Henry V

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Shakespeare's father was a glove-maker, and Shakespeare received no more than a grammar school education. He married Anne Hathaway in 1582, but left his family behind around 1590 and moved to London, where he became an actor and playwright. He was an immediate success: Shakespeare soon became the most popular playwright of the day as well as a part-owner of the Globe Theater. His theater troupe was adopted by King James as the King's Men in 1603. Shakespeare retired as a rich and prominent man to Stratford-upon-Avon in 1613, and died three years later.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Battle of Agincourt took place during the Hundred Years' War, a drawn-out series of battles fought between England and France from 1337 to 1453. The war originated in a dynastic dispute over the right to rule France and began when Edward III (Henry V's great-uncle) went to battle to protect his claim on French lands in 1337. Aside from its effect on English-French relations, the Hundred Years' War is also notable for introducing the first European standing armies since the Roman Empire and for developing a strong sense of nationalism among France and England's peoples.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Henry V is the final play in a tetralogy of history plays including *Richard II*, *Henry IV Part 1* and *Henry IV, Part 2* that is sometimes called the Henriad. The previous plays track the reigns of King Richard II and King Henry IV, who is Henry V's father and who overthrew King Richard II to himself become king. Shakespeare's primary source for these plays was Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles*, though he may also have relied on Latin biographies, such as the *Henrici Quinti Angliae Regis Gesta*, written about Henry V while he was in power.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *The Life of Henry V*
- **When Written:** 1599
- **Where Written:** London, England
- **When Published:** 1600
- **Literary Period:** Elizabethan
- **Genre:** History
- **Setting:** England and France, 1415
- **Climax:** Henry V's St. Crispin's Day speech before the Battle of Agincourt.
- **Antagonist:** Lewis the Dauphin

EXTRA CREDIT

The Wooden O. Though it's impossible to know for sure, it has long been believed that *Henry V* was the first play to be performed in London's Globe Theater – the "wooden O" of the play's prologue – whose construction was completed in 1599. Shakespeare may even have written *Henry V* specifically as a showpiece for the new theater – a fact which would cast an especially ironic light on all the Chorus' apologies for the stage's inadequacy.

Back to Life. Sir John Falstaff dies at the start of *Henry V* but Shakespeare brings him back to life in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, published three years later (though possibly performed earlier). This resurrection supposedly occurred at the behest of Queen Elizabeth herself, who adored the character of Falstaff and demanded a play that portrayed him in love.

PLOT SUMMARY

The play starts with the Chorus apologizing for the theater's limited portrayal of history. Act 1 opens on the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Ely hoping to distract Henry V from passing a bill that would seize Church properties by giving Henry the Church's approval and funds to raise an army to claim France for England. Canterbury convinces Henry that war is justified because Salic law (a law that inheritance can only pass through male heirs) does not apply in France and Henry thus has an inherited right to French territory. The French Ambassadors deliver the Dauphin's warning and **box of tennis balls**. Henry conveys his contempt back and declares war. Meanwhile, Bardolph, Nym, and Pistol bicker while Hostess Quickly and Boy attend Falstaff's deathbed.

Though France bribes the English lords Scroop, Cambridge, and Grey into plotting Henry's murder, Henry discovers the plot in time. He toys with the traitors, letting them advocate royal mercilessness in a commoner's case before exposing their plot and condemning them to death according to their own recommended policy. Henry sets sail for France.

King Charles, the Dauphin, and the French court receive Henry V's ultimatum: surrender or face attack. The Dauphin scoffs. The Chorus recounts that Charles offers Henry his daughter Katherine and small dukedoms. Unsatisfied, Henry attacks Harfleur, motivating his troops by speaking to their strength

and nobility. Nym, Bardolph and Pistol try to evade battle while Fluellen lectures everyone on Roman war discipline. Harfleur surrenders after Henry threatens blood-curdling violence, at which point Henry orders his soldiers to treat the French citizens mercifully. At the French palace, Katherine practices English and the French prepare to rally their army.

Back at the English camp, Henry approves Bardolph's execution for stealing (never seeming to even think about or notice that Bardolph was one of Falstaff's friends back when Falstaff was Henry's mentor), promoting moral rectitude among his troops. Montjoy, a French ambassador, arrives to ask Henry for a ransom to pay back the damage he has caused to France or face total defeat, but Henry refuses to back down and says he'll fight the next day despite his troops' exhaustion. The two armies wait for battle the next morning: the French, smugly confident; the English, tired, ill, and fearful. Disguised, Henry wanders the English camp pretending to be a common soldier and argues with Michael Williams about the justness of the war and the king's right to launch it. He and Williams exchange gloves and vow to fight when they meet. Alone, Henry enumerates the stresses of being king, envying a commoner's peace of mind.

Next morning, the French charge assuredly into battle while the outnumbered English long for reinforcements until Henry delivers a speech on English honor and brotherhood. He declares that this day, St. Crispin's Day, will forever be celebrated in commemoration of his soldiers' bravery. His troops charge off in high spirits and overwhelm the French. A group of French defectors vandalize the English camp, killing Boy and others. Montjoy arrives to ask if the French can sort the corpses of their noblemen from their commoners and admits that the English have won. Henry names the fight the Battle of Agincourt. He gives Williams' glove to Fluellen under false pretenses, then, after Fluellen and Williams begin to fight, reveals himself as the man Williams argued with. Henry not only pardons Williams but rewards him. A herald delivers the casualty report: France has lost ten thousand; England, twenty-nine. Henry gives God credit for the victory and calls for a religious procession and Christian burials before returning to England.

The Chorus recounts Henry's modesty in England and his subsequent return to France to negotiate a peace treaty as requested by the Holy Roman Emperor. The final act opens in France where Fluellen fights Pistol for daring to make fun of the leek he wore in his cap to celebrate St. Davy's Day. Gower backs Fluellen up, warning Pistol not to make fun of people's different cultures. Meanwhile, Henry, King Charles, Queen Isabel, Katherine, and French and English nobles gather at the French palace. Henry agrees to peace on the condition that Charles accepts his demands, which Charles goes off to review. Henry woos Katherine (marriage to her is his foremost demand) by presenting himself as a simple soldier. Charles returns to announce that he grants Henry all he asks for and blesses Henry and Katherine's betrothal, hoping that their marriage will prevent all future strife between England and France. The Chorus closes the play by describing how Henry's son loses France in the next generation.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Henry V – King of England. Though Henry V lived a wild, reckless youth (portrayed in Shakespeare's *Henry V* "prequels" of *1 Henry IV* and *2 Henry IV*, he enters the play a changed man. His rise to the throne has turned Henry into a moderate, dignified, eloquent monarch who rules with equal parts strength and mercy. Though he confesses privately to the struggles of being king, he is publicly optimistic and assured, repeatedly inspiring his countrymen to military triumph and moral rectitude. He modestly attributes all personal successes to God and is considered a model king.

