

# 'be like a comet, my sun' essay



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Assignment 2

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English 115

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" And then I stole all courtesy from heaven, And dressed myself in such humility, That I did pluck allegiance from men's hearts, Loud shouts and salutations from their mouths, Even in the presence of their crowned King.

Thus did I keep my person fresh and new,..” (1 Henry IV 3. 2. 50-54 King

Henry) This scene between Hal and his father, leaves the audience in no doubt as to the King's attitude concerning his son's actions. King Henry is angry because his son is not in council therefore placing himself far away from the court. As any father would naturally react, he is upset as he is concerned for his son and more pertinent to this essay, his son's future.

The King feels that the court and the masses will now have low expectations of him as a result of his association with the commoners. Henry IV

describes himself as somebody who made something of himself from nothing using adjectives such as “ stole” “ plucked” and “ dressed”. Unlike Hal who seems to have had everything made easy for him in life and in his father’s eyes he is throwing it away. He talks to his son about assuming a role. A role which involves remaining aloof in order to create a certain mystique, yet at the same time Henry IV talks of dressing himself in humility. In other words, the King means the ability to act a certain way and disguise his true colors. This is intriguing to note as in ‘ Henry V’, Hal takes his father’s advice literally and actually dresses as one of the soldiers. Also, early in the first play, during Hal’s first soliloquy, Hal arguably shows himself to more like his father than the King is aware. The young prince compares himself to the sun and his common companions to the clouds that sometimes form a veil over the sun when being viewed from the Earth. This implies that he is something of high and powerful stature and that anything that may seem to detract from that permanently is merely a temporary distraction, as he when he so wished could tear down those veils to reveal the brightest star of them all.

Indeed, the most noticeable 'change' in Harry is when he becomes King Henry V. It seems that the new King is eager to throw off his delinquent reputation and prove himself as an astute leader. However, as previously mentioned, it could be argued that this notoriety for being a renegade was fabricated by the young prince in order to emphasize his ascendancy as even

more 'wonderful', an adjective which his father once used in an analogy about a comet when talking about himself. "But, like a comet, I was wondered at." (1 Henry IV 3. 2. 47)

When considering Henry V true feelings and his relationship with his subjects it would be naive to omit the valuable insight that can be ascertained from '1 Henry IV' and Hal in his formative years. Was he playing a role in 1 Henry IV? Is he playing a role in Henry V or has his experience taught him anything? It certainly seems that he has many roles throughout the two plays in much the same way as any human fulfills certain roles in their lifetime. The soliloquies perhaps give us a true glimpse of his character's psyche. However, just using his words in order to pass judgment would be mere speculation. In the case of this enigmatic figure, <https://assignbuster.com/be-like-a-comet-my-sun-essay/>

it would seem far more valuable to attempt to ascertain his true feelings from his words and actions during integral parts of the plays.

It may be fair to assume that Shakespeare agrees as it is interesting to note that whereas we get Hal's first soliloquy in Henry IV Part 1 within the first act, Shakespeare only gives us a glimpse into King Henry's inner thoughts late in the play. The relatively new King mentions his lasting concern regarding the theft of the throne by his father. In 'Henry IV', his father seems to want Hal to come to terms with what it is to be part of a family line. However, Hal certainly seems to have some difficulty in seeing his legitimate claim to the throne as virtuous since his father stole it. He is not from a royal blood line. He admits to himself that he would rather be a slave who has no responsibilities (Henry V. Act IV. i. 248-250) When considering these kinds of comments which Henry V makes when lamenting the loneliness and responsibilities of his position as ruler, it could be argued that in Henry IV perhaps Hal knew of his responsibilities that were about to become him and his actions reflected that like a last holiday before the end of summer for example.

Henry presents us with the idea that his motivation for his actions as king are not power, lust or arrogance, but simply a crushing sense of responsibility to preserve stability and order for his subjects. Obviously, this can be questioned due to the position of power that Henry V has found himself in. It can be stated without much argument that he abandoned his ' friends' from the Boar's Head the moment they became obsolete. His execution of traitors and his ' friends' is done with a clinical feel and at the very least his reasons for invading France are ambiguous. It is interesting to note the new King's response when one of the soldiers questions the Kings motives for invading France. Henry does not consider the question of responsibility for what William describes as " if the cause not be good, then the King himself has a heavy reckoning to make..... I am afeard there are few die well that die in a battle." (Henry V. IV. i. 128-135) Instead, he chooses to argue the religious side of the argument as opposed to William's initial statement.

