LESSON TITLE: *Henry IV, Part I: Does Father Know Best?*

GRADE LEVEL: Grades 9-12

TIME ALLOTMENT: Two 45-minute class periods

OVERVIEW
In this lesson, students will examine the relationships between parents and children in *Henry IV, Part I*. As the lesson begins, students will talk about expectations they feel are put on them and think about how they are influenced by these expectations. Next, students will view segments from the PBS series *Shakespeare Uncovered* to gain an overview of the various fathers and sons in the play, including King Henry, Prince Harry, Hotspur, and Falstaff. Students will then turn to the play itself, reading and analyzing excerpts from three key scenes in the development of the relationship between the king and the prince: Act I, Scene i; Act I, Scene ii; and Act III, Scene ii. To sum up the lesson, students will try writing a scene that Shakespeare didn't include in the play, in which Prince Harry gets to tell his father how he feels about the expectations that have been laid upon him.

This lesson is best used after reading Act III, Scene ii of *Henry IV, Part I*, or after reading the entire play.

SUBJECT MATTER
English/Language Arts

LEARNING OBJECTIVES
After completing this lesson, students will be able to:

- Describe how Shakespeare uses the theme of parents and children in *Henry IV, Part I*.
- Draw connections between the representations of parent/child relationships in the play with relationships in their own lives.
- Interpret a literary text by analyzing characters' motivations and decisions.
- Perform a close reading of speeches and scenes in *Henry IV, Part I* that includes deciphering denotation, connotation, imagery, and metaphor.

STANDARDS

National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)

Standard 1
Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace;
and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

**Standard 2**

Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.

**Standard 3**

Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

**Common Core Literature Standards for Grades 11-12**

[http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RL/11-12](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RL/11-12)

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.2 Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.3 Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

**MEDIA COMPONENTS**

**Video**

Excerpt from *Shakespeare Uncovered: Henry IV & V with Jeremy Irons.*

Access the video segment for this lesson at the Video Segments Page.

**Segment: “A Royal Family”**

An exploration of father-son relationships in *Henry IV, Part I.*

**MATERIALS**

*For the class:*
- Computer, projection screen, and speakers (for class viewing of online video segments).

*For each student:*
- “What's Expected of You?” Student Organizer
- *Henry IV, Scenes from Act I*
- *Henry IV, Act III, Scene ii*
• “The Scene Shakespeare Never Wrote” Assignment

PREP FOR TEACHERS
Prior to teaching this lesson, you will need to:

Preview the video segment used in the lesson. Prepare to watch it using your classroom’s Internet connection.

Print out and make copies of the “What's Expected of You?” Student Organizer for each student.

Print out and make copies of Henry IV, Scenes from Act I for each student.

Print out and make copies of Henry IV, Act III, Scene ii for each student.

Print out and make copies of “The Scene Shakespeare Never Wrote” Assignment for each student.

INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY

1. Tell your students that today you’ll be examining the relationships between parents and kids in Henry IV, Part I. Explain that you want your students to think about how parents and kids relate to each other, and how a parent’s expectations may have an influence on a son or daughter.

2. Next, ask your students to think about what sorts of expectations they've felt in their lives. Distribute the “What's Expected of You?” Student Organizer.

