

Henry VIII background:

Original title probably *All is True*
Written collaboratively with John Fletcher

Date:
1612 - 13 One of Shpe's last plays
First published in First folio, 1623

Sources:

Holinshed's *Chronicles*
John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* (1563, 1597)
Edward Hall's *Union of the Two Illustre Families of Lancastre and Yorke*
George Cavendish's *The Life of Cardinal Wolsey* (c.1553, not published until 1641)
John Speed's *History of Great Britain* (1611)
Samuel Rowley's play, *When You See Me, You Know Me* (1603)

For more on the sources and Shakespeare's use of them see Annabel Patterson's "'All is True': Negotiating the Past in *Henry VIII*." *Elizabethan Theater: Essays in Honor of S. Schoenbaum*. Ed. R.B. Parker and S.P. Zitner: 147 - 66.

Style:

- 1) Predominantly iambic pentameter.
- 2) Attend to the more involved stage directions in this play.

Themes or topics of interest:

Although some scholars dispute the idea that Shpe collaborated with Fletcher to write this play, it is worth addressing the following questions, raised by Jay Halio in his Introduction to the Oxford World Classics edition of the play, when studying *Henry VIII*:

Is it a well developed play, adequately unified and coherent, or merely a pageant-play, its scenes strung together loosely but its main interest localized in the big court scenes and processions? (1)

The character of Katherine, from both an historical and a dramatic perspective

The English Reformation

(Our old friend) the use and abuse of power, but this time with a twist: rather than the King himself it is Cardinal Wolsey who tests and learns the limits of power

The theme of the King's two bodies is explored through Henry's seemingly genuine love for Katherine, e.g. @ 1.2. 320 - 449; 2.4. 1495 - 1506; 4.2. 2687 - 2711.