

Fall 2023

## THE WARS OF THE ROSES

### Henry VI – Part 3

**Synopsis:** The cost of the wars is keenly felt both by the nobles and the commoners as two “monsters” stand in opposition to each other: the misshapen Richard of York and the serpent-tongued Queen Margaret. Fortunes ebb and flow between the Yorkists and Lancastrians. The childlike and saintly King Henry VI tries to keep himself apart from the fray, but horror intrudes into every aspect of life.

**Discussion Topics:**

- The horrors of civil war are most vividly illustrated by the suffering of fathers and sons, both among the nobles and the commoners. The killing of children is especially brutal. How does Shakespeare structure the deaths so their impact is additive and not numbing?
- The civil war is intensified by two motives that become intertwined: revenge vs pursuit of power. How do the two motives feed off each other in the characters of Richard and Margaret? Do we have political characters in US today where these motives influence their careers?
- King Henry VI is ill-suited to the crown and is perhaps best suited to be a saint. How does Shakespeare build an almost a Christ-like character to contrast with the monsters? (The Simple Life speech in Act II-5, death scene in Act V-6, also funeral in Richard III)

Folger Shakespeare Link: <https://www.folger.edu/explore/shakespeares-works/henry-vi-part-3/>  
Carnegie-Stout Public Library also has paper copies of the play.

Kanopy BBC production link: <https://www.kanopy.com/en/dubuque/video/5332692>

***Novels that provide a different perspective:***

Gregory, P. (2012) *The Lady of the Rivers*. Reprint edition. New York: Atria.

Penn, T. (2020) *The Brothers York: A Royal Tragedy*. Illustrated edition. New York: Simon & Schuster.

**Discussion: Nov. 12, 2023 @ 2 PM**

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