

An interpretation of  
invictus: an  
interpretive study of  
the poem by william  
ernes...



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In the poem *Invictus* by William Ernest Henley the writer has given us a glimpse of the theme in the title itself. *Invictus* means unconquerable or undetected in Latin. Knowing that this poem was written by Henley while he was in the hospital being treated for tuberculosis of the bone. This only helps strengthen my thesis that this poem is about strength and perseverance in the faces of death.

The first stanza is about strength and death. The entire stanza is basically stating that the author woke up from the dark night that he describes in the poem. He was thankful for waking up because he does not wish to die.

Although he does not wish to die he knows that he will die one day. He states this in the sentence " I thank whatever gods may be for my unconquerable soul". I believe that the author was thinking dark because he was on his death bed. You can see that he is thinking dark when he uses phrases like " out of the night that covers me" and " black as the pit from pole to pole".

When he wakes up the next morning and is still alive he is thankful so he is thinking happy thoughts because he is still alive.

The second stanza is about the author persevering through his troubles. " In the fell clutch of circumstance I have not winced nor cried aloud". In this sentence the author is stating that under the sinister hold of circumstance he has preserved through his troubles. Henley also states that under the beatings of chance the authors head is bloody but unbowed. This is basically stating that even though he has taken the many beatings of life he is not giving up. I believe that he is talking mostly about his strength and how he is fighting to stay alive. When he is talking about strength he says things like " I have not winced nor cried aloud" and " My head is bloody but unbowed".

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When he is talking about fighting to stay alive he says things like “ In the fell clutch of circumstance” and “ Under the bludgeoning’s of chance.”

The third stanza is mostly about death. “ Beyond this place of wrath and tears.” This sentence is talking about the Earth. The writer is describing earth as a place of harshness, pain and tears. “ And yet the menace of the years Finds and shall find me unafraid.” This statement is saying that the author is not afraid of death and will never be afraid. I believe that Henley was thinking that for him life was hell for him so he writes about it. You can see this when he uses sentences like “ looms the horror of the shade, and yet the menace of the years” and “ beyond this place of wrath and tears.” I believe that the poet was having another bad day because he goes back into writing really dark stuff. For example the realm of the dead, harshness and tears.

The final stanza is talking about the author’s strength to go forward. “ It matters not how straight the gait or how charged with punishments the scroll.” This is stating that he does not care how narrow the gait is to get to where he is going or how many punishments are destined for him for whenever he gets where he is going. He will decide where he goes whether it be heaven or hell. “ I am the master of my fate I am the captain of my soul.” I believe that the when writing the author was thinking about the end of his goal because he knows that it is almost his time.

All of the evidence that I have provided supports my thesis which is to have strength and perseverance in the face of death. In the end the author realizes that he is the master of his life. In life you will always have to make

decisions that will steer your fate one way or another but you are the only one to blame for your outcome.