

King Henry V



2009 Study Guide



American Players Theatre
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Cover Photo: Cast and Set of *King Henry V*, 2009. Photo by Zane Williams.

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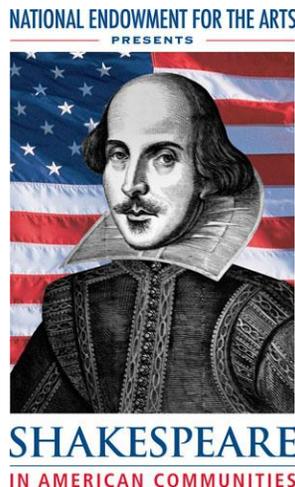


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2009 Study Guide

for

Henry V

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Character List

Henry V	Rambures, a French Lord
Chorus	Lord Scroop
Duke of Bedford, brother to the King	Williams, an English soldier
Bishop of Ely	Lewis, the Dauphin
Duke of Burgundy	Bardolph
Duke of Bourbon	Charles VI, King of France
Messenger	Sir Thomas Erpingham, an officer in King Henry's army
Duke of Gloucester, brother to the King	
Sir Thomas Grey	Pistol
Court, an English soldier	The constable of France
A Herald	Nym
Alice, attendant to Katherine	The French Ambassador
Duke of Exeter, uncle to the King	Montjoy
Macmorris, an English officer	A French Herald
Le Fer	Isabel, Queen of France
Archbishop of Canterbury	Mistress Quickly
Governor of Harfleur	Duke of Orleans

Earl of Cambridge

Bates, an English Soldier

Gower, an officer in King Henry's army

Katharine, daughter to Charles and Isabel

Synopsis

Prince Hal has rejected his former companions and has now become Henry V. In order to delay the passing of an anticlerical bill, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Ely persuade Henry to invade France. In answer to Henry's territorial claims, the Dauphin of France sends his ambassadors with a gift of tennis balls – a scornful jibe at Henry's idle youth. The insult spurs Henry to invade France immediately.

The French meanwhile prepare to counter the invasion. King Charles offers England a compromise which is rejected. Henry's forces besiege and take Harfleur. When the English army reaches Picardy, the captains Fluellen and Gower encounter one of Hal's quarrelsome old cronies, Pistol, who reports that his friend Bardolph is to be executed for looting. Henry upholds the sentence. The French herald comes to offer Henry ransom before the imminent battle. The offer is rejected.

On the eve of the battle of Agincourt the French nobles are confident, while the English are uneasy. Henry tours his camp incognito. He meets Pistol; he observes Fluellen. He is challenged by Williams and Bates, who assert that the monarch must bear the responsibility for the souls of all his slaughtered men. The king and Williams quarrel and exchange gloves as a sign of a challenge to be taken up after the battle. Alone, King Henry contemplates the heavy responsibility of kingship.

The next morning he urges his soldiers to battle and rejects the French herald's offer of ransom. The attack begins. When Henry discovers that his baggage wagons have been plundered and the boys guarding them killed, he orders the massacre of all French prisoners. Miraculously, the vastly outnumbered forces of the English defeat the French. A peace conference is held and a settlement is made on condition that Henry can win Princess Katharine's hand. This he does.

Context of the Play

When *Henry V* debuted in London in 1599, Shakespeare assumed that his audience was aware of the key historical events that took place before the play's action. After King Henry IV died, the crown passed on March 21, 1413, to his son Henry, the Prince of Wales, a 25-year-old who proved his mettle in battle during a war against rebels from Wales and Scotland. Although civil discord continued to fester in Britain, the new king shifted his attention to France. Because he believed the French may have usurped lands and titles from his ancestors, Henry began to consider invading France and seizing the throne. Defeating the French would not only win back lost lands, but it would also win back the hearts and minds of the rebellious forces at home, uniting them under Henry's flag. But young King Henry's conscience demanded that he seek counsel to affirm or deny the justness of his claims against France. (Shakespeare: a Guide to the Complete Works by Michael Cummings)

Themes

Strong leadership is a powerful weapon. Henry's qualities as a leader make him not only a fit king but a redoubtable warrior.

A noble cause with noble warriors can win the day against overwhelming odds. Though outnumbered, Henry V defeats the French because his forces believe the cause is noble and just.

Foreign war quells domestic strife. Since ancient times, rulers have gone to war to divert the attention of the people from domestic problems. Henry V is well aware that war with France will unite his subjects and make them forget the domestic issues of the day.

A just cause can transform disunity into unity. Henry's army of Welsh, English and Irish soldiers fight as one army against the French usurpers of English lands.