Michael Williams – A common soldier who Henry V argues with while in disguise. The two exchange gloves, swearing to fight in the future. When Henry V eventually reveals himself, he pardons and rewards Williams even though Williams challenged the justness of the war and questioned the king's right to risk so many soldiers' lives.

Katherine – Daughter of King Charles VI and Queen Isabel. Henry V requests her hand in marriage as part of the peace treaty at play's end. She speaks with Henry in broken English, suspicious of his rhetoric and hesitant to accept his professions of love. She is betrothed to Henry with her parents' blessing. She speaks with a French **accent**.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Lewis the Dauphin – Son of King Charles VI and Queen Isabel, the Dauphin is cocky and vengeful, sending Henry V **the box of tennis balls** to mock him and dismissing England as a feeble power. He is captured during the Battle of Agincourt.

Ancient Pistol – An irascible common soldier who steals and lies his way through the war and plans to steal and lie back in England.

The Chorus – Introducer of each of the play's acts, summarizer of off-stage events, and frequent apologist for the theater's limits in its ability to portray historical events.

King Charles – King of France. King Charles lacks the hot temper of his son the Dauphin and treats the English with moderation and caution. After the Battle of Agincourt, he agrees to all of Henry's demands during peace negotiations and gives Henry his daughter Katherine in marriage.

Captain Fluellen – A Welsh officer in Henry V's army, Fluellen pontificates at length about the Roman disciplines of war but is nevertheless courageous, loyal, and committed. He speaks with

a thick Welsh **accent**.

Archbishop of Canterbury – An English archbishop and advisor to Henry V who convinces the king that his claim to France is God-given. In doing so, Canterbury hopes to (and does) divert the passage of a bill that would seize church property and give it to the king.

Boy – The previous page to Falstaff who laments the low morals of his new masters Pistol, Nym, and Bardolph. Boy is killed in the French defectors' attack on the English camp.

Queen Isabel – Queen of France and wife of King Charles, Queen Isabel blesses the marriage between Katherine and Henry V, hoping it will eliminate future conflict between England and France.

Duke of Exeter – Henry V's uncle and advisor who conveys Henry's refusal to surrender to King Charles.

Earl of Westmoreland – An English earl whose professed wish for reinforcements at the Battle of Agincourt inspires Henry V to make a rousing speech.

Bishop of Ely – An English bishop who supports the Archbishop of Canterbury's case before Henry V.

Henry, Lord Scroop of Masham – A conspirator against Henry V. Scroop was closest to the king and Henry V thus finds his treason the most painful.

Sir John Falstaff – The best friend and mentor to Henry V during Henry's wild youth, Henry dropped Falstaff when he became king. Heartbroken, Falstaff dies at the beginning of the play and never appears onstage.

Duke of York – Henry V's cousin, whose death during the Battle of Agincourt, as recounted by Exeter, brings Henry to tears.

Richard Earl of Cambridge – A conspirator against Henry V.

Sir Thomas Grey – A conspirator against Henry V.

Lieutenant Bardolph – A drunken common soldier and friend of Falstaff who is executed for stealing during the campaign against France.

Corporal Nym – A common soldier executed for stealing.

Hostess Quickly – Pistol's wife who defends Falstaff's character and was at one time engaged to Nym.

Sir Thomas Erpingham – A commander in Henry V's army who lends Henry the cloak Henry uses as a disguise.

Duke of Burgundy – A French duke who helps negotiate the peace treaty between King Charles and Henry V.

Montjoy – A French herald who Henry V asks the name of and tips for his services.

Governor of Harfleur – Governor of the town of Harfleur who surrenders to Henry V.

The Constable of France – A French officer who joins the Dauphin in his cocky boastfulness and mockery of England.

Duke of Orléans – A French duke who joins the Dauphin in his cocky boastfulness and mockery of England.

Captain Gower – An English officer in Henry V's army.

Captain Jamy – A Scottish officer in Henry V's army, he speaks with a thick Scotch **accent**.

Captain MacMorris – An Irish officer in Henry V's army, he speaks with a thick Irish **accent**.

John Bates – A common soldier who Henry V argues with while in disguise.

Alexander Court – A common soldier who Henry V meets while in disguise.

Alice – Katherine's lady-in-waiting.

The French Ambassadors – Deliverers of the Dauphin's warning and **the box of tennis balls** to Henry V.

Duke of Bedford – Henry V's younger brother.

Duke of Gloucester – Henry V's younger brother.

Earl of Warwick – An English earl.

Earl of Salisbury – An English earl and a general.

Duke of Bourbon – A French duke.

Duke of Berri – A French duke.

Lord Rambures – A French lord.

Lord Grandpré – A French lord.

Humphrey – A British lord.

Clarence – A British lord.

Duke of Brittany – A French lord.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

KINGSHIP

Above all else, *Henry V* investigates the relationship between a monarch and his people. By exploring the life of the particular king Henry V, the play also explores the role of a king in general. Throughout the play, Henry wears many hats, each representing a facet of his role as monarch. Aside from being absolute ruler, Henry is also a merciful Christian, a fierce war general, a loyal patriot, a tireless optimist, an inspirational orator, and a vulnerable human being.

