

# HENRY IV, PART ONE

Classroom resources for Shakespeare's dramatic history play.

## History vs. Fiction

Check out the historical context section on pages 1-3 to get the background info on the Bolingbrokes, Mortimers, and more. Then compare that real-life drama to the story Shakespeare chooses to tell.

## Who's that again?

You'll find a simple family tree on page 4 to help visually guide you through all those people.

## Discussion Points

Get the conversation rolling with the questions on page 4. These can also serve as essay prompts.

## Quizzes and Vocab

Say what? Find some of the Bard's less obvious vocabulary on page 8. Pages 6 & 7 are a printable quotes quiz for students.

## Actors Speak

Actor insights from OSF's own troupe, pages 9-13.



## Historical Context

*How did Henry IV become king?*

Edward III was a popular ruler during his 50 year reign. He was known for his military prowess and restoring the royal authority that had been destroyed by his own father (Edward II). Edward III did what he could to ensure the royal bloodlines continued; he fathered twelve children. Good thing, too, because only nine of his kids survived childhood.

However, his first two sons—Edward of Woodstock (aka the Black Prince) and Lionel of Antwerp—only produced two surviving heirs between them. Both Edward and Lionel died young.

The crown passed on to the Black Prince's only surviving



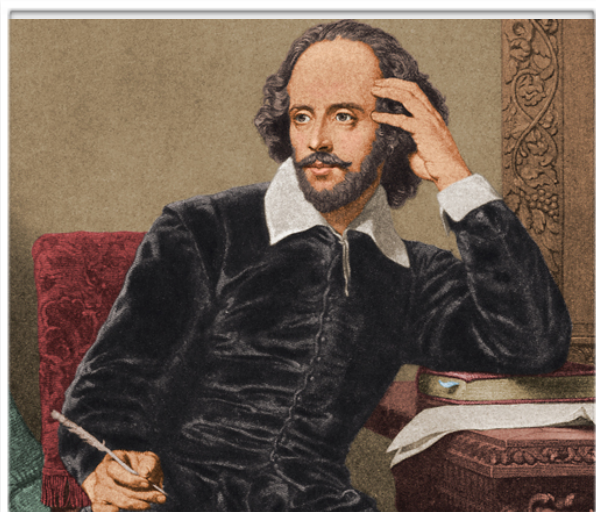
son, Richard of Bordeaux (Richard II) in 1377 at the ripe old age of 10. Edward III's sixth child and oldest surviving son, John of Gaunt, along with a council, actually governed the country for the first several years of Richard II's reign. Richard's rule was generally harmonious...except for the revolting peasants, the plague, and the rampant favoritism which resulted in a short-lived government overthrow led by his other uncle, Thomas of Woodstock. Other than that, things were harmonious. At least they were, until Richard II totally lost his mind, behaved like a tyrant (aka jerk), and disinherited John of Gaunt's oldest surviving son, Henry of Bolingbroke. Then it got real.



Richard II didn't like Bolingbroke because, about ten years previously, Bolingbroke had helped Thomas of Woodstock, Earl of Gloucester, and the Lords Apellant temporarily strip Richard II of power. Thus, Richard banished Bolingbroke. When John of Gaunt died, Richard II also stripped Bolingbroke of his inheritance, confiscated his lands, *and* murdered Thomas of Woodstock (you know—the other conspirator).

Both Richard II and Bolingbroke were about 30 years old at this point, and Bolingbroke couldn't wait for Richard to live out his life. Bolingbroke invaded England on the premise of reclaiming his own lands, but he went on to toss Richard in the dungeon and claim the crown. Parliament eventually said, "Well...okay," and officially deposed Richard II. He died in captivity shortly thereafter. Bolingbroke, now Henry IV, became King in 1399.

If they were following the normal succession rules, upon Richard II's death / abdication of the throne, the family of Lionel of Antwerp would be next in line. (Lionel and his daughter, Philippa of Ulster, preceded Richard II in death.) But of course, Bolingbroke wasn't playing by those rules. Philippa's family, the Mortimer's, actually lost their spot in line behind Richard II thanks to Henry IV – specifically slighted was Edmund Mortimer, Earl of March.



### *Shakespeare's Version*

Shakespeare wrote *Henry IV, Part 1* for Elizabeth I during the late 1590s. Elizabeth I was a direct descendent of John of Gaunt (through the Beaufort line, daughter of King Henry VIII) and part of the House of Tudor. Shakespeare took some theatrical license with this history, adding embellishments and ensuring King Henry IV's party was very heroic. Bill knew his audience.

