

Quiz: Henry IV Part 1, Act I – Answer Key

1. What news does Westmoreland report to King Henry regarding the battle between Mortimer and Glendower?

Westmoreland reports bad news from Wales. Mortimer has been captured by Glendower and his men have been massacred and mutilated. Even though Mortimer was fighting in support of the King, Henry shows little regret over his capture. Mortimer has a legal claim to the throne, having been named heir apparent by Richard II, the man Henry overthrew to take the throne.

2. When Henry hears of Hotspur's victory over Douglas, what is his reaction?

Henry relishes in Hotspur's accomplishments. He wishes his own son, Prince Hal, was more like the valiant son of Northumberland. He further wishes that some fairy had exchanged the two sons at birth so that now they could be returned to their rightful fathers and Hotspur would be next in line for the kingship.

3. What problem does Hotspur present for Henry after the victory over Douglas?

Hotspur took many prisoners in the victory, but arrogantly refuses to turn them over to King Henry. Although Hotspur is behaving according to the law of arms, which stated that the victor in a battle could keep all prisoners of war (except those of royal blood, who had to be turned over to the King), Henry reacts as if his authority has been challenged. He sends for Hotspur and calls a council to look into the matter.

4. Describe Sir John Falstaff.

Falstaff is fat, lazy, and crude thief. He enjoys sparring verbally with Prince Hal, who he hopes will show him favors when Hal becomes king. Falstaff and King Henry are one of the important pairs in the play. Both are father-figures to Hal, but in different environments. As King, Henry stole the crown from Richard II. As a thief, Falstaff steals "crowns" from travelers. As the play progresses, notice how Falstaff is a "mirror" of King Henry in other ways.

5. Why does Prince Hal finally agree to take part in the robbery at Gad's Hill?

When Ned Poins first proposes the robbery, Hal refuses. After Falstaff leaves, Poins proposes that he and Hal hang back during the robbery, then disguise themselves and rob the robbers. He suggests that the best part of the plan will be listening to Falstaff's lies when they meet afterwards. Hal finally agrees to take part.

Hal's role in the robbery is interesting. He is looking forward to making a fool of Falstaff. He knows Falstaff can't report the robbery, since he is himself a robber. While it may be unseemly for a prince to take part in a highway robbery, is stealing from a thief an example of true justice? Or is Hal continuing his father's habit of stealing "crowns"?

Who said it and what is he/she talking about?

6. Yet herein will I imitate the sun

**Who doth permit the base contagious clouds
To smother up his beauty from the world.**

In a soliloquy at the end of Scene 2, Prince Hal informs the audience that his "loose behavior" is only a disguise. He plans to publicly reform himself to become a responsible, virtuous heir to the throne. Hal shrewdly realizes that when he chooses to break with his low-life companions (such as Falstaff), he will seem better (by contrast) than if he had led a virtuous life all along. Hal also seems to be demonstrating wisdom here. As the future King, he is getting to know the people he will govern on a level that is denied most monarchs. Hal's "secret identity" is also very effective dramatically. Now the audience knows something that the rest of the characters on stage don't.

7. Worcester, get thee gone, for I do see Danger and disobedience in thine eye.

When Henry and the Percies meet in Scene 3 to discuss Hotspur's refusal to surrender his Scottish prisoners, Worcester reminds Henry that the nobles he is threatening have placed him on the throne. Henry quickly banishes him from the court, sensing that he represents a real threat to his security.

8. By Heaven, methinks it were an easy leap To pluck bright honor from the pale-faced moon, Or dive into the bottom of the deep...

Hotspur is characterized by his devotion to the concept of honor. Worcester cleverly plays on this by reminding Hotspur that their family has been blamed for Richard's death, not Henry. In this quote, Hotspur's imagination becomes inflamed thinking of the honor to be won by rebelling against Henry. He sees himself grappling with danger, diving to the bottom of the sea or leaping to the moon to rescue "bright honor."

These images are the first indications that Hotspur's honor is his goddess. The language is energetic and physical. Hotspur seems to draw his power from the very idea of honor.