As absolute ruler, Henry is eminently reasonable, exerting his power with equal parts strength and compassion. The play

opens with the news that the wild party-boy Prince Hal (from 1 Henry IV and 2 Henry IV) has turned into the dignified and thoughtful King Henry V, and Henry's new moderation and even-headedness are repeatedly praised and taken pride in. Henry strongly identifies as a Christian, aligning all of his pursuits with God's will and frequently showing mercy. He spares the lives of the drunk man who spoke against him and of Michael Williams, who doubted the justness of the war, reminding his advisors that scrutiny and serious punishment should be reserved for serious crimes. That said, Henry will not tolerate dishonesty and approves the execution of Bardolph for stealing to emphasize the importance of moral rectitude among his people: "…when lenity and cruelty play for a kingdom, the gentler gamester is the soonest winner," he says. Yet even in dispensing capital punishment, Henry remains reasonable and immune to petty vengefulness. Sending the conspirators' Scroop, Cambridge, and Grey to their deaths, Henry informs them that he does not seek revenge against them for himself but executes them to preserve his kingdom's safety and to obey English law. Henry likewise shows mercy as a war general, though he reserves mercy until after his enemy's defeat. Henry's speech to the Governor of Harfleur threatens vicious, blood-curdling violence, yet, as soon as the Governor surrenders the town, Henry orders his soldiers to treat the French with respect.

As the head of England, Henry is also responsible for instilling patriotism among his people, an effort that, in hard times, requires Henry's unflagging optimism and virtuosic eloquence. Even when the English troops are grimly convinced of defeat, Henry remains cheerful, refusing to back down to the French or to admit any doubts to his people. When his soldiers are exhausted and outnumbered before the Battle of Agincourt, Henry's rousing St. Crispin's Day speech stokes everyone's sense of English pride and honor and invigorates them to win the war. Yet such prodigious feats of speech and spirit take a private toll. Apart from exploring the king's public role, the play also looks into his private struggles. Henry's soliloquy describes the immense stress he must undergo daily and daily hide from view. Though Henry is ultimately proud and glad to be England's monarch, he imagines how luxurious it would feel to sleep the peaceful sleep of a common man, unburdened by kingly responsibility.

WARFARE

Warfare constitutes the entire dramatic arc of *Henry V*, which begins in preparations for battle, continues onto the battlefield itself, and ends with a post-war peace treaty. Yet while the whole play focuses on warfare, it doesn't limit itself to one perspective. Instead, the play illuminates different elements of battle in different scenes, assembling a complex vision of war. This vision includes views from every strata of England's class hierarchy. The play opens on the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Ely discussing a Church investment in the war. Later, scenes of Henry V and his noble advisors crafting strategy are interspersed with scenes of high-ranked army officers like Captains Fluellen, Jamy, Gower and MacMorris managing the battlefield and scenes of common soldiers like Pistol, Bardolph, and Nym charging into battle (or, in their case, trying to avoid charging). Voice is also given to Boy, one of the young pages who guards the army's luggage, and to Montjoy, a French messenger whom Henry kindly asks the name of and tips. In addition to encompassing every class, the play includes the enemy perspective on the war, portraying King Charles, the Dauphin, and the French nobility engaged in their own preparation, strategy, and fight.

By offering such a wide range of perspectives on the battle, the play also showcases a wide range of attitudes towards warfare. Though Henry initially expresses wariness of war, he is soon convinced of the justness of an attack on France and quickly turns to warmongering. Henry also continually conflates war and religion, deciding to wage war only after Canterbury has convinced him that a war on France is God's will. On the battlefield, Henry repeatedly reminds his troops that God is on England's side ("God for Harry, England, and Saint George!" he shouts) and, once the battle is won, Henry refuses all personal credit, chalking the victory up to God. Where Henry prioritizes the religious aspect of war, Captain Fluellen prioritizes history. Though a good officer, Fluellen is tediously long-winded on the subject of Roman war discipline and talks the ear off anyone who will listen to him (and some who won't). He is at pains to craft his battle strategies in accord with Roman tradition and rails against officers like Captain MacMorris, who act in the present without regard for history. Michael Williams, by contrast, embodies the perspective of the common man and ordinary soldier. Unconvinced by appeals to war's godliness and tradition, Williams considers war nothing but senseless and gratuitous violence suffered by powerless people at the King's command.

Apart from its range of individual perspectives, the play also presents an overarching vision of history written by war. Discussion of the past - including Canterbury's speech convincing Henry to attack France, King Charles' memory of the long-ago military campaigns of the English King Edward III, and Fluellen's congratulations to Henry after Agincourt – describe history as a series of battles won and lost, shaping the present by their outcomes. Yet belief in war's importance does not equal belief in war's efficacy. Henry's victory at Agincourt is joyously celebrated in the play, but the Chorus reminds the audience that the effects of that victory were swiftly undone in the next generation.

ENGLAND

Just as *Henry V* presents a multifaceted perspective on warfare, it also portrays a diverse portrait of England. Throughout the play, England is understood as a royal line, a malleable geography, a multicultural melting pot, and a source of patriotic pride. Faith in England's royal line and indignation at France's attempt to truncate that line spurs the action of the play. Henry V goes to war, he believes, to claim a monarchic right over France inherited from his great-uncle Edward III. Though King Charles and the Dauphin deny that claim, the French are nevertheless intimidated by England's royal line. Henry comes from "victorious stock," King Charles reminds his son. A sense of that stock stands stronger in the English mind than any sense of national geography. England's borders are permeable. Henry goes to war to extend them and thinks, in going, that the Scottish will inevitably try and push them back. With England's lands in constant flux, the English place more weight on national character than on geography, taking pride in the "lions" of Henry's blood and striving for honor and courage. Indeed, even the French acknowledge that English toughness and bravery seem at odds with the damp, dull, murky landscapes of England.

While the play celebrates royal lineage, it also celebrates the diverse lineage of common Englishman by incorporating characters from a wide variety of backgrounds and English subcultures. Characters hail from every class and from many different cultures: Henry V and Captain Fluellen are Welsh, Captain MacMorris is Irish, and Captain Jamy is Scottish. Though the captains' heavy accents identify their backgrounds, their high ranks in the army prove that those backgrounds haven't biased English society against them. In fact, Captain Gower (who is English) chastises Pistol for failing to show Fluellen's Welsh heritage due tolerance.

Perhaps most crucially, England is a source of patriotic pride and a rousing cause to fight for. Henry's inspirational speeches to his troops before the battles of Harfleur and Agincourt understand this fact and convince English soldiers to forget exhaustion, illness, and fear for the sake of England, uniting army members of every stripe in their common identity as honorable citizens of England, a "band of brothers" embracing any brave Englishman from the lowliest soldier to King Henry V himself.