Guide to references in Henry V

The Salique Law

The “Salique land” referred to by the archbishop was in Germany and was occupied by Franks, Germanic people who later moved westward and established France. Under the Salique law (also called Salic law), a daughter could not inherit the property and entitlements of her father. This proscription applied to all women, including the daughter of a king. Thus, despite her royal status, a king’s daughter could not pass on lands and entitlements of the king to her children; she could not give them what she did not legally possess.

The Globe Theatre

In the prologue of the play, Shakespeare refers directly to the Globe Theatre. He asks, “Can this cockpit (theatre) hold the vasty fields of France?” In other words, can the small stage of the Globe adequately present a play set on a vast battlefield? He then asks, “Or may we cram within this **wooden O** (Globe) the very casques that did affright the air at Agincourt?” The **wooden O** of course refers to the circular Globe Theatre. Shakespeare was preparing his playgoers to use their imaginations to pretend that a great battle is to take place on the stage of the Globe.

The Battle of Agincourt

When: October 25, 1415

Where: Field between two forests near the village of Agincourt, France. The town is now known as Agincourt.

Combatants: About 6,000 Englishmen under the command of King Henry V and 20,000 to 30,000 Frenchmen under the command of Charles d’Albret, constable of France.

Weather: Rain, heavy at times, which muddied the battlefield.

Reason for the Battle: Disputed claims to French lands and the French crown. The battle was part of the Hundred Years' War, a series of engagements fought between 1337 and 1453.

Outcome: English victory. However, it did not end the war.

Flipping the V

Throughout Great Britain, a “peace sign” made with the palm inwards – a “two – fingered salute” or “flipping the v” – is an offensive gesture comparable to raising the middle finger.

Saint Who?

Along with his twin brother Saint Crispinian, Saint Crispin was supposedly born to a noble Roman family in the 3rd century. Facing persecution for their Christian faith, the brothers were forced to flee to the hinterlands of Gaul, where they worked as shoemakers by day and itinerant preachers by night. Annoyed by their missionary zeal, the Roman governor of the province had them put to death, and they were later declared saints by the Catholic Church. They were the patron saints of shoemakers, and their liturgical feast was celebrated on October 25, the day on which the Battle of Agincourt was fought in 1415.

Interviews with the Artistic Team for Henry V

James Bohnen, Director

1. What is your job as director?

My job as director is first to have an organizing idea about the play that can be clearly conveyed to designers and actors to get the journey started. After that I need to be able to listen with a clear mind and open heart to hear the music of the play rise through all the talented people who bring the story to life. The biggest job for all of us is to figure out what the story of the play is and convey it with as much passion and clarity as we can.

2. Why this play, now?

This play always seems to hold its currency. At present, it speaks to us on at least three critical topics:

- what characteristics should we look for in any leader, and how does that leader handle his or her power?
- when a country goes to war, must its cause be just?
- what are the personal and psychic costs to a country in times of strife?

On a personal level I am continuously fascinated by power and powerlessness, and there are many moments in the play that speak to that.

3. What draws you to Shakespeare?

Shakespeare draws us in, as the other great writers do, with his fascination with the ravages of time, the wheel of fortune that spins through each of our lives, and the ever changing situations of history (the mutability of all things). He refuses to judge his characters and instead offers them to us in all their conflicting complexity.

4. What do you hope the audience takes away from the production?

We have so little control over what any audience takes back down the hill. I hope they have been lured into the world of the play and found ways that it speaks to them. Our job is to begin a conversation in the heads and hearts of the audience that will carry on through the car ride home and deep into the evening.

Matt Schwader, on playing the role of Henry

What I do believe is true and essential about the play itself is that it is not just a patriotic play. It is about a young man that was not necessarily raised his whole life to be King. With his father's death, Henry V is left with not only a fractious kingdom, but some heavy unanswered questions... namely "Am I the *rightful* heir to the throne?"

Henry seems to have inherited much of his father's political skills, though much of his father's guilt seems to have been passed along as well. Also, what he learned

from his time in the pubs with Falstaff and his crew about communicating is hugely advantageous to him. Henry V, unlike his father and most Kings before him, is able to speak to the common man as well as the court. In the play, we see the benefits of this ability to communicate. He not only speaks to all his troops and rallies them in some of their darkest moments to give it their all, but he is able to disguise himself and converse among them in order to get a feel for their perspectives. Something the Kings before him would not very likely have been able to do even if they wanted. Henry certainly takes his father's advice in "busying giddy minds with foreign quarrels" by demanding a justification for invading France and then doing so. But his mission is more challenging than that. It's almost as if he's demanding God answer his great question. Is it divine? Is it God's will that he be King? He is vastly out numbered throughout his expedition, but he seems to enjoy the odds. Like a captain aboard a ship at sea being ravaged by a mighty storm, he's almost daring God to answer him. Henry V needs proof of his claim and I believe it is the miracle at Agincourt that is finally sign enough for him. When he reads the list of dead, which impossibly puts the larger death count with the French and only a few of his men, he gives all thanks and credit to God. To me he has finally accepted his role as King of England.