This could possibly connote the idea of Hal being fickle, a notion which could easily be put forward but possibly somewhat naively. In very

much the same way as Malvolio of Shakespeare's 'Twelfth Night' an audience

may at times sympathize with the protagonist of this play whilst conceding that he has his faults. At the end of 'Twelfth Night' when Malvolio is subject to some rather cruel and unusual torture at the hands of Maria and Sir Toby, he remains true to himself and never for an instant believes that he could be insane. In the same way King Henry never truly loses his association with the commoners. He may distance himself from the friends he

had at the Boars Head but some dialogue from Henry IV left us wondering whether he was such good friends with the so called 'crew of rascals'.

Therefore, it is certain to say that Hal, arguably more than any other King in any other play knows how to interact with common people most probably as

a result of his experiences in his formative years at the Tavern. Further evidence to disprove the notion of Hal being fickle is evident in his discussion with the soldiers. Previously, he has walked among them as King and proclaimed that he was their brother. However, during this discussion,

there is no reason for pretence as the soldiers have no idea as to his true identity. Whilst arguing with William, the cloaked King refuses to change his opinion and is willing to fight as a result of his convictions.

Throughout the two plays Henry/Hal 'disguises' himself on a number of occasions. His father talks of him about cloaking (acting) and Henry literally heeds his advice in 'Henry V Act IV'. This scene is of most intrigue when attempting to judge Hal. He is obviously assuming a role when disguised in a common cloak but whether any more so than the rest of the time is extremely debatable. For example, long before this in '1 Henry IV', Hal disguises himself as a commoner. For much of this play, Hal cloaks himself in common company .

This use of disguise, obviously brings about negative connotations of concealment. One point that should be stated is that it is easier to 'hide' in taverns and in the bottom of a pint of ale than to stand up and be counted and be responsible for being the heir to the throne and the next ruler of these very people which he chooses to surround himself with now. Only truly great men can keep company with the men that they will rule over



as a huge amount of respect has to be given over with grace by the subjects. On the other hand, it is easier for a ruler to remain aloof and wondered at like a comet as it helps add to the mystique that one human being, a king, is actually not like another, a subject. Hal is not one or the other. That is to say he is not a royal or a commoner. It is important to note that Shakespeare managed to give us glimpses of the 'real' character. For example, his use of soliloquies and language gives us more than a look at the character of the role he was supposed to fulfill within the play, for example the 'Prince of Wales'.

Hal's father spoke to him about a comet. He used the analogy as a comet is something which is infrequent and as a consequence becomes something to be wondered at. Presumably, the old king wanted his son to be more than just a star. This would be for the reason that any man can simply lift his eyes toward the night sky and will be able to see them as he pleases. It is fair to argue that Hal is more than a star. He is enigmatic to the point of wonder. His father wanted him to be a comet, however it is clear that Hal aspires to be much more than that. He draws comparisons

between himself and the sun, the brightest and most powerful star of them all.

Hal can be regal , he can also be as common as the next man. If a director was to cast this role he would have to find an intelligent man with a lot of depth who can appear no different to the average man.

However, while he appears no different, one cannot tell whether he is just the same. Hal has the rare ability to set himself apart from the crowd.

That's what makes him who he is . Not an easy job for a casting director!

In conclusion, one can only offer an honest appraisal from their own perspective as to what Hal/Henry V's true feelings are about his men. In times in his life he has become friends with so-called ' common men', therefore at times he likes them. At times he has not. At times he has been genuinely hurt by them, an example of which would be when he speaks to the

traitors who attempted to take his life. Hal and Henry V cares about his fellow man and he can act as though he cares about his fellow man.

Therefore, in this respect, he is their brother because which man has not had mixed feelings and emotions about his fellow man at different stages in

their life. Ultimately he is hedonistic prince and an effective ruler.

Ultimately he is a man.