APPEARANCES

In *Henry V*, appearances are easily shifted and generally untrustworthy. Again and again, people or situations are not what they seem to be to other characters onstage. Henry V's first entrance onstage is preceded by discussion of his changed demeanor and the false assumptions made based on his former appearance as a reckless young prince. Once on stage, one of Henry's first actions involves exposing and punishing the duplicitous traitors Cambridge, Scroop, and Grey, telling them that their falseness has tarnished the appearance of even the best-seeming men in Henry's eyes. Yet Henry's exposure of the traitors itself plays with appearances, as he leads the men along as if he trusts them before revealing he's on to them. During the war, Henry puts on a show of optimism and conceals his anxieties. Henry also disguises himself in Erpingham's cloak and argues with Michael Williams about the king's justifications for war while pretending to be a common soldier. Though Henry eventually reveals himself to Williams, he only does so after tricking Fluellen into assuming the appearance of the man Williams argued with and swore to fight. Later wooing Katherine, Henry claims to be a simple, ineloquent soldier, though the rich and complex language in which he makes the claim disproves the claim itself. Still, Henry's false appearances are strategic or playful but not malevolent and he pardons Williams, acknowledging it was his own disguise that incited the soldier's criticism. Other characters who play with appearances include the Dauphin, pretending not to be himself before the English messenger, and Pistol, who deceives without compunction and who, in his last lines of the play, resolves to tell everyone in England that the wounds he suffered from Fluellen's beating are actually noble battle scars.

While characters on stage toy and struggle with false appearances, the Chorus repeatedly recalls the false appearance of the stage itself, asking the audience to pardon the play's inadequate efforts to portray historical events. The theater, the Chorus laments, has nothing but "the flat unraised spirits that have dared on this unworthy scaffold to bring forth so great an object" – a paltry appearance of reality. Each act opens with such an apology by the Chorus and his persistent refrain complements the role false appearance plays within the drama itself, inviting audience members to consider appearances before them in regards to dramatic narrative as well as dramatic form.

LANGUAGE

As it acts out a war between armies of different mother tongues, *Henry V* exposes the powers and limitations of language. The most obvious representation of that limit is the non-English portion of the play itself: large chunks of lines are spoken in French, barring the understanding of any non-French-speakers in the audience. The play's characters themselves struggle with this language barrier, as the French Katherine strains to learn English and Pistol butchers French words attempting to communicate with the Frenchman he captures. But even as language perpetuates misunderstanding and difference, it also embodies ideals of unity and inclusion. The Welsh, Irish, and Scottish accents spoken by Captains Fluellen, MacMorris, and Gower gesture

towards England's diversity and cultural tolerance.

For Henry V, language is also a powerful tool. His rhetoric is the most effective weapon in the play. Before the Battle of Agincourt, Henry's soldiers lack every physical advantage to the French: they are poor, they are hungry, they are exhausted, they are fighting on unfamiliar territory. They themselves bemoan their situation and wish for reinforcements, certain of imminent defeat. Yet Henry's St. Crispin's Day speech turns the whole war around. Through his words, Henry reconfigures the soldiers' image of themselves, enabling them to see themselves as an honorable, unified "band of brothers" destined to be celebrated throughout English history for their courage and gallantry. Armed with Henry's words, the soldiers fight in high spirits and win the Battle of Agincourt against a much larger force.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

THE BOX OF TENNIS BALLS

The Dauphin sends Henry V a **box of tennis balls** intending them to serve as a mocking symbol of Henry's boyish frivolity, but Henry V's reaction to the gift renders them a different symbol entirely. "Tell the pleasant prince this mock of his / hath turn'd his balls to gun-stones," Henry says, transforming the tennis balls into a symbol of Henry's new steely resolve and strength as a monarch. Though he once played games, he will now fight wars, and will fight those wars ferociously. As the tennis balls "turn'd…to gun-stones" against France express seriousness in the guise of play, so too is Henry V's raucous youth considered in retrospect a mere "veil of wildness" which concealed a shrewd and powerful monarch.

ACCENTS

Accents abound among the play's characters and symbolize *Henry V*'s diverse vision of England. Though Captain Fluellen, Captain Jamy, and Captain MacMorris all speak English, each man's English carries the distinctive mark of his homeland. Their Welsh, Scotch, and Irish accents gesture towards their respective English sub-cultures, signaling the rich diversity of England's population. The fact that each man is a high-ranking captain in Henry V's army signals, too, that England is tolerant of cultural differences and welcomes people of disparate backgrounds into its most trusted offices. This ideal of tolerance is reiterated in Act 5 when the English Captain Gower admonishes Pistol for making fun of Fluellen's Welsh traditions and accent. Katherine's French accent can likewise be seen to signify English diversity and tolerance. As Henry V's success at Agincourt unites France and England, the French become another sub-culture welcomed into the English melting pot.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Simon & Schuster edition of *Henry V (Folger Shakespeare Library)* published in 2004.

Prologue Quotes

But pardon, gentles all,
The flat unraised spirits that hath dared
On this unworthy scaffold to bring forth
So great an object.

Related Characters: The Chorus (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: Pro.9-12

Explanation and Analysis

In the Prologue, the Chorus introduces the play that will follow. He praises the play's subject, King Henry V, and calls out for a muse of fire to help deliver a production worthy of "the warlike Harry." But in the quote, the Chorus apologizes, since the stage can only approximate history, greatness and war. He calls the actors "unraised spirits" and the stage an "unworthy scaffold" on which they will attempt to show Henry V, "so great an object."

Theatre can only accomplish so much; it cannot truly depict countries and battles and "mighty monarchies," and so the Chorus asks the audience to use its imagination. He asks them to forgive the imperfection and use their thoughts to go beyond the appearances on the stage, imagining a thousand soldiers for every one and truly seeing horses where there are none.

However, at the same time, Shakespeare seems to perhaps be making a larger point or claim, because he knows that in fact through the magic of theater the audience *will* get caught up in the story, *will* see the actors on stage as soldiers really fighting in a war. So even as Shakespeare starts the play by apologizing for the weakness of theatrical appearances, he is also sort of secretly highlighting the *power* of theatrical appearances. This important, in part, because the play portrays Henry V himself as a master of theatrical appearance, and of being able to unite England and defeat France, in part, because of this mastery.

