

HENRY IV, PART TWO | FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Shakespeare's language can seem scary, but give it a try! *Go at your own pace, and have fun!*



SHAKESPEARE IN PRISON

DETROIT PUBLIC THEATRE'S
SIGNATURE COMMUNITY PROGRAM

The Shakespeare

Rumor

Open your ears; for which of you will stop
The vent of hearing when loud Rumor speaks?
I, from the orient to the drooping west
(Making the wind my post-horse), still unfold
The acts commenced on this ball of earth.
Upon my tongues continual slanders ride,
The which in every language I pronounce,
Stuffing the ears of men with false reports.
I speak of peace, while covert enmity
Under the smile of safety wounds the world;
And who but Rumor, who but only I,
Make fearful musters and prepar'd defense,
Whiles the big year, swoll'n with some other grief,
Is thought with child by the stern tyrant war,
And no such matter? Rumor is a pipe
Blown by surmises, jealousies, conjectures,
And of so easy and so plain a stop
That the blunt monster with uncounted heads,
The still-discordant wav'ring multitude,
Can play upon it.

The Translation

Rumor

Open your ears! For who could possibly block them when loud Rumor speaks? I make the wind my horse, and ride it from the Orient in the east to the place where the sun sets in the west, describing the events taking place in the world. I continually tell lies and I tell them in every language, stuffing men's ears with falsehoods. I say that things are peaceful when, in reality, concealed hatred is at work, hidden behind smiles of good will. And who but Rumor—who besides me—can make armies prepare anxious defenses, when in fact the world is uneasy for other reasons and there's no war coming at all? Rumor is like a flute. Guesswork, suspicion, and speculation are the breath that makes it sound, and it's so easy to play that even the common masses—that dim monster with innumerable heads, forever clamoring and wavering—can play it.

1 Read the Shakespeare.

2 Read the translation.

3 Read the Shakespeare again!

What is Rumor's tone?
Menacing? Amused? Bored?
Proud? Read the speech a few
different ways and see what
feels right.



Three Part Question!

- 1) What's the take-away here? How would you sum up Rumor's message in a few words? (Or is it a warning...?)
- 2) This speech is at the very beginning of a play. Why begin a play with this sort of warning? What would be on your mind when the story starts? How would it change how you listened to the characters?
- 3) Aha! You probably noticed, this whole play is "Part 2." There's a Part 1 before this one, although you wouldn't have seen both on the same day. It's a sequel! Does that change your answer at all?



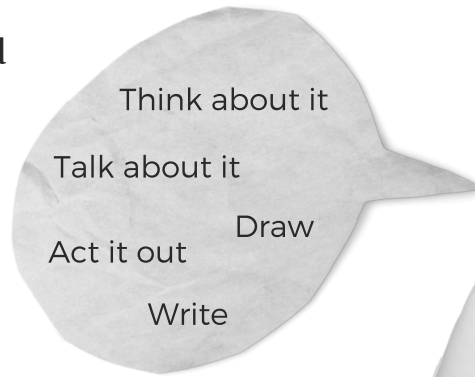
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You can respond
to these in any
way you choose.

Up to you!



Rumor seems to think that people can't resist listening "when loud Rumor speaks." Before long, rumors are "stuffing the ears of men with false reports." Is that true, in your experience? Why do you think that is? Do you think you'd be more likely to believe a rumor if you were in a group or alone?

Some rumors are lies from the get-go, but some begin as information that is true and then gets twisted. How does that happen? How does the "rumor mill" work?



Rumor looks at groups of people and does not see individuals, but rather a "blunt monster with uncounted heads."

What does that monster look like to you? Or, if that image doesn't speak to you, what do you see when you look at a big group of other people?

And while we're at it, what does Rumor look like to you? Since Rumor is not an actual character, but a symbol of gossip and rumors, a very creative approach can be taken! How would you dress Rumor in a production to help the audience understand who this is and what they're saying?

Rumor talks about playing a pipe.

What do you think that music might sound like?

Is it a particular genre?

If you were to write the music yourself, what instruments would you include?

Are there songs or pieces of music out there already that would sound right to you?

Would there be lyrics to sing? If so, would you write your own or use what's in the monologue? Do you have a particular singer in mind—or would you sing it?