Our play begins in 1402. King Henry IV is having trouble with his Scottish & Welsh borders, and the tension with the Percy clan is increasing. Harry Percy, nicknamed Hotspur for his fiery temper, has fallen out of favor with the King because he refuses

to turnover some recently captured Scot prisoners. Hotspur would rather use them as ransom for Edmund Mortimer, who's sister, Elizabeth (aka Kate—because that's a normal nickname for Elizabeth) happens to be Hotspur's wife.

Edmund initially supports Henry IV in the fight against the Welsh rebels, but he is captured by the notorious wizard Owen Glendower and marries Owen's daughter, Catrin. Owen is the leader of the Welsh rebels who are unhappy with the deposition of Richard II. Despite his crazy, Richard II gave a lot of opportunities to the Welsh people.

Harry "Hotspur" Percy and his family are powerful landowners in Northern England. They are offended when King Henry questions their loyalty, and this prompts Hotspur and Edmund to join together with the Scots and the Welsh, along with Thomas, Earl of Worcester, and Henry, Earl of Northumberland (Hotspur's father). Rebellion is brewing.

Not everyone is aligned against the King. His allies include the Earl of Westmorland, Ralph de Neville, who is married to Henry IV's younger half-sister Joan Beaufort. John of Lancaster is one of Henry's four sons and Sir Walter Blunt is a long-standing supporter of John of Gaunt and Henry IV.

Hal, aka Henry, Prince of Wales, is Henry IV's oldest son and heir to the throne. Hal's not very interested in preparing to rule; he instead spends his time with the charismatic yet corrupt and drunken John Falstaff. When the rebels come knocking, though, Hal quickly understands that he should take his rightful place on the battlefield and prove his commitment to his father.

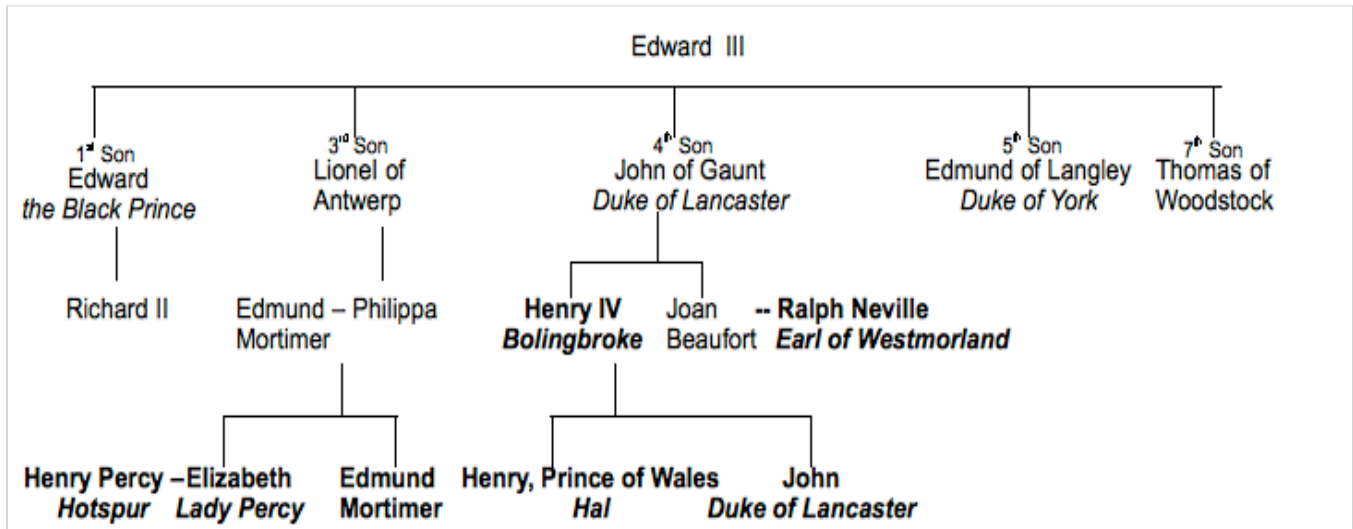
Hal is awarded a high ranking post and leads the King's forces into battle at Shrewsbury, where he meets the rebel forces led by Hotspur.

No spoilers from us. Watch the play and find out who lives.