Act 1, Scene 1 Quotes

The strawberry grows underneath the nettle
And wholesome berries thrive and ripen best
Neighbored by fruit of baser quality.
And so the prince obscured his contemplation
Under the veil of wildness, which, no doubt,
Grew like the summer grass, fastest by night,
Unseen, yet crescive in his faculty.

Related Characters: Bishop of Ely (speaker), Henry V

Related Themes:

Page Number: 1.1.63-69

Explanation and Analysis

Act 1 opens with the Bishop of Ely and the Bishop of Canterbury worrying about a bill that would limit the power of the Church; this bill was originally proposed during the reign of Henry IV. But Canterbury and Ely reassure themselves by talking about how much Henry V loves the Church, and how changed he is, praising his poise, reason, and maturity. In Henry IV parts 1 and 2, Henry V is merely Prince Hal, a rambunctious, disappointing son who slums in the pubs with common people.

Here Ely recognizes the change in Henry V, comparing him to a strawberry that grows hidden and surrounded by worser fruit. Hal "obscured his contemplation / Under the veil of wilderness," meaning that he hid his growing intelligence and maturity by acting and appearing wild. This maturity and kingliness, he says, probably "grew like the summer grass, fasted by night, / unseen" until he suddenly appeared confident, competent, and kingly.

These remarks by the bishops signify a resolution of a claim made by Hal in Henry IV part 1, in which he predicted that his transformation from wild youth to king would happen in just this way. He used the metaphor of the sun suddenly bursting through the clouds after being hidden. Put another way, his wild youth (while fun) was a calculated act, a performance, intended to make his eventual kingliness even more powerful.

Act 1, Scene 2 Quotes

Therefore take heed how you impawn our person
How you awake our sleeping sword of war:
We charge you, in the name of God, take heed
For never two such kingdoms did contend
Without much fall of blood; whose guiltless drops
Are every one a woe, a sort complaint
'Gainst him whose wrong gives edge unto the swords
That make such waste in brief mortality.
Under this conjuration, speak, my lord;
For we will hear, note and believe in heart
That what you speak is in your conscience wash'd
As pure as sin with baptism.

Related Characters: Henry V (speaker), Archbishop of Canterbury

Related Themes:

Page Number: 1.2.24-36

Explanation and Analysis

Henry is about to meet with ambassadors from France, but first wants to meet with Canterbury and Ely; the King wants to know for certain whether or not he he has a legitimate claim to the throne of France. Here Henry tells Canterbury to be careful in his answer, and to be truthful in the name of God, since the answer has the potential to "awake our sleeping sword of war." Note that Henry's regal speech and mastery of the 'royal we' supports the claims that he has matured made by Ely and Canterbury in the preceding scene.

Henry introduces the potential of violence and war with great compassion, showing an understanding of how much bloodshed a war would create, and how those who suffer would be "guiltless." He recognizes that war has the potential to waste and destroy lives, and shows hesitancy over going to war for the wrong reasons. War is dangerous, not just a game for glory.

With this heavy interpretation battle and an appeal to conscience and God, Henry tells Canterbury that he will trust the Bishop completely in this matter. After carefully considering the matter and listening to Canterbury's lengthy legal and biblical justifications and encouragement from his entourage (below), the King decides to wage a war in attempt to gain the French throne.

All of that said, one can also read Henry's entire speech to be a performance rather than honest. In this reading, Henry *wants* to wage war against France, both to conquer it and expand his power and because he knows that having a

foreign enemy will help keep his own country united (something that his father, the previous king, advised him just before he died). And yet he also knows that the best way to get the war he wants is not to appear to want it too much, to act like a king who cares only for his subjects.

And finally, one can read Henry's motives as being even more complex. He might both want the war *and* be concerned about his citizens, and he might want the war because he knows it will help unite England and end the years of civil war that plagued his own father's reign as king (dramatized in *Henry IV* parts 1 and 2). And so Henry V might be performing here to help get the war he feels his country needs, and be willing to sacrifice some of his people to save his country.

Which motive is true or right is not clear, and it isn't definite that it's only one motive pushing Henry V to act. What is clear is that Henry V is a master of performance and appearances, and you as a reader should always keep that in mind when thinking about the play.

Your brother kings and monarchs of the earth
Do all expect that you should rouse yourself,
As did the former lions of your blood.

Related Characters: Duke of Exeter (speaker), Henry V

Related Themes:

Page Number: 1.2.127-129

Explanation and Analysis

The Duke of Exeter is here encouraging Henry to make a claim to the throne of France and to start a war. He does so by appealing to Henry's royal lineage and to his peers. The other kings around the world, Exeter says, expect that Henry should "rouse himself," which recalls "awake our sleeping sword" in Henry's own quote just a hundred or so lines earlier.

This rising to the challenge is expected since Henry's ancestors have done so in similar situations. Note that the Lion symbolizes the English crown and is on the English Royal Arms. Blood, too, is a palpable symbol of lineage, legacy, and ancestry. By placing Henry firmly in an impressive line of Kings, Exeter appeals to his sense of pride and duty as a member of his family and the lineage of English kings more generally.

Act 2, Scene 2 Quotes

If little faults, proceeding on distemper,
Shall not be wink'd at, how shall we stretch our eye
When capital crimes, chew'd, swallow'd and digested,
Appear before us?

Related Characters: Henry V (speaker), Henry, Lord Scroop of Masham, Richard Earl of Cambridge, Sir Thomas Grey

Related Themes:

Page Number: 2.2.55-59

Explanation and Analysis

The King is about to leave for France, but he has discovered a secret, treasonous plot by the English lords Scroop, Cambridge, and Grey. The three ironically flatter the King, thinking that he doesn't know that they are traitors. When Henry instructs Exeter to release a man that was imprisoned for lambasting the King while drunk, the traitors encourage Henry to punish the man severely instead.

In the quote, Henry responds by saying that "little faults" like this one need to be shown mercy ("winked at"), while larger capital crimes which are premeditated need to be given the harsh punishments. In this way, the King carefully calibrates an appearance of ignorance (of the lords own treachery) with his mercifulness (towards the prisoner) to trick the traitorous lords into calling for harsh punishment for anyone who dares to insult or work against the king.

