

SYNOPSIS

Part I, Act 1

No sooner has Henry V died and left his infant son king than the English learn their newly won French territories have been lost to forces led by Charles, the Dauphin of France. Aided by the young maid Joan la Pucelle (Joan of Arc), the French fight to overthrow the English, led by the noble Talbot. Meanwhile, in the London court of the child King Henry VI, his uncles Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester and the Bishop of Winchester wrangle for control of the government as a feud emerges between Richard Plantagenet, who takes the white rose as his symbol, and the Duke of Somerset, who wears a red rose. Having at last brokered an uneasy peace with France, Henry is convinced to marry the French Margaret of Anjou by the Earl of Suffolk, who captured Margaret and intends to make her his paramour.

Part I, Act 2

Bringing no dowry and costing England significant territories, Margaret's marriage to Henry enrages the Duke of Gloucester. Winchester seizes on Gloucester's rage and, aided by the Duke of Suffolk, entraps Gloucester's prideful wife to unite the other lords against him. Richard Plantagenet, now Duke of York, persuades the Earl of Warwick of his claim to the crown. The Duke of Suffolk, in service to the Queen his lover, arranges Gloucester's murder. When Henry learns of this, he banishes Suffolk, inciting Margaret's fury.

Part II, Act 1

The Duke of York, dispatched to Ireland to put down a rebellion there, hires the rabble-rouser

Jack Cade to stir up the citizens of London to rebellion and test how they support the House of York. York returns from Ireland and finding Henry allied with Somerset, declares war against Henry and the House of Lancaster. Aided by his sons Edward, Richard, and George, as well as by the Earl of Warwick, the Duke of York overpowers Henry's forces and takes over the Parliament House. Henry convinces Richard to agree to peace by vowing, upon his death, to turn the monarchy over to the House of York. Furious at the King's disinheriting of his own son, Margaret takes command of the army which she leads to York's castle, where her soldier Clifford murders York's youngest child, the Earl of Rutland, and she brutally kills Richard, Duke of York.

Part II, Act 2

Having learned of their father's death, the three sons of York, aided by the Earl of Warwick, meet the forces led by Henry and the Queen. Overthrowing these forces, the

Yorkists kill Clifford, force Henry into hiding in Scotland, and establish York's eldest son as King Edward IV. Desperate for aid, Margaret goes to the French King Lewis, where she finds Warwick, sent by Edward to woo Lewis' sister Bona as Queen. Edward's decision to instead marry Lady Elizabeth Grey humiliates Warwick in the French court, sending him into alliance with Margaret. The king, secretly back in England, is arrested and brought to the Tower of London. In London, tensions increase between the three York brothers, as multiple lords turn to support the usurped House of Lancaster. These forces eventually go to war, killing Warwick. Margaret returns, backed by forces from France, and meets King Edward's forces at Tewksbury, where the Yorks vanquish the Lancastrians, killing Prince Edward but refusing Margaret's pleas that they kill her too. Richard sneaks off to the Tower where he kills the imprisoned Henry, and then returns to his brother's court, vowing next to turn his violence on his own brothers.

HENRY VI: A TRILOGY IN TWO PARTS