3. Review the organizer, explaining that it lists six topics. Tell your students that you'd like them to think about each topic and jot down notes about what parents, family, or others (teachers, clergy, etc.) expect of them in that area of their lives. Give them 5 to 10 minutes to record their answers. To prompt their thinking, ask students about expectations for them in regards to:
   - School and classwork: Are you expected to get good grades? Are there certain classes you’re expected to take? How much are you required to study?
   - Extracurricular activities: Are you expected to study all the time? Or are you encouraged to take part in extracurricular activities? Are some extracurricular activities considered “better” than others? Are you expected to have a job after school or on weekends?
   - Free time: Are you allowed to decide how you spend your free time? Do your parents, guardians, or others limit how much time you spend with your friends?
   - Attitude: Are you expected to act a certain way? Are you told certain kinds of behavior or attitudes aren't acceptable?
   - Your future education: Is it expected you'll go to college? Do you get suggestions about where you should go to college or what you should major in?
   - Your future career: Have you been advised about what field you should go into? Have parents, guardians, or others tried to suggest you go into the same field they're in? Are there any fields you've been told you shouldn't go into?
4. Ask a few students to share their responses to these questions. Once you’ve heard your students’ responses, ask: How are these expectations communicated? If needed, ask the following questions to get the discussion going:
   - Do parents or others set standards (such as a minimum grade point average or rules about study time versus free time)?
   - Are you told about other kids who are models of how you should behave?
   - Are you criticized when you don’t meet these expectations? Are you praised when you do what’s expected?
Encourage your students to share their experiences with the class.
5. Ask your students to think about how they feel about these expectations. Do they try to fulfill these expectations? Do they resent them? Encourage your students to share their impressions.
6. Divide your class into small groups. Tell your students you’d like each group to consider expectations in one of the categories on the student organizer. In their groups, they should consider the following questions:
   - Why do you think parents, family members, or others might have these kinds of expectations for kids?
   - How do you think kids might want to change these expectations? If they feel these expectations in their lives, how would they want to change them?
   - If you’re a parent someday, would you have these same expectations for your child? Or would you set different expectations? Why?
7. Tell the students they will have 10 minutes to discuss their topics and that afterwards, you’ll have them present their observations to the entire class.
8. After all the groups have presented their observations, explain: Part of growing up is figuring out how these kinds of expectations will influence you. Will you try to follow exactly in the footsteps of parents and others, completely reject the choices they’ve made, or take some sort of middle path?
9. Observe that even though *Henry IV, Part I* was written more than four hundred years ago, it raises these same kinds of questions about parents, children, and growing up. Ask your students to keep your discussion about the expectations on kids in mind as they look more closely at the parent/child relationships in *Henry IV, Part I*.

**LEARNING ACTIVITY**

1. Introduce the video segment by telling your students that in the rest of this lesson, they’ll be looking more closely at the relationship between King Henry IV and his son, Prince Harry (Henry V). Frame the video by asking your students to consider the following questions: Who are the fathers and sons in *Henry IV, Part I*? How would you describe their relationships?
2. Play the segment “A Royal Family.” (Access this clip on the Video Segments Page.)
3. After viewing the segment, pose the questions you asked students to think about: Who are the fathers and sons in *Henry IV, Part I*? How would you describe their relationships? *Answers should include:*
• Henry IV is the main father character in the play. Prince Harry is the main son character. At the start of the play, there is antagonism between them. Henry IV wants his son to behave like someone who will eventually be a king. He wants Prince Harry to be responsible and serious, and to spend his time learning about how to run a country. Prince Harry wants to hang around at the tavern and have fun. He is rebelling against his father’s expectations.

• Hotspur (Harry Percy) is also a son. His actual father is Northumberland, but Shakespeare portrays him as a sort of "alternative son" for King Henry IV. Hotspur is everything the king wants in a son. He represents “old-fashioned virtues”: he’s serious, interested in politics, and doesn’t waste his times in taverns. But he’s also rebelling against the king, though in a different way than Prince Harry. Hotspur doesn’t think Henry IV is a good king, and eventually rises against him.

• Falstaff is a sort of “alternative father” to Prince Harry. He’s the total opposite of Henry IV. He has none of the king’s seriousness or sense of responsibility. He’s a womanizer, a thief, a drunk, and a liar. But he also represents how to enjoy life.

4. Next, ask your students to keep these relationships in mind as you look more closely at the character of Henry IV and his feelings about his son. Start by reviewing the situation at the start of the play. Remind them that Henry IV seized the throne from the previous king, Richard II. Tell them that it’s easy to think that a king is simply an absolute ruler, but at this time in England, there was actually a lot of instability in the government. There were a lot of uprisings and rebellions, so kings had to constantly worry about whether they could remain on the throne. In fact, as the play opens, King Henry’s forces have been engaging both Scottish and Welsh rebels.

5. Next, tell your students you want them to think more about the character of Henry IV and his feelings about his son. Distribute the handout Henry IV, Part I, Scenes from Act I, and ask for a volunteer to read the first speech.

6. Remind your students of the context of this speech. Tell them this speech comes from the first scene in the play. The speaker, Henry IV, is growing old and has been hearing about the various uprisings in his land. Even though it happened many years ago, he still feels guilty about the fact that he seized the throne from Richard II, as well as all the violence the overthrow required.

