers to the the beliefs or principles of a group of English Protestants of the late 16th and 17th centuries who regarded the Reformation of the Church under Elizabeth I as incomplete and sought to

personification of puritan doctrines. We see him as an authority on moral sensibility (as seen in his discussion of honour). However, this reading does not account for his irresponsible actions throughout the play which, by all accounts, defy religious sentiment. If he is a purely fictional creation and separated from his historical origin, we can argue that Falstaff is based on the 'Vice' character archetype evident within morality plays. Perhaps his stabbing of Hotspur and claiming of victory, his 'counterfeit' and contradictory behaviour throughout the play reflects the Vice more than the moral instructor? This question is one which you must consider in your study of the text, as your answer to this query will guide your reading of the text's themes.

One can also argue that Falstaff is a figure of old sensibilities and is therefore placed in diametric opposition to Hal, a figure of new sensibilities and ways of thinking. As you can see, there are many different readings of Falstaff. He is, as Hegel argues in relation to all of Shakespeare's greatest characters, an agent of his own free will. Therefore, ensure to provide a balanced argument in response to any questions posed regarding a study of Falstaff. For example, that posed by NESA:

Falstaff has been labelled as one of 'nature's predators'. Write an extended response in which you challenge or affirm this view regarding Falstaff in Shakespeare's King Henry IV, Part 1.

4. Honour

Honour is a complex term studied within the play, as each of the primary characters in the play portray a different, if not dichotomous, understanding of the idea. Hotspur's understanding of honour is founded on the assumption that military glory is akin to greatness (see Act 1 Scene 3). To be honourable in battle is, indeed, to be seen as an honourable man. This understanding of honour is juxtaposed with Hal's

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simplify and regulate forms of worship.i.e extreme form of protestantism (as seen in texts like the Crucible).

convoluted understanding of honour, as he believes that such a title is attributed to noble deeds. He does, however, purposively relinquishe his appearance of being honourable so as to achieve an objective. The parallel between Hotspur and Hal was noted by Stephen Greenblatt during his explanation of Hotspur's depiction in Samuel Daniel's *Civil Wars.* Daniels was the first to adjust the age of Hotspur in his play; Shakespeare followed suit and thereupon allowed Hotspur to serve as a dramatic foil for Hal in *Henry IV.* A different understanding of honour can be seen in the characterisation of Henry IV. The King's legitimacy of rulership and creation of peace within the country defines his belief in what it means to be 'honourable'.

Enter Falstaff, the "mad-cap" fool who, with brilliant precision and balance, makes us question why an individual would die for an abstract concept (thereby foreshadowing Hotspur's death).

" 'Tis not due yet. I would be loath to pay Him before His day. What need I be so forward with Him that calls not on me? Well, 'tis no matter. Honour pricks me on. Yea, but how if honor prick me off when I come on? How then? Can honor set to a leg? no. Or an arm? no. Or take away the grief of a wound? No. Honor hath no skill in surgery, then? No. What is honor? A word. What is in that word "honor"? What is that "honor"? Air. A trim reckoning. Who hath it? He that died o' Wednesday. Doth he feel it? No. Doth he hear it? No. 'Tis insensible, then? Yea, to the dead. But will it not live with the living? No. Why? Detraction will not suffer it. Therefore, I'll none of it. Honor is a mere scutcheon. And so ends my catechism."- Falstaff, Act 5 Scene 1

We must ask ourselves, is Falstaff being a cowardly fool? Or a pragmatic philosopher who promotes the sanctity of life and subjugates any societal ideal which destroys such life? Unlike many other characters in the play, Falstaff enacts his own philosophy, hiding from the war at hand (except, of course, when attacked by Douglas). Your answer to these questions shall guide an explanation and understanding of Falstaff the character and his role within the text.