## Family Tree

*Beginning with Edward III, a simple tool to help you keep track of all those Henries...*



## Discussion Ideas

*Introduce these questions to your class for an exciting socratic seminar, or use them as essay prompts or journaling exercises —what you will!*

1. How is honor viewed by various characters in the play, specifically between Hotspur and Falstaff? Do you think the play/Shakespeare takes a stance on which viewpoint is right?
2. Falstaff is known as a glutton for food, alcohol and prostitutes. Throughout the play he lies, steals, and profits from the war. Is his behavior morally reprehensible? Or is he an enlightened man who, seeing the system is corrupt, will not play by its rules?
3. Do you think Hal behaves so poorly because he wants to have fun before he becomes king, or is it part of a more elaborate plan to put people off? Do you think his soliloquy at the end of act 1 scene 2 is a spontaneous idea, or a plan that he has had for a long time?
4. Is Hotspur's death a product of his own ambitions, or is he a victim of the manipulations of other people?



*“In faith, I’ll break thy little finger, Harry, an if thy will not tell me all things true!”*

## Quiz Questions

*See if your students can identify who said what line. It will help indicate whether they are grasping the characters’ personalities, wants, and contributions to the plot.*

*It may be helpful to hint that noblemen often spoke in verse and lower class characters in prose.*

*Extra credit can be given if they name the circumstances under which the character spoke the line.*

### TEACHER’S KEY:

- |                   |                |
|-------------------|----------------|
| 1. Falstaff       | 9. Mortimer    |
| 2. Lady Percy     | 10. Falstaff   |
| 3. Hotspur        | 11. Hotspur    |
| 4. Falstaff       | 12. Hotspur    |
| 5. Falstaff       | 13. Prince Hal |
| 6. Prince Hal     | 14. Prince Hal |
| 7. Owen Glendower | 15. Falstaff   |
| 8. Hotspur        | 16. Douglas    |

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

**Name the character who said:**

1. “Do not, when thou art king, hang a thief.”
  
2. “In faith, I'll break thy little finger, Harry,  
An if thy wilt not tell me all things true.”
  
3. “Come, wilt thou see me ride?  
And when I am o' horseback, I will swear  
I love thee infinitely.”
  
4. “A king's son! If I do not beat thee out of thy kingdom with a dagger of lath, and drive all thy subjects before thee like a flock of wild geese, I'll never wear hair on my face more.”
  
5. “Why thou knowest I am as valiant as Hercules. But beware instinct. Instinct is a great matter. I was now a coward upon instinct.”
  
6. “That villainous abominable misleader of youth, Falstaff, that old white bearded satan.”
  
7. “I can call spirits from the vasty deep.”
  
8. “Oh he is as tedious  
As a tired horse, a railing wife,  
Worse than a smokey house.”

9. "This is the deadly spite that angers me:  
My wife can speak no english, I no welsh."
10. "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? No. What is honor? A word. What is that word honor? Air."
11. "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,  
Where fathom line could never touch the ground,  
And pluck up drownèd honor by the locks,  
So he that doth redeem her thence might wear  
Without corrival all her dignities."
12. "Why, look you, I am whipped and scourged with rods,  
Nettled and stung with pismires when I hear of this vile politician Bolingbroke."
13. "I'll so offend to make offense a skill  
Redeeming time when men think least I will."
14. "I will redeem all this on Percy's head,  
And in the closing of some glorious day,  
Be bold to tell you that I am your son,  
When I will wear a garment all of blood  
And stain my favors in a bloody mask,  
Which washed away, shall scour my shame with it."
15. "Do thou amend thy face, and I'll amend my life."
16. "Now, by my sword, I will kill all his coats.  
I'll murder all his wardrobe, piece by piece,  
Until I meet the King."

# Glossary of Terms

*Helpful to any reader, below you will find some vocabulary to get you through those soliloquies.*