7. Prepare your students to follow along as your volunteer reads the scene by asking your students to consider the following questions: Why is it so important to Henry IV that Prince Harry behaves like a king? What is Hotspur like, and why does Henry IV prefer him? To aid comprehension, identify the names that are referenced in this speech:
   - Lord Northumberland: Hotspur’s father
   - Percy: The last name of Hotspur and Lord Northumberland
   - Plantagenet: The last name of King Henry IV and Prince Harry

8. After the reading, ask students to write a short synopsis of what the king is saying in this speech. When everyone is done writing, ask a few students to read their synopses. (The main points are: Henry IV feels sad and envious of Northumberland because he wishes Prince Harry were more like Hotspur.
When he compares Hotspur to Harry, he sees even more clearly how badly Harry is behaving. He fantasizes how nice it would be if he discovered that some fairy or spirit had swapped Harry and Hotspur when they were infants so that he could believe that Hotspur was really his son instead of Harry.)

9. Now ask your students the questions you posed before the reading: Why is it so important to Henry IV that the prince behaves like a king? What is Hotspur like, and why does Henry IV prefer him? (Answers should include: King Henry knows how hard it is to rule a country, and he's afraid his son will not be up to the task. Hotspur is everything he'd want in a son. He's brave and honorable and has proven himself in battle - qualities that would make a good king.)

10. Ask your students their opinion of this speech. Do they think Henry IV is a good father? Guide students to uncover a more complex answer than "yes" or "no" by helping them recognize why King Henry has such high expectations for his son - that it's necessary for his success and the success of the country.

11. Next, ask your students to think about this speech from Prince Harry's perspective. Ask: Do you think Prince Harry is aware his father has thoughts like this? How do you think that makes him feel? Would it influence the way he decides to behave?

12. When you are finished discussing Harry's perspective on the king's speech, tell your students that you'd now like them to take a closer look at the prince. Direct them again to the handout of scenes from Act I and ask for a volunteer to read the speech from Act I, Scene ii.

13. Remind your students of the context of this speech. Tell them this speech comes at the end of the second scene in the play. Prince Harry has just had his first scene in the tavern with Falstaff and Edward Poins, and he and Poins have agreed to pull a prank involving a robbery on Falstaff. Explain that Prince Harry is a young man who is aristocratic but enjoys spending time in the tavern with everyday people and even, in some cases, criminals.

14. Ask students to follow along as your volunteer reads the scene, and to consider the following question: What does this speech say about the influence of Henry IV on Prince Harry?

15. After the reading, ask students to write a short synopsis of what Prince Harry is saying in this speech. When everyone is done writing, ask a few students to read their synopses. (Harry says he understands the faults of the people with whom he surrounds himself. He is willing to be with them in order to seem like he is less worthy than he is so that when he later reveals his true quality, it will be like when the sun breaks forth from clouds. He acknowledges that if all we did was to play and goof around, then playing would be as tiresome as working. His plan is to act foolish and ignobly now, so that later, when he acts like a true king, he will seem so much more praiseworthy.)

16. Now ask your students the question you posed before the reading: What does this speech say about the influence of Henry IV on Prince Harry? To fuel this discussion, ask:
   - Do you believe Harry when he says he's only behaving badly now so he can impress people more when he "reforms"? Or does it seem like he's just rationalizing his own actions? (Responses will vary.)
What does Harry mean when he talks about "the debt I never promised" (line 312)? How does that reflect on the idea that parents lay expectations on their children? (In this line, Prince Harry refers to the fact that, as prince, he has certain duties and requirements for his future that he never asked for. More generally, all children have to contend with the requirements their parents put on them.)

17. When you’ve finished discussing the speech in Act I, Scene ii tell your students you’d like to look at one last scene in which the king and the prince finally come face to face to talk about Harry’s behavior. Distribute Henry IV, Part I, Act III, Scene ii. Remind students of the context of the scene: Prince Harry has been called to court for a private conference with the king.

18. Break the class up into pairs, and tell them you’d like each pair to work independently to read through the scene. Instruct them to read the scene at least twice, and to think about how they would perform the scene. Tell them that after they’ve had some time to work on the scene in pairs, you’re going to ask for volunteers to present parts of the scene to the class.

19. When the student pairs have finished their "rehearsals" of the scene, ask for some volunteers to read and/or perform the scene for the class. Since the scene is long, consider breaking the scene up and assigning different pairs of students to the following sections: Lines 1823-1914 and 1915-1985.

20. Ask students to follow along as your volunteers read, and to consider these questions: How does Henry describe his disappointment in the prince? How does he illustrate his expectations and indicate that the prince has not met them? Tell your students to make note of any lines which seem to relate to this topic.

