

Henry v is a play written by william shakespeare around the year 1591

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Henry V is based on the real campaign that King Henry V of England led into France in 1415 for the French crown, Henry accomplished some great victories during this campaign, the most notable being the Siege of Harfleur and the Battle of Agincourt. The siege lasted around a month until the French surrendered, and then came the Battle of Agincourt. This is well documented in Shakespeare's Henry V, although dramatised. It was such an astonishing feat because the English were outnumbered somewhere between 2-1 and 5-1.

Something that is generally forgotten these days is that in the times Shakespeare wrote the play, it was always performed on stage in front of a large audience. Going to the theatre to watch plays, cockfights and bear baiting were considered to be the main forms of entertainment in those days. People of all different classes went to see Shakespeare's plays, and they were performed at The Globe Theatre in London. The Globe Theatre was rebuilt several years ago after being burned down centuries ago.

Shakespeare's plays were a lot more famous in the days of Shakespeare.

The play of Henry V is divided into 5 acts with several scenes in each, as was the traditional style. It begins with Henry deliberating on whether to attack France in Act 1. In this act he receives an insulting gift of tennis balls from the Dauphin of France, Henry believes this to mean that the Dauphin does not consider Henry as a challenge in battle. This is an insult to Henry's pride, and he decides to go to war. This shows us that Henry is headstrong and proud; he refuses to let someone insult him and get away with it.

Act 2 is about Henry showing up traitors in his army, and some other characters called Bardolph, Nym and Pistol. They are poor, thieving lowlifes that decide to join the army to profit from the war. The French organise their defences. Act 3 is the Siege of Harfleur, Act 4 the Battle of Agincourt and it's build-up. Nym and Bardolph are hanged. Act 5 is about Henry asking for Katherine's hand in marriage and a brief scene with Fluellen, an English Captain, and Pistol.

Chorus is a vital part of the play, at the beginning of each Act there is an 'iambic pentameter' of writing to introduce you to what's going on. Iambic pentameter was a popular style of writing at the time, it is complicated but the basic principle is that it is written with weak and strong syllables following each other alternately for a certain length of writing. This is an example taken from Wikipedia. com:

Without Chorus the play would be more confusing and less enjoyable, because he adds structure to the play that helps you understand the setting and history.

Throughout the play we are shown many different sides to Henry's character. He seems to be almost a different person at times.

In Act 1 Scene 2 we see Henry with Canterbury, Westmorland, Exeter and. Henry is trying to find out whether he has the right to claim the Throne of France. In this scene Henry appears intelligent and ambitious, a man who considers his decisions carefully. He asks Canterbury " May I with right and conscience make this claim?"

Soon after this, in Act 2 Scene 2 we see the ruthless side of Henry's character. He hands some documents to three of his trusted captains, Cambridge, Scroop and Gray. They believe them to be battle plans but they turn out to be death warrants for treason. Henry allows them to incriminate themselves by telling them about a man who was rude to him yesterday, whom he let off (We judge no less. Uncle of Exeter, enlarge the man committed yesterday that rallied against our person.

We consider it was an excess of wine that set him on and on his advice we pardon him). All three captains say that he was too kind, and should've had the man killed. We can see from this also Henry's intelligence, because the three men have said that this man should be put to death, so they are condemning themselves because they have done worse than the man. Henry feels betrayed by what the three men have done, because he believed them to be loyal to him. He says " To mark the full fraught man, and best endowed with some suspicion. I will weep for thee for this revolt of thine, methinks, is like another fall of man."

In Act 3, we see the patriotic, brave side of Henry. He makes what is commonly regarded as the most well known speech of the play, " Once more unto the breach, dear friends..". This proves Henry to be a brilliant orator; he incorporates flattery, patriotism (" On, on you noble English!" and " And you, good yeomen, whose limbs were made in England, show us here the mettle of your pasture"), the way he speaks to them as individuals, by calling them dear friends and the way he challenges them to prove themselves to him (" In peace there's nothing so becomes a man", " Whose blood is fet from

fathers of war-proof, Fathers that like so many Alexanders" and " Dishonour not your mothers") to deliver a speech that rouses his troops for one last charge at Harfleur, which Henry needs desperately to continue the campaign. This is Henry as a King, determined and proud.

