

2nd henry v-prompt

Literature



November 18, Why Henry Fought: Henry V and War In Shakespeare's Henry V, we see the making of a King. It is one of the only Shakespeare plays that focuses on the development one character. Shakespeare utilizes the element of war to define the young King Henry V. Why Henry becomes committed to this enterprise has been attributed to one or the other cause, but in looking at the totality of Henry's personality, his desire to show legitimacy, and his growth into a true leader of men and nations, the war is a necessary vehicle from which he used to change a man and his country.

Throughout history, war has changed the perception of leaders. If we look at FDR in the 20th century, without WWII, would FDR have been seen as the same galvanizing figure in American history? Many do not think so. FDR was seen as a man reacting to events out of his control, which is different than waging a war (and all of its terrible consequences) for immoral reasons. This gained FDR much respect and adoration in his country and around the world as a savior of democracy. King Henry V faced the same dilemma in his life: a desire to be a strong ruler and show his people he could lead them, but without a vehicle to do so. Henry used the opportunity for war, but had to be sure he was on the moral high ground in order to seal his legacy as a moral and just leader of England.

There was no single event which led him to make this decision, but a confluence of events, and a personal desire to change history's course. In his youth, young Prince Henry (or Hal) was very lazy, indolent, and not taken as a serious person. It is this personal past that contributed to his desire to commit to the war. In addition, his advisors and religious clergy advocated for the war as a way to strengthen England's standing in the region (although they had differing reasons for advocating for the war). Finally, it <https://assignbuster.com/2nd-henry-v-prompt/>

was the insulting “ gifts” from the French Dauphin which drove Henry to take the campaign more personally and to prove to the Dauphin (and all foreign leaders who did not take him seriously) that he was a new, more determined leader, capable of defending the honor and rights of his people and establishing his monarchical legacy. He knew that he had to take on this campaign of war to protect both the legitimacy of the Crown and the sovereignty of his people.

Even without the tennis ball insult from the Dauphin, Henry would have committed to the war. He was intent on changing and establishing his legacy, and closely heeded the advice of his advisors and needed the moral support of his reasoning for his claim to the Crown of France.

Henry is adept at putting the onus on others, rather than himself for this coming war. Escaping any moral blame, Henry allowed others to make the choice to “ force” him to respond if they chose a certain pathway. For example, he puts the onus on the Archbishop to tell him the truth about the line of succession (which is confusing to him), and puts the onus on the Dauphin to either allow him his rightful claim to the French Crown or suffer the consequences of war. It takes the choice out of Henry’s hands and puts it into the hands of others-- a sly tactic to gain himself moral superiority. The insulting box of balls simply adds insult to injury in Henry’s mind, as he was morally ready to advance the cause of England. Regardless of any personal animosity between he and the Dauphin, Henry’s past, along with his present and future desires to be seen as a legitimate ruler to his people, and to show the rest of the world he should be taken seriously, all add up to give him impetus to begin a morally justified campaign of battle.

As was FDR, Henry was a man whose choices were dictated to him by others;

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although Henry was much more the aggressor in his case, he was careful to couch his actions as a consequence of the poor choices of those around him. Deep down, King Henry V wanted this war; he needed this war as the vehicle for his legitimacy. It was the convenient behavior by others which allowed him to fulfill his desires as a leader of men and a country where he could claim that greatness was not thrust upon him, but he grasped greatness.

Works Cited

" Henry V." November 2012. OpenSourceShakespeare, George Mason University. 17 November 2012 .