Henry, in other words, is manipulating appearances to get the lords to demand harsh punishment against traitors. The lords think that their own "appearance" as loyal followers is secure, never realizing that Henry has seen through their guise and is putting on a "play" of his own. Once again, Henry's master of appearances is clear.

Such and so finely bolted didst thou seem:
And thus thy fall hath left a kind of blot,
To mark the full-fraught man and best indued
With some suspicion. I will weep for thee;
For this revolt of thine, methinks, is like
Another fall of man. Their faults are open:
Arrest them to the answer of the law;
And God acquit them of their practices!

Related Characters: Henry V (speaker), Henry, Lord Scroop of Masham, Richard Earl of Cambridge, Sir Thomas Grey

Related Themes:

Page Number: 2.2.144-151

Explanation and Analysis

Still feigning ignorance, Henry asks Scroop, Cambridge, and Grey who should be in charge of England during his campaign in France. When they suggest themselves, he reveals that he knows about their conspiracy. When they beg for mercy, he shows them to be hypocrites (based on their call for harsh punishment of the drunken man who had insulted the king) and criticizes them for their betrayal.

Henry V says he'll weep for the traitors, comparing their revolt to "Another fall of man." The betrayal is thus described with high stakes and extremely emotional and religious meaning.King Henry is comparing himself to God, and in doing so is asserting his divine right to the throne (the idea that the king ruled because God wants the king to rule). The rebellion then, must be seen as similar to Adam and Eve's act of disobedience that caused them to be thrown out of the Garden of Eden.

Their crimes now out in the open, Henry orders the conspirators' arrest, saying that only God can "acquit them of their practices," even calling on God to grant them mercy. He later explains that he does not seek personal revenge, but rather acts out of concern for England's safety and respect for its laws. This calm, fair decision is further evidence of Henry's maturation, but also is an example of his ability to project an image of himself as a just and good king always looking out for England.

At the same, Henry's comment that the traitors had left a"blot" that, for Henry, marks even the best men with suspicion indicates that he's now hesitant to trust anyone since the traitors appeared so genuine. It also suggests one of Henry's main concerns as king, which is again about appearances: as king, Henry knows, he can never entirely trust anyone. *Everyone* is performing when around him, even those who are loyal, because, well, he's the king! (Imagine how you might behave if you were to meet the President of the United States) This means that Henry, as king, must constantly perform for others, while at the same time he can never see the true intentions of others because they are always performing too. Being surrounded always by appearances is one of the costs of being king, andpiercing this veil of performance is something that Henry will try to do all through the play in order to get a real sense of what his people think of the world and of him.

Act 2, Scene 3 Quotes

Boy, bristle thy courage up; for Falstaff he is dead, and we must earn therefore.

Related Characters: Ancient Pistol (speaker), Boy

Related Themes:

Page Number: 2.3.4-6

Explanation and Analysis

This scene describes the death of the famous character Falstaff, which occurs offstage. Falstaff was a friend of Henry V's (back when he was Prince Hal) in *Henry IV 1* and *2*.Falstaff was lively and fun, a master of language (and Henry learned much of his mastery of language and appearance from Falstaff), a kind of second father to Henry, and at the same time Falstaff was corrupt and completely and entirely self-interested. The final "act" of Prince Hal's transformation from wild youth to good King is his banishment of Falstaff at the end of *Henry IV Part 2*. And yet Henry's transformation also implies a kind of ruthless heartlessness (earlier in*Henry V*it's made clear that that Falstaff has become sick with a broken heart from Henry's turn away from him, and so his death is a result of Henry's transformation).

Here Pistol announces that "Falstaff is dead," and his former friends must therefore "earn." *Earn* here takes on the dual meanings of grieve and make money. This play on words is fitting for the announcement of Falstaff's death, as Falstaff's friends are sad at his passing but at the same time must now make their own way in the world now that Falstaff and his schemes can no longer support them.

Act 2, Scene 4 Quotes

O peace, Prince Dauphin!
You are too much mistaken in this king:
Question your grace the late ambassadors,
With what great state he heard their embassy,
How well supplied with noble counselors,
How modest in exception, and withal
How terrible in constant resolution,
And you shall find his vanities forespent
Were but the outside of the Roman Brutus,
Covering discretion with a coat of folly.

Related Characters: The Constable of France (speaker), Lewis the Dauphin, Henry V

Related Themes:

Page Number: 2.4.31-40

Explanation and Analysis

The King of France (Charles), his son Prince Dauphin, and others are discussing the English invasion. King Charles suggests the strongest defense possible, but his son the Dauphin says his father's fears are ridiculous, making fun of Henry V based on the way he carried himself in his youth. Here, the Constable of France tells the Dauphin that he is "too much mistaken in this king," offering further evidence of Henry's transformation.

For his argument, the Constable points to the way that Henry acted with the French ambassadors, saying that he heard them with "great state," seeming both "modest in exception" and "terrible in constant resolution." Note the anaphora, the repetition of a word at the beginning of consecutive lines ("how") to emphasize these points. Like Canterbury argued in Act 1 Scene 1, the Constable says that Henry's "vanities" and "folly" in his earlier years were merely an appearance, covering up his "discretion" and true nature as a warrior king.

Act 3, Scene 1 Quotes

For there is none of you so mean and base,
That hath not noble lustre in your eyes.
I see you stand like greyhounds in the slips,
Straining upon the start. The game's afoot:
Follow your spirit, and upon this charge
Cry 'God for Harry, England, and Saint George!'

Related Characters: Henry V (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 3.1.32-37

Explanation and Analysis

With his forces about to engage the French in their first battle, Henry delivers this speech, which begins, "Once more into the breach, dear friends." This rousing pre-battle speech is evidence of the eloquence that Canterbury and Ely ascribed to Henry in Act 1 Scene 1. Here he uses language to reinforce his Kingship, and by appealing to his soldiers as both friends and Englishman, rhetorically prepares them with visions of their connection to their country and their king to rally them to face and overcome the horrors of warfare.

In these lines he calls all of his soldiers noble, saying that even the lowest of them have "noble luster" in their eyes. In the preceding speech they have been told to discard their peaceful ways and embrace the battle that will follow, and they have been reminded of England's proud history and many victories. Now, they "stand like greyhounds," ready to fight for their country and their king. Declaring "the game's afoot," Henry gives his final rallying cry, telling his men to follow their spirits and, charging, cry out "God for Harry, England, and Saint George!" In this way he appeals simultaneously to their faith, their sense of camaraderie with each other as soldiers and countrymen, and their sense of duty to their King. Note that by calling himself the informal Harry, he draws his men even closer to him.