In Act 4 Scene 1 Henry goes about his men's camp in disguise and talks to them, to find out what they really think of the King and the Campaign. He pretends to be an ordinary foot soldier and speaks to Bates, Court and Williams. He then has a quarrel with Williams and they exchange gloves, saying that the next time one of them sees the other they will fight. After the three soldiers leave, Henry speaks the only soliloquy of the play. In this he displays his true feelings about the battle ahead, and his weaknesses as a man: how he finds Kingship a hard duty to bear, and sometimes wishes he did not have the responsibility.

Later in Act 4, in the third scene begins the St Crispin's day battle, the pinnacle of Henry's campaign, and the perfect example of Henry as an inspirational leader.

He makes the St Crispin's speech, which is vital because his troops are exhausted and know that they are greatly outnumbered, only a great speech can rouse them to fight with their full ability. Henry incorporates some of speaking tactics from the Harfleur speech but concentrates largely on pride, telling them men how proud they will be to return to England and how they will always be remembered if they fight this battle - (" He that outlives this

day and comes safe home will stand a-tiptoe when this day is named, and rouse him at the name of Crispian.

He that shall see this day and live old age will yearly on the vigil feast his neighbours, and say 'Tomorrow is Saint Crispian.' Then he will strip his sleeve and show his scars and say " These wounds I had on St Crispin's day"). This is a powerful part of the speech, and is a great way to rouse troops into believing they can win, and that they should fight hard. Henry continues the speech - (" Old men forget, yet all shall be forgot but he'll remember, with advantages what feats he did that day. Then shall our names, familiar in his mouth as household words"...). The promise of fame and reverence is enough to strongly encourage most men.

Henry finally goes on to say that those men who chose not to come on the campaign will deeply regret it - (And gentlemen in England, now abed, shall think themselves accursed that they were not here, and hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks that fought with us upon St Crispin's day."). This would rile the troops yet more, it would make them believe that, having fought this battle, they would be generally superior to any man who chose not to, that they would be more of a man.

In Act 4 Scene 7, after the French have murdered all of Henry's luggage boys we see Henry's violent ruthless side once again. He orders the death of all the French prisoners they have taken. " Besides, we'll cut the throats of those we have, and not a man of them we shall take shall taste our mercy. Go and tell them so." Shortly after this Montjoy, the French messenger,

arrives at the camp. He brings the news that the English have won. When Henry receives this news he thanks not himself or his troops, but God. " Praised be God, and not our strength, for it." This tells us that Henry is a very pious man; he believes that ultimately God decides everything.

Shortly after this, Henry plays a practical joke on his Captain Fluellen, the glove he exchanged with Williams for the fight he gives to Fluellen. He then tells Warwick and Gloucester to follow Fluellen to stop a real fight breaking out.

Finally, in Act 5 Scene 2 we see the romantic, gentlemanly side of Henry. In the French King's Palace at Troyes he tries to gain Princess Katherine's hand in marriage. The French royalty and his own captains are there. The French agree because it would help make peace between the two countries, the marriage is for political purposes. Henry, however, does not need to convince Katherine to marry him. He is allowed to marry her regardless, so courting her is merely a formality. I believe that the reason he does anyway is that he wants her to actually love him, for the marriage not just to be a political agreement.

The dictionary defines a hero as: A person noted for feats of courage or nobility of purpose, especially one who has risked or sacrificed his or her life.

From this definition, I believe the statement " The play's aim is to celebrate heroic actions under a heroic King" is true. The play is based around Henry and his achievements and I think Shakespeare did his best to make Henry appear as a hero. Henry is indeed noted for his feats of courage and nobility

of purpose. He risked his life many times in battle, charging into the battle rather than cowering outside the battlefield. I believe Henry's actions in France are and were generally considered heroic.