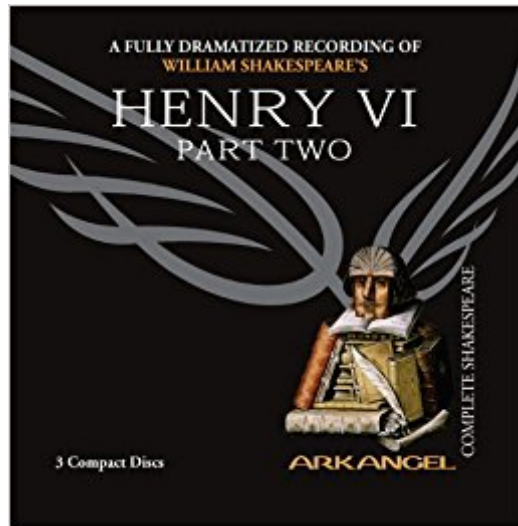




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Henry VI, Part Two (Arkangel Shakespeare)



Synopsis

[Full-Cast Audio Theater Dramatization. David Tennant plays Henry VI, and Kelly Hunter plays Queen Margaret. Norman Rodway is the Duke of Gloucester, Isla Blair the Duchess of Gloucester, and Clive Merrison plays the Duke of York.] Young King Henry VI has married the beautiful Margaret of Anjou but the new Queen is ruthless and ambitious. Supported by the powerful Duke of Suffolk, Margaret plots the overthrow of her enemies, chief among them the Duke of Gloucester, Protector during Henry's infancy. But the Duke of York also aspires to the crown, and the common people, led by Jack Cade, are in rebellion. To the despair of the mild young King, England descends into civil war.

Book Information

Audio CD: 1 pages

Publisher: BBC Audiobooks America; Unabridged edition (September 15, 2005)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1932219137

ISBN-13: 978-1932219135

Product Dimensions: 5.6 x 0.9 x 6.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 5 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars 11 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #3,224,123 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #94 in Books > Books on CD >

Authors, A-Z > (S) > Shakespeare, William #328 in Books > Books on CD > Poetry & Drama

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Customer Reviews

"Warren's impressively scholarly edition of Henry IV, Part 2 is genuinely new and adroitly negotiates the relation between the Folio and Quarto texts of the play. Warren provides a thorough and exemplary scholarly introduction."--Studies in English Literature 1500-1900 "Warren's impressively scholarly edition of Henry IV, Part 2 is genuinely new and adroitly negotiates the relation between the Folio and Quarto texts of the play. Warren provides a thorough and exemplary scholarly introduction."--Studies in English Literature 1500-1900 "Warren's impressively scholarly edition of Henry IV, Part 2 is genuinely new and adroitly negotiates the relation between the Folio and Quarto texts of the play. Warren provides a thorough and exemplary scholarly introduction."--Studies in English Literature 1500-1900 --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

William Shakespeare (1564-1616), English poet and dramatist of the Elizabethan and early Jacobean period, is the most widely known author in all of English literature and often considered the greatest. He was an active member of a theater company for at least twenty years, during which time he wrote many great plays. Plays were not prized as literature at the time, and Shakespeare was not widely read until the middle of the eighteenth century, when a great upsurge of interest in his works began that continues today.

This is a play about leadership, or rather the lack of it. Written early in William Shakespeare's career, the three parts of Henry VI chronicle the weak leadership of England under Henry VI and the civil war that resulted. In "1 Henry VI," Henry is a mere boy but already king. England is at war with France over territorial rights, while the noblemen of the King's court are bitterly divided. Characters of principle, such as Talbot and Gloucester, are blissfully unaware of the poisonous politics that threaten the kingdom. Those aware of the threat, such as Plantagenet and Suffolk, are without principle and supplying much of the poison. Caught in the middle, young King Henry has no support in his own court. Worse, he is without a father or mentor to train him in the art of effective leadership. With the English court divided, the French regain many of their cities including Rouen, under the able military leadership of Joan of Arc (in Shakespeare's play, Joan is a harlot and witch, as the English viewed her at the time). Lord Talbot mounts a counterattack to retake Rouen but is trapped by superior forces while attempting to capture Bordeaux. Back in London, the quarreling Dukes are pushing the kingdom toward civil war (a.k.a. the Wars of the Roses). They fail to send reinforcement troops to France and as result the English are defeated at Bordeaux and Talbot is slain. In another battle, the English capture Joan of Arc and Margaret of Anjou. Joan is condemned to death at the stake while Margaret is groomed to marry Henry VI as part of settlement that ends the war with France. As the play ends, the Wars of the Roses is poised to begin.¹ Henry VI is a cautionary tale of how bad leadership can lead to a nation's undoing. To quote William Baldwin in "A Mirror for Magistrates" (1559), "The goodness or badness of any realm lieth in the goodness or badness of the rulers." For more, read Janis Lull's insightful introduction. The play itself makes for a highly entertaining read, involving "battles, castles, and marching armies; kings, queens, knights and esquires . . ." (to quote Irish dramatist Sean O'Casey).

As always, the Arkangel Shakespeare series is excellent. I read the play but the dramatization adds so much depth to written word. The only fault I have with the production is that there beginning and ending notifications on the CD to alert the CD is beginning and ending; that is, it is time to change

the CD.

Very well edited!

Note that this review is of the Oxford World's Classics edition of Henry VI Part One. seems to have a hard time sorting out which editions of Shakespeare plays are equivalent to each other, so that this review also is referred to Henry VI Part Two and probably others, to which it does not belong.*The First Part of Henry VI, while certainly not Shakespeare's masterwork, is still an interesting read both for its place in the earliest period of Shakespeare's development as a dramatist and for its own artistic merits. The play is written entirely in verse and contains many rhyming couplets, a characteristic of Shakespeare's other early work such as The Comedy of Errors; the language of the play is less mature than that of the later plays and the its tone much less subtle, lacking the keen characterization of which Shakespeare was to prove such a master (to read the Henry VI plays and then Hamlet in quick succession, as I did, is quite a jolting transition). Nevertheless, 1 Henry VI is a fun play, its sonorous pentametres rolling merrily from the tongue as the reader is swept from one melodramatic bloodbath to another. So much for the merits of the play; now for the edition. The Oxford World Classics editions of Shakespeare are usually excellent, but not this one. The editor, Michael Taylor, is a poor writer who stuffs his introduction with meaningless critical jargon (as other editors of the series also do, but in their cases with less verbosity and to good effect). He is unable to maintain a professional tone either in his introduction or his textual notes, both of which are replete with gratuitous contractions and other colloquialisms that are totally out of place in a scholarly work of this nature. His comments on the text cannot always avoid being salient, but he seems to spend much space needlessly defining Elizabethan words or constructions that either he has already treated, or the glossing of which any reader who has spent even a short time with Shakespeare's language cannot but take as an insult to his intelligence. The text is what really matters, of course, and this edition at least has an adequate apparatus; but since, considering the scarcity of the Oxford editions, this is not likely to be the first version of 1 Henry VI that you come across if you are looking for a copy of the play, there is no reason to seek it out.*This also means that I cannot write a separate review for the Oxford World's Classics edition of Part Two, which is a much better edition than this. Get your act together, !

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