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Shakespeare's history plays have been performed more in recent years than ever before, in Britain, North America, and in Europe. This volume provides an accessible, wide-ranging and informed introduction to Shakespeare's history and Roman plays. It is attentive throughout to the plays as they have been performed over the centuries since they were written. The first part offers accounts of the genre of the history play, of Renaissance historiography, of pageants and masques, and of women's roles, as well as comparisons with history plays in Spain and the Netherlands. Chapters in the second part look at individual plays as well as other Shakespearean texts which are closely related to the histories. The Companion offers a full bibliography, genealogical tables, and a list of principal and recurrent characters. It is a comprehensive guide for students, researchers and theatre-goers alike.