**sepulchre**

*a tomb*

**gallant**

*brave, spirited*

**sovereign**

*a nation's ruler*

**dissolutely**

*indifferent to moral restraints*

**countenance**

*facial expression*

**vizards**

*masks*

**popinjay**

*parrot*

**gammon**

*smoked ham*

**varlet**

*servant*

**palisadoes**

*in war, stakes placed in rows to defend an area*

**indenture**

*act of apprentice*

**intractable**

*difficult to solve*

**zeal**

*enthusiasm*

**wanton**

*indulgent*

**portent**

*a sign, omen*

**belie**

*to give a false impression*

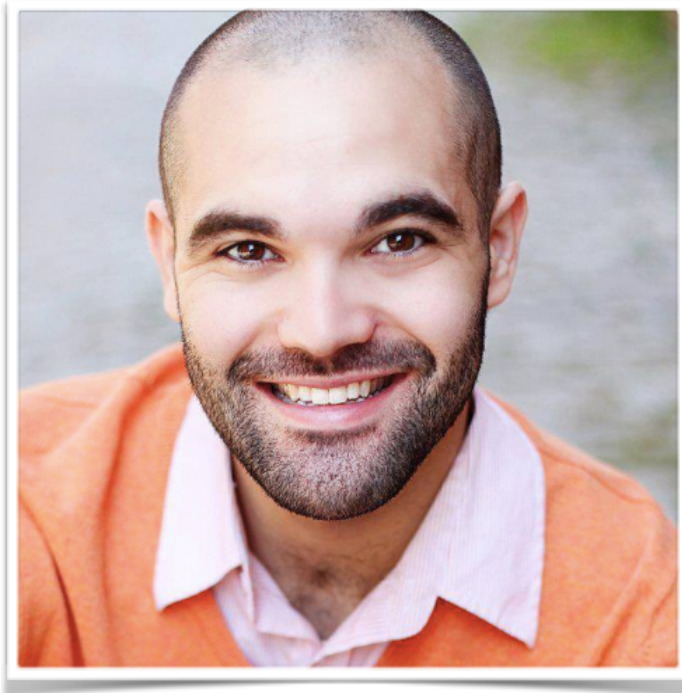


*“I can no longer brook thy vanities.”*



## Actor Insights

*Read some specific insights from the Ohio Shakespeare Festival actors. Here, they share moments in the script, or rehearsal that significantly impacted their performances.*



### Henry “Hotspur” Percy

*Played by Joe Pine*

Hotspur is one of the most challenging roles I have ever played. Because of the challenge he poses, he is also one of my absolute favorite roles in all of Shakespeare. Reading *Henry IV, Part One*, Hotspur seems to serve as the villain of the story. But early on in the rehearsal process, director Terry Burlger and I discovered that to simply play Hotspur as a villain would be to miss all the incredible depth that Shakespeare wrote for this character. Hotspur is, as his name would suggest, a hot-head, and I must confess that my biggest struggle playing him was to not rely too heavily on that one characteristic. There is a lot of humor to be found in Hotspur’s words; my struggle was to balance his hair-trigger temper

with wit and a sense of humor, showing all sides of his character and not turning him into an angry caricature. Shakespeare provides many opportunities to explore Hotspur’s idiosyncrasies, my favorite being his propensity to—in the middle of a passionate speech—lose his train of thought and come to a screeching halt as he tries to reclaim a lost thought:

**Hotspur:** Why look you, I am whipped and scourged with rods,  
 Nettled and stung with pismires, when I hear  
 Of this vile politician, this Bolingbroke.  
 In Richards time,—what do you call the place?—  
 A plague upon it, it is in Gloucestershire;  
 Twas where the madcap duke his uncle kept,  
 His uncle York; where I first bow’d my knee

Unto this king of smiles, this Bolingbroke,—  
S'blood!—

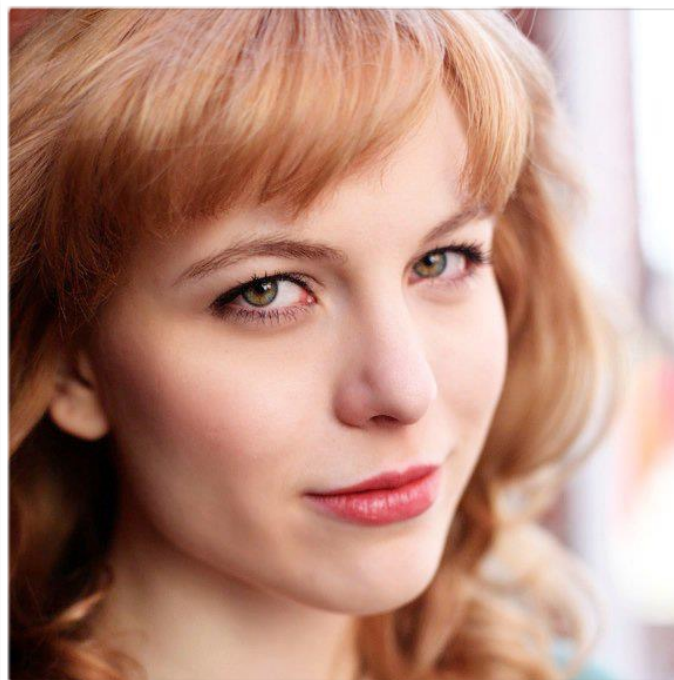
When you and he came back from Ravensburgh.