Shakespeare's Hal/Henry V are very different than history's version. The real Hal, before he became king was a fierce and respected warrior general by the age of 16, I believe. Shakespeare, however, paints Hal as a young rebel who is simultaneously reluctant for the crown but also fascinated by its power.

The great question, set in motion at the end of Richard II, finally is concluded after being tested and tried through Henry IV parts one and two, at the end of Henry V with the marriage to the French Princess.

Study Questions and Essay Topics

1. Which character in the play do you most admire? Which character do you least admire?
2. Write an informative essay analyzing Henry V's ability as a military leader.
3. In an essay, compare and contrast the Henry of the play with the Henry of *Henry IV Part I*.
4. Is Henry primarily interested in achieving glory for himself? Or is he sincerely and selflessly devoted to the English cause?
5. Write an informative essay analyzing the strategies used by the English and French in the real – life Battle of Agincourt.
6. Research Shakespeare's theatre. What were the limitations of the space? What is a "wooden O"?
7. Research the Plantagenet family tree. Chart it. Who was Henry's father? Grandfather? Great Grandfather? Brothers? Uncle?
8. Research Henry IV's rise to power. How did he become king? How did Henry V become king?
9. Research the battle of Agincourt. The English were victorious even though they were greatly outnumbered by the French. How did they accomplish the victory? What were the rules of war? In what ways were the rules of war broken by the French? By the English? How do the rules of war differ today? How are they similar?
10. Read *Henry IV, Part I* and *Henry IV, Part II*. What is Prince Hal's relationship with his father? Why does Prince Hal rebel? What does he learn through this rebellion? In what ways does he change as a result of it? What is Hal's relationship to Sir John Falstaff? To cronies, Pistol, Bardolf, Nym, Mistress Quickly? How do these experiences influence Hal once he becomes king? How does his relationship with his Eastcheap friends, specifically Falstaff, change once he becomes king? Find examples in the text of Hal's maturation process.
11. What was the Salic Law?
12. What did it mean for a king or nobleman to be ransomed in war?

13. In *Henry IV, Part II*, King Henry IV advises his son “to busy giddy minds with foreign quarrels.” What does he mean? What would busying giddy minds accomplish?
14. Watch a film version of *Henry V*.
15. William Shakespeare seldom wrote a chorus in his plays. Why do you think he uses the Chorus in *Henry V*?
16. What right does England have to France?
17. What is the Archbishop of Canterbury’s motive for convincing Henry to go to war with France? Read the Archbishop’s speech in Act I, scene ii, lines 100 – 114. Why do such strong words come from the mouth of a clergyman? What was the clergy’s place in politics in England?
18. Henry wins a notable victory in each act of the play. What are they? What does each mean to him?
19. Differing views of war are presented in the play. What is Henry’s perspective on war? What is the point of view of the citizens of Harfleur? What is the point of view of the Dauphin? The French before the Battle of Agincourt? After? The English before and after?
20. Find the lines in the text which describe the glory of war. Find the lines which describe the horrors of war. Compare these sets of lines. Is this an anti – war or pro – war play? What are the benefits of war? The drawbacks?
21. Trace the sequence of events in the conflict between France and England. Begin with the first insult to the agreement of the terms of peace. How does one atrocity lead to the next?
22. In a very real sense, God is a character in the play. Who talks about him? What is God’s job in the play? When does Henry call on God?
23. At the end of Act II, scene ii, Henry says, “No king of England if not king of France.” What does he mean by this statement?
24. What does the following passage mean?

O, pardon! Since a crooked figure may

Attest in little place a million;

And let us, ciphers to this great accompt,

On your imaginary forces work.

Prologue, Act I, lines 15 – 18

25. Find the places in the play that one person or a few people stand for a large group. Who do these represent: Cambridge, Scroop and Grey; Bardolph; Fluellen, Gower, Jamy and Macmorris; Bates, Williams and Court; Pistol's French prisoner?
26. What are the qualities of a great leader? Which of these qualities does Henry possess? How does Henry express his leadership?