21. After the student pairs have finished reading, ask for a synopsis. Lead a discussion about the reading, including the following key ideas from the excerpt:

- The king tells Harry that he wonders if the prince's bad behavior is God's punishment of the king himself. Why else would Harry behave in a way that is so out of keeping with his nobility?
- Prince Harry says he wishes he could prove himself innocent, and that many of the accusations aren't true. He asks that if he can show he's not guilty of the false charges, then his father will forgive him for the ones he actually did do.
- The king replies by saying he's amazed by how his son's preferences and behavior are so different from his ancestors. He points out that because Harry has been so irresponsible he has lost his place on the king's council to his brother. The king points out that if he himself had behaved like Harry - and had made himself so available to everyday people - he never would've become king because the people wouldn't value him. He says because he stayed apart from the people he appeared like a comet that is rare and at which people wonder. He compares his own behavior to that of the previous king, Richard (who Henry overthrew), and says that because Richard degraded himself, he was quickly discarded by the people. He says it will be the same for Prince Harry - that he's lost his status as prince by making himself too familiar and spending all his time with lowly people.
- Prince Harry replies that he will behave more like himself from here on out.
• The king repeats that the prince seems like the old king, and notes that Hotspur seems more like Henry himself when he first came to rebel against King Richard. He describes how Hotspur is more like a king than Harry is, describing his military victories. He tells Harry that he is his most dangerous enemy, and says that he wouldn't be surprised if Harry deserted him to go fight under Hotspur.

• Harry insists he wouldn't do that, and says he'll redeem himself by defeating Hotspur. He anticipates the battle in which he'll meet and defeat Hotspur. He tells his father he wishes to heal the wounds caused by the earlier behavior, and assures him he would rather die than break his promise to defend him.

• Henry says Harry has his full trust.

22. When you’ve finished reviewing the synopsis, ask your students to consider the question you posed before they read the scene: How does the king describe his disappointment in the prince? How does he illustrate his expectations and indicate the prince has not met them? (Answers should include: He says Harry's behavior is a punishment on him [lines 1826-1834]; he points out that the prince is behaving opposite to how his ancestors did [lines 1852-1854]; he notes that the prince's younger brother has taken his place in the council [lines 1855-56]; he compares the prince's behavior to himself when he was younger [lines 1862-1882]; he compares the prince's behavior to the negative example of King Richard [lines 1883-1914]; he compares the prince's behavior unfavorably to Harry's contemporary, Hotspur [lines 1920-1944]).

23. Ask your student to think about the function of this scene. Why is this scene important to the plot? (Answers should include: This is the turning point in the plot when Harry changes into the person his father wants him to be.) Why do you think Harry changes his attitude in this scene? What does Henry IV say that seems to affect him? (Answers will vary; students may note that Harry seems to respond particularly to the example of Hotspur and to the idea that Harry would betray his father and go over to Hotspur's side.)

CULMINATING ACTIVITY

1. When you are finished discussing the significance of Act III, Scene ii ask your students if they think Harry's turnaround is too abrupt. (Answers will vary.) Point out that Harry never gets to tell his father why he has behaved the way he has, or how he feels about the expectations that are put on him. These are moments that Shakespeare never dramatizes, but which we may be able to guess about as we interpret the play.

2. Tell your students you'd like them to try writing this scene that Shakespeare never wrote. Either as an in-class writing assignment or as homework, have your students write a dialog between King Henry and Prince Hal in which they talk about the expectations Henry has for his son and how the prince feels about those expectations. Have your students consider the following questions as they prepare to write the scene:
   • What are some expectations Henry IV had for his son? Why are these things important?
What specifically does Henry object to in Harry's behavior? What will happen if Harry keeps behaving the way he does?
What would it be like to be born a prince? How long has Prince Harry known what was expected of him? How would these expectations have been communicated?
How does Prince Harry feel about these expectations? Does he simply disagree with them? Does he understand why his father wants him to behave differently? Is it the case that he understands why he must behave differently, but simply doesn't want to just yet?
How have the king's expectations influenced the prince's behavior? Think not just about how Harry eventually tries to live up to his father's expectations, but also about how Harry's earlier rebellious behavior relates to these expectations.
Do you think Prince Harry looks forward to being a king? Or fears it? Or a little of both?
Why does Prince Harry like spending time with Falstaff in the tavern? Is there anything he learns there that is of value? Is there any way that spending time with Falstaff helps prepare the prince to be a better king?
What other scenes in the play might these characters reference as they describe their feelings?

If students will complete the essay as homework, distribute “The Scene Shakespeare Never Wrote” Assignment, which lists the questions provided above.
3. Collect the students’ scenes for an assessment of the lesson.