Henry may believe all these things, but once again he is also putting on a performance for his men here. He is, through his words, conjuring a vision of a united England while also helping the men to conjure visions of their own best, bravest selves.

Act 3, Scene 3 Quotes

The gates of mercy shall be all shut up,
And the flesh'd soldier, rough and hard of heart,
In liberty of bloody hand shall range
With conscience wide as hell, mowing like grass
Your fresh-fair virgins and your flowering infants.

Related Characters: Henry V (speaker), Governor of Harfleur

Related Themes:

Page Number: 3.3.10-14

Explanation and Analysis

Henry delivers this chilling monologue to the Governor and citizens of the French port city of Harfleur; he asks if the Governor will surrender, saying it is the last chance for mercy. Opposing the brotherly, supportive sentiment of his war-speech to his men in Act 3 Scene 1, here Henry is vicious and threatening, offering the most violent lines of the play. We can note that the most brutal act of violence is not carried out physically, but is instead done with language. The mere suggestion of such atrocities as these is enough to encourage the Governor of Harfleur to surrender; here language and words are weaponry.

The lines excerpted in the quote say that if the Governor refuses to surrender, "the gates of mercy shall be all shut up," and terror will be unleashed. The rough soldiers will

with "bloody hands" and "conscience wide as hell" wreak havoc on the town. Henry says they'll move through it, "mowing like grass" to suggest ease, and rape the women (fresh-fair virgins) and murder their "flowering infants." This harrowing slaughter never takes place, as the Governor decides to surrender immediately following the speech.

Act 3, Scene 5 Quotes

❝ Where have they this mettle?
Is not their climate foggy, raw and dull,
On whom, as in despite, the sun looks pale,
Killing their fruite with frowns? Can sodden water,
A drench for sur-rein'd jades, their barley-broth,
Decoct their cold blood to such valiant heat?

Related Characters: The Constable of France (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 3.5.15-20

Explanation and Analysis

The war between England and France is now well underway, and here the French King and his retinue discuss England and their advance thus far. In these lines, the constable wonders how the English have so much strength ("mettle"). Speaking about England's climate, he finds it miraculous that such a rainy, "foggy, raw and dull" place where "the sun looks pale" could turn out such ferocious warriors. How, he asks, can the cold damp place make men with such "valiant heat?"

As the conversation continues, these French lords will continue to suggest that the Englishmen put Frenchmen to shame, since French women now yearn for the English. These lines can be seen as an appeal to the English audience of the play, who would probably have cheered upon hearing praise of their country.

Act 3, Scene 6 Quotes

❝ ...and we give express charge, that in our marches through the country, there be nothing compelled from the villages, nothing taken but paid for, none of the French upbraided or abused in disdainful language; for when lenity and cruelty play for a kingdom, the gentler gamester is the soonest winner.

Related Characters: Henry V (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 3.6.110-116

Explanation and Analysis

Here Henry V speaks to his soldiers once again, offering a contrast to his prewar speech in Act 3, Scene 1 and the terrorizing speech made before Harfleur in Act 3, Scene 3. Bardolph, who was once one of Henry's friends when he was hanging around with Falstaff, has been sentenced to death for stealing from a church; despite pleas from Pistol, Henry approves of the punishment.

In the quote, Henry expresses the requirement that his army act morally and honorably to the French citizens, and ordering his men to steal nothing from the French villages. "Nothing compelled," and "nothing taken but paid for." What's more, he even prohibits his soldiers from abusing the French people with foul language. He argues that when kindness and cruelty compete for a kingdom, it is the "gentler" that always wins. This decision shows both compassion and calculated leadership. Henry V wants to be honorable and kind since he is a Christian and a gentle ruler, but he also wants to take over France. If the English soldiers are kind to villagers during the war, it is more likely that Henry's rule in France will be accepted by the common people, he believes, after he has defeated the French forces.

Act 4, Scene 1 Quotes

❝ I think the king is but a man, as I am.

Related Characters: Henry V (speaker), John Bates, Alexander Court, Michael Williams

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 4.1.105-106

Explanation and Analysis

In this scene, once again, Henry is acting as something that he's not. Though instead of feigning ignorance as he did when confronting his traitorous English lords in Act 2, Scene 2, here he is pretends to be a common soldier.

He uses his disguise to observe his soldiers' behavior when they are not in the King's presence, to discuss private matters openly, and to test the feelings of his men. He claims to serve under a man who is certain that the English forces are doomed and says that his commander has not told the King this opinion.

He utters this line in the middle of a debate with John Bates, Alexander Court, and Michael Williams. He humanizes the King (himself) by saying that he is just a man, giving a lengthy prose speech in which he describes the King thinking and feeling like a normal man (note Henry's ability to alter his language to fit in with his soldiers). Henry here shows the vulnerability and humanity he otherwise could not show, since it might dishearten his troops and his country. By altering his appearance, he is able to articulate the private thoughts that plague the public figure of the King.

> He may show what outward courage he will; but I believe, as cold a night as 'tis, he could wish himself in Thames up to the neck.

Related Characters: John Bates (speaker), Henry V

Related Themes:

Page Number: 4.1.117-119

Explanation and Analysis

In response to Henry's humanization of the King, John Bates responds that he believes the King might show "outward courage" while inwardly wishing himself at home. Ironically, Bates is correct in thinking that the King is using outward appearance to conceal his true self, but instead of concealing fear, he is concealing his royal personage and walking amongst his men.

Bate's arguments represent the belief among many common soldiers that wars are simply blood baths, not righteous and glorious fights in the name of honor and lineage. Further, he implies that the soldiers are just the king's tools, used and then tossed aside to get what the king wants.

> Then I would [Henry V] were here alone; so should he be sure to be ransomed, and a many poor men's lives be saved.

Related Characters: John Bates (speaker), Henry V

Related Themes:

Page Number: 4.1.125-127

Explanation and Analysis

In these lines, as Bates continues to argue with the disguised Henry (not realizing he is speaking with his King), Bates expresses his desire that the king be ransomed, thereby saving "many a poor men's lives."

