

Fall 2023

**THE WARS OF THE ROSES**

## Henry VI – Part 2

**Synopsis:** England slips further into civil war and anarchy with a weak King Henry VI unable or unwilling to make decisions. Two larger than life figures, Richard of York and Margaret of Anjou are introduced and they will continue to take over the series of plays. Then, there is Jack Cade and his populist rebellion, with the delicious quote “The first thing we do let’s kill all the lawyers”!

**Discussion Topics:**

- Jack Cade’s rebellion is profoundly anti-intellectual, with the infamous quote about lawyers imbued with several layers of horror. Populist rebellions often encourage mistrust of knowledge and the ‘elite’ who transact knowledge. How does Jack Cade function within the context of the play, and what lessons can we learn from that for today’s US?
- A just society requires steady interpretation of law and a strong authority willing to uphold justice. King Henry VI is too preoccupied with his books and unwilling to administer justice. Shakespeare illustrates the breakdown of law and order by juxtaposing the murder of Gloucester with a comedic trial by combat between two “low” characters. How does the structure of the play allow tension to be maintained?

Folger Shakespeare Link: <https://www.folger.edu/explore/shakespeares-works/henry-vi-part-2/>  
Carnegie-Stout Public Library also has paper copies of the play.

Kanopy BBC production link: <https://www.kanopy.com/en/dubuque/video/5332690>

**Discussion: Oct. 8, 2023 @ 2 PM**

Carnegie-Stout Public Library 360 W 11th Street, Dubuque, IA