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*** Questions 6 – 26 are used with permission from Oregon Shakespeare Festival.**

Activities

1. Write a review of this production of *Henry V*. Be sure to include specific information and your own reactions to both the acting and the design elements (light, set, costumes and sound). Explain what you liked about the production, and what you disliked, and support your opinions. Then submit your review to your teacher.
2. Henry V's success in the play is determined by his powers of persuasive speech as much as by his military might. Imagine that Henry Monmouth (Henry V) is a contemporary presidential candidate. Consistent with what you know about the character from Shakespeare's play, write an appropriate campaign speech for him. Alternatively, you are running against him – write a campaign speech that persuasively details his flaws.
3. For most of the play, King Henry is forced to be a public figure, the leader of his army and his nation. In one scene, Shakespeare "pulls back the curtain" to show us Henry alone, disguised as a common soldier, and gives us access to his inner thoughts. What might Henry have been thinking in the other scenes? Write journal entries describing, for example, his private thoughts about the Dauphin's gift of tennis balls, the assassination plot, ordering Bardolph's execution, marrying Katherine, and so on.

4. Henry V has been remembered for centuries as a British national hero. Think of another historical hero with whom you are familiar. What makes someone remembered as a hero? Write a description of your hero, comparing and contrasting him/her to Henry.
5. Divide into five groups, and have each group take one act of the play. Your task is to create a three – minute version of your act, using only Shakespeare’s words. Choose carefully the lines from your act that carry the most important information and advance the story. When each group is done, you will have a 15 minute version of *Henry V* which you can perform for one another. Afterwards, discuss both the process of adaptation and how your abridgement compared to the full – length performance.
6. Research some of the world’s famous war memorials. What characteristics do they share? What makes an effective memorial? Pick a moment from Henry’s campaign in France and memorialize it from either the English or French perspective. What would you choose to remember – the siege of Harfleur, the death of the Duke of York, Henry refusing to be ransomed, the massacre of the camp – boys? You can design your memorial on paper or have your classmates create it with their bodies as a living tableau.

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King Henry V Photo Summary



Prince Hal has forsaken the taverns to become King Henry V



The Archbishop of Canterbury attempts to convince the King to invade France.

“O, let their bodies follow, my dear liege,
With blood and sword and fire to win your right”

“The breath no sooner left his father's body,
But that his wildness, mortified in him,
Seem'd to die too”



The French Dauphin scorns Henry with a gift of tennis balls.



Furious, Henry plans an invasion of France.

“We'll chide this Dauphin at his father's door.
Therefore let every man now task his thought,
That this fair action may on foot be brought”

“This tun of treasure; and, in lieu of this,
desires you let the dukedoms that you claim hear no more of you”



King Henry V Photo Summary



Henry walks among his men in disguise, hearing their thoughts on the upcoming battle.

“But if the cause be not good, the king himself hath a heavy reckoning to make”



Arguments aside, Henry urges his troops to battle.

“Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more, Or close the wall up with our English dead.”



Princess Katharine is comforted by her lady, Alice.

“If I may say so, your Highness pronounces the words just like a native English speaker.”



Henry's former friend Pistol proves himself an inadequate soldier.

“Tell him my fury shall abate, and I the crowns will take.”

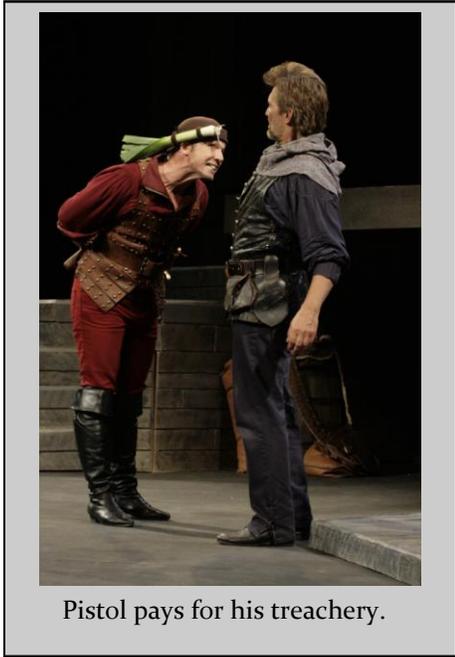


King Henry V Photo Summary



Henry, discovering that that his wagons were taken, and their guards all killed. Orders all French prisoners killed.

“Then every soldier kill his prisoners!”



Pistol pays for his treachery.

“By this leek, I will most horribly revenge”



A settlement is made with France based on Henry wooing Princess Katharine.

“So happy be the issue, brother England,
Of this good day and of this gracious meeting”



Henry and Katharine wed, restoring peace between France and England.

“Then shall I swear to Kate, and you to me;
And may our oaths well kept and prosp’rous be!”