Such a desire reveals a fundamental opinion about the value of a king's life and the legitimacy of Henry's cause. Bates feels no particular inclination to give his life for the king and his cause, regardless of what it may be, and he believes that the lives of the many (and the poor) outweigh the life of a king. What's more, he seems to believe that it is Henry's duty to his people to offer his life as ransom for theirs. Thus the argument develops where one side sees the responsibility of a king to his people, and the other demands the service of people to their king.

> But if the cause be not good, the king himself hath a heavy reckoning to make, when all those legs and arms and heads, chopped off in battle, shall join together at the latter day and cry all 'We died at such a place.'

Related Characters: Michael Williams (speaker), Henry V

Related Themes:

Page Number: 4.1.138-142

Explanation and Analysis

Michael Williams here continues the discussion while Henry is in disguise. He says that if the King's cause is not just and good, then all of the deaths will be his fault. He lists with gruesome details the limbs that might be dismembered during the battle. These limbs are then given voice, crying "We died at such a place."

This dark imagery demonstrates regular soldiers' visceral experiences during warfare. Williams also suggests that even King Henry will have to answer to God on Judgement day, and that, especially "if the cause be not good," he will face a "heavy reckoning." That the soldiers question the righteousness of the King's cause might suggest that his eloquent, battle-rousing speeches are not as effective as he thinks, and also that England as a whole is not as unified behind him as he thinks.

> The king is not bound to answer the particular endings of his soldiers, the father of his son, nor the master of his servant; for they purpose not their death, when they purpose their services.

Related Characters: Henry V (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 4.1.160-164

Explanation and Analysis

Continuing the dialogue in which the responsibilities and powers of kings are called into question, Henry (still in disguise) insists that a king is not responsible for a soldier's death. He argues that a king asks his soldiers to fight, but not to die. Their deaths are ultimately left up to fate and to God, and regardless of the king's intentions, his soldiers have all sinned in the past. That they serve in a war is due to the king, but the end they meet depends on the type of people that they have been in their lives.

Comparing different levels of obligation, son to father, servant to master, and soldier to king, Henry says that those with the higher positions ask for services but not for "death." Just as a father sending his son on a voyage is hopeful he will live, a king leading his people to war hopes that there won't be casualties.

Through this entire debate between the disguised Henry and his soldiers wesee a king able to share his viewpoints and argue with common soldiers, to pierce the appearances that he would never be able to see past were he to be undisguised. Meanwhile, Henry himself is able topreserve the infallibility, fearlessness, and regal presentation that becomes a ruler. At the same time, these soldiers are espousing ideas that are far more threatening to the very idea of kingship and therefore to Henry himself than the plots of some treacherous lords could ever be. How or whether Henry ends up responding to these ideas will therefore also give a much stronger indication of his own character and core beliefs -- will give the audience the ability to pierce the performance that Henry has been putting on as king for the entire play. And, indeed, near the end of the play Henry finds a way to both reveal that he was the man who was arguing with Williams and to reward him rather than punish him, signaling his recognition that it was his own disguise that led to the discussion, his general status as a good and fair king to his men, and, perhaps, an indication that he prefers Williams open disagreement to the "appearance" of agreement put on by his sometimes traitorous lords.

Act 4, Scene 3 Quotes

If we are mark'd to die, we are enow
To do our country loss; and if to live,
The fewer men, the greater share of honour.

Related Characters: Henry V (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 4.3.23-25

Explanation and Analysis

No longer disguised and once more fully inhabiting his role as king, Henry speaks to calm and inspire his men who are worried and wishing for more soldiers. The English, in fact, are about to face a French army that is massively larger than their own.

In this famous speech, called the St. Crispin's Day Speech, Henry appeals to fate and glory, suggesting that if the men are "mark'd to die," then it is simply time for them to die for their country. And "if to live," than the fewer that survive, the greater the honor is for each one of them. By consigning their lives to fate and appealing to their sense of English pride and honor, Henry returns to the ideals of warfare in honor of England that he evoked in his famous "Once more into the breach" speech, and prepares his men to fight for victory.

We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;
For he to-day that sheds his blood with me
Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,
This day shall gentle his condition:
And gentlemen in England now a-bed
Shall think themselves accursed they were not here,
And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks
That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's day.

Related Characters: Henry V (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 4.3.62-69

Explanation and Analysis

These lines, also excerpted from the St. Crispin's Day Speech, are probably the most famous from the play. In an impressive display of rhetoric and masterful use of language, Henry makes his soldiers feel like his equals and relish their opportunity to fight for and with him. He marks the exclusivity of the chance with "we few," and immediately

modifies it to "we happy few," making clear that the group is not a grim company marching towards death but rather a lucky group of men granted a rare chance to achieve glory.

He then calls the whole group a "band of brothers," and says that whoever on that day fights with him will be his brother. To instill in them bravery and the desire to fight, he places them on his kingly level, inviting them to share in his glory. He then appeals to their sense of patriotism and honor by suggesting that any Englishmen missing the fight will curse themselves for missing the opportunity and question their own manhood. Again, we see Henry use masterful language to energize his men with multiple, overlapping ideals. These speeches are extremely performative, and indicative of Henry's success as a king.

Act 4, Scene 7 Quotes

> Praised be God, and not our strength, for it!

Related Characters: Henry V (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 4.7.92

Explanation and Analysis

This line is uttered by Henry on the battlefield; Montjoy, a French herald, wants permission for the French to sort out their dead by social class, revealing a crucial difference between the French army and England's "band of brothers." WhenMontjoy admits that England has won the day despite the tremendous odds against their small army defeating the much larger French one,Henry says this quote, giving praise to God and not his own strength. This line reinforces Henry's status as a Christian, and the belief that his will is aligned with God's. Ultimately, he seems to believe that he won not because of any particular greatness of his men, but instead because it is what God desired.

Though, as with Henry's stated uncertainty about going to war in the first place in Act 1, Scene 1, it is possible to read Henry's statement here in more complex ways. He could mean that the outcome was up to God, with the added implication that the English deserved God's support precisely *because* they are humble enough to recognize that the outcome was God's will and not their own. By refusing to act arrogantly, Henry is in some sense also asserting England's, and his own, right to rule.

> All the water in Wye cannot wash your majesty's Welsh plod out