

Henry v is primarily concerned with war and the glory of war, we can learn little...

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I neither agree nor disagree with the statement ' Henry V is primarily concerned with war and the glory of war, we can learn a little else from the study of this play'. The play is set in and around war so obviously war features heavily in it, however there are other topics included in this play for instance; religion, history, law, relationships, kingship and leadership and through analysing the play we can learn about these. 'Henry V' is a play about war. In it we see the two aspects of war. Henry sees war as a way of gaining glory and honor however if he is not completely oblivious to the reality of war, he acknowledges openly and honestly that people will die in Act 1 Scene 2 when he says that, " many now in health shall drop their blood in approbation.

" He also, in Act 3, Scene 4 reveals the true horrors of war when describing to the governor of Harfluer what will happen to the people if they do not surrender. He speaks of burning the town down and how his soldiers, out of control, will rape their daughters, kill their fathers and put their " naked infants spitted upon pikes". Here Henry uses graphic detail, strong language, visual imagery and alliteration to depict the grotesque nature of war. He may be exaggerating so as to frighten the governor into surrendering but it is likely that these things really did happen during conflicts. However in front of his men, Henry does not speak like this, in fact he does the opposite. In his St Crispin's speech he glorifies war in order to raise the men's spirits.

He talks of the riches and honor that it will bring, he describes the battlefield as ' glorious' and does not once mention the reality of war. The St Crispin's speech brings us to another subject of the play, for here Henry is showing <https://assignbuster.com/henry-v-is-primarily-concerned-with-war-and-the-glory-of-war-we-can-learn-little-else-from-the-study-of-this-play/>

qualities of leadership and we see that he is a charismatic orator.

Shakespeare portrays Henry as the perfect king but not entirely a perfect person. Henry knows the importance of leadership, that if he is a good leader he will gain the respect and love of his men who will in turn fight hard to win the battle and so Henry will gain glory and power. However Henry says that power comes with toil, 'hard condition is twin born with greatness.' Henry knows not to treat his men as inferiors; he knows how to treat all kinds of men as Shakespeare demonstrates when Henry tours his camp in disguise.

Henry uses repetition when he refers to his men as 'we few, we happy few, we band of brothers' these words, combined with the literary device would make his men will feel honored to be considered a friend of the king. In contrast to Henry we have the Dauphin, who is portrayed as a bad leader by Shakespeare. The French in general are disunited, they quarrel among themselves which is a very bad thing in a time of war. They are not set a good example by their leader, the Dauphin who turns against his father in saying "if my father renders fair return, it is against my will." He also says that his horse is his mistress, showing he is more concerned with his horse than the war. He is very complacent and arrogant, he boasts and is confident that the French will win the war, he is so sure that he thinks it an unfair match and considers sending the English 'dinner and fresh suits' and their 'fasting horses provender'.

The Dauphin does not talk to his men directly; he does not live in the same conditions as them, instead he treat them as inferiors and invaluable. The two kings contrasting tactics on leadership go head to head when Henry and

his army take on the French and despite the odds being stacked against them, the English are victorious. This proves that Henry is the better leader and therefore Henry's tactics were successful and we can learn from them. The two leaders relationships with their men is demonstrated again when, after the battle the French ask for permission to ' sort our nobles from our common men. For many of our princes..

. lie drowned and soaked in mercenary blood', an example of strong language and visual imagery, to demonstrate their arrogance and snobbishness. Henry however is mourning the loss of his men and carrying them himself back to give them a proper Christian burial as he says ' Let... the dead with charity enclosed in clay'. Religion is an important aspect of the war against France. At the very start of the play we see Henry consulting the Archbishop of Canterbury and Bishop Ely about whether or not God is on their side. Henry does not want to commit any sin and so will not proceed with the war until he is convinced that God approves. Henry is very religious and turns to God for guidance and support. Before Agincourt we see him pleading with God to let him win and then when he does he thanks him saying that all the praise and glory ' is His only'.

Through the play we are able to learn that religion in the Middle Ages was important and decisions on all levels were influenced by it.