**Northumberland:** At Berkley castle.

**Hotspur:** You say true.

This is an excerpt from Hotspur's first scene; it is the audience's introduction to his character, so it is important to look closely at the words. There is a reason Shakespeare included this little moment where Hotspur forgets the name of the castle. Hotspur gets himself so wound up that thoughts start to jumble themselves up in his head. Multiple times in that same scene, other characters try to draw him back to the topic at hand, only for Hotspur to remember a particularly aggravating detail and blow up all over again. To play him as simply angry and raging can easily allow an actor to miss all those subtleties—unless that actor and his director are really looking at the words on the page.

My biggest challenge was to first find and then make sense of all these moments to help the audience understand Hotspur—even possibly relate to him. Far from being a mustache twirling villain, he is a complex human being with a rather just motive who gets caught up in the manipulations of his uncle. He is a man renowned for his prowess on the battlefield; he is honorable, noble, impatient, witty, clever, and stubborn. And I think he truly loves his wife. My hope was that, by the end of the play, the audience would care deeply for both Hal and Hotspur, so that when they faced each other on the battlefield, they would feel conflicted over who should win.



## Lady Percy

*Played by Tess Burgler*

Lady Percy is a small but impactful female presence in *Henry IV, Part One*. When looking at her scenes with Hotspur for the first time, I found it all too easy to fall into the trap of playing her as a peeved-off wife—snapping out questions, throwing around accusations without allowing him to respond, threatening him, and then getting upset when he responds in kind. This can't be a woman in a happy marriage, right?

But I'm pleased to say that is not who she is,

and that is not how I eventually played her. Really—Will never writes his ladies (or his men, for that matter) in such a flat and predictable way. Under Terry's direction, I discovered she and Hotspur are actually pretty well matched. She can put up with his nonsense because she's strong and has a biting tongue—she'll call him on his nonsense right away and leave him no wiggle room. And while in the moment that annoys Hotspur, he loves and respects her for her feistiness. Think about it: Hotspur isn't going to like a prim princess. He wouldn't even be able to see her.

Lady Percy loves her husband, even if she doesn't always like him. And honestly, I think they get excited by the kind of fighting they do in Act II scene iii. For them, it's the weird little way they express their love and keep their marriage interesting. Instead of letting a biting, real anger take over the scene, we played instead with a tit for tat, battle of the sexes vibe.

In the end, Lady Percy shows us a vulnerable side—or at least a fragment of one. She starts it off as a challenge.

**Lady Percy:** Do you not love me? Do you not indeed?

Well do not then for since you love me not

I will not love myself.

*"Fine. Don't love me. Whatever,"* she says. But then, she asks again in earnest, a little unhappy with how far the "jesting" has gone.

**Lady Percy:** Do you not love me?

Nay, tell me if you speak in jest or no.

And he senses her honest distress. He switches tactics and responds more gently, effectively ending the argument.

**Hotspur:** Come, wilt thou see me ride?

And when I am on horseback I will swear

I love thee infinitely, Kate.

He even gives in, and Kate gets what she wants in the end.

**Hotspur:** Whither I go, thither shall you go, too;

Tonight will I set forth, tomorrow you.

Will this content you, Kate?

**Lady Percy:** It must of force.

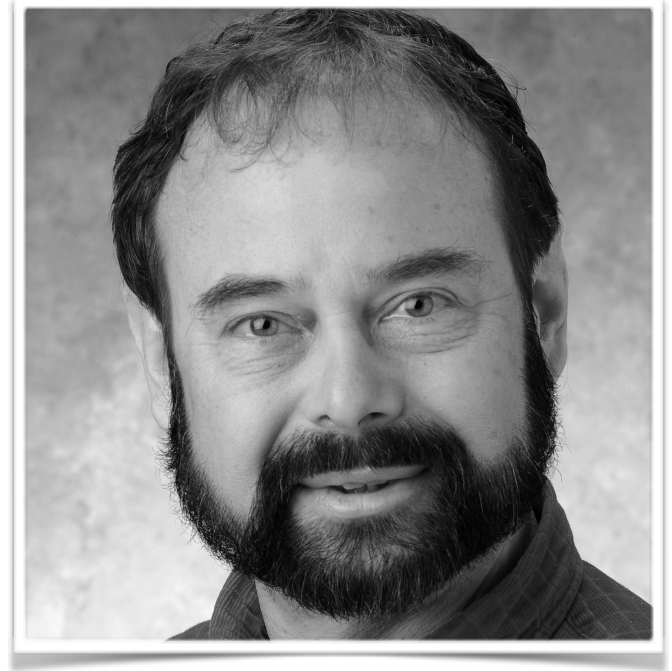
*"Sigh...I guess so,"* she says. Then she throws the audience a knowing grin. She knows how to communicate with her husband better than any one; and she knows how to get what she wants.

The audience is left with a little snapshot into a bizarre, slightly broken, loving marriage. We care more about Hotspur because we see a little of his humanity. Haven't we all had this same domestic spat with a loved one? Well, maybe a slightly more civilized version. I think Lady Percy helps us relate to Hotspur by showing us—the audience—how to love him.

## John Falstaff

*Played by Terry Burgler*

My favorite playwright is Shakespeare and I think my favorite character might well be Falstaff. My first Shakespeare production was *Henry IV, Part One* my last year at Princeton. Falstaff was played by Dan Seltzer, a wonderful professional actor who also happened to be the primary Shakespearean professor at the university. He was not a large man and only the littlest bit rotund, but his Falstaff was gigantic in every sense of the word. I fell in love with the character. He is one of the most irresistible rogues and liars in all of literature. Indeed, "Falstaffian" is a term applied to his various descendants and inheritors in all subsequent literature, Porthos of *The Three Musketeers* being one that jumps immediately to mind.



He is described as "a great fat man," a "horseback breaker," and a "huge hill of flesh," along with many other images of immensity. He is also described as a white-bearded Satan and acknowledges himself "that he is old, these white hairs do witness it." He is an enthusiastic thief, a compulsive liar and an unrepentant con man.

So what's to like about him? First of all, his very enthusiasm and his total lack of repentance. He is not immoral, he is amoral. He is totally committed to indulging all his senses and his every whim. There is a twinkle to his devilry and an uncanny ability to escape every predicament. He shouldn't even be alive, given his age, his physical state and the innumerable times he has tempted fate and the hangman, yet he drinks, dances, whores and steals and consistently lives to do so another day. There is in fact a sort of immortality about him, like one of mythology's lesser trickster gods such as Loki. Even when he dies in the play, he rises like an obese Phoenix.

So how does one go about inhabiting a character of that scale? Well, for starters, you commit to the physical scale described in the play. Both times I have performed Falstaff I have had a marvelously

effective fat suit suggesting a man of about 350 pounds. As director of the production I had the luxury of giving him his first entrance asleep on top of a large tavern table lugged in by six struggling tavern workers, groaning under the strain, leaving no doubt about the reality of his girth. He's sleeping off a night of carousing with the Prince. While I take some credit as an actor playing the weight effectively--my wife immediately recognized a dear and very large friend in the way I rose, sat, walked and descended the stairs-- the fat suit did its fair share of the work for me. Even without the accompanying weight, the sheer volume of the suit put the same strictures on me as actual flesh would have (the three times I was on my back in the play, I felt like a turtle trying to right itself).

Next you need a voice that stands up to the visual image, which suggests a lower register, strong palate resonance, good diaphragmatic support and rich breath flow, along with thoroughly rounded vowels, well sounded consonants and perhaps a bit of a growing gruffness--"How the fat rogue roared!" I also felt that Falstaff's girth couldn't rule out physical liveliness such as the speed with which he flees the mock robbery or the physical theatricality of his tavern performance in Act II, Scene iv. ("Shall we have a play extempore?") That physical liveliness was also important to support the quickness of his wit. Despite being awakened from a sound sleep in his first scene, he is able to match Prince Hal word for word in a battle of verbal wit and in the tavern scene manages to escape every trap Hal and Poins set for him with an outrageous new premise. I felt his flaws shouldn't include sloth or lethargy, either physical or mental.

One further aspect I felt was critical to Falstaff was his complete commitment to whatever he was doing, whether it be carousing at the tavern, swashbuckling as a terrifying highwayman, performing for his onstage audiences, glorying in his villainies or fighting for his life. In fact that degree of commitment in Falstaff gives a curious sort of honesty to a dishonest rogue. For him opportunism reads as opportunity and despite his self-serving antics, there really isn't any mean-spirited attitude driving what he does. On some level I suppose his great good humor, his lack of repentance and his denial of consequence suggest a freedom and an unfettered celebration of life that appeals seductively to all but the most prudish and unimaginative among us.

Let me end by also noting that Falstaff is a great lover of language, but given the extraordinary lines Shakespeare has written for him, all an actor has to do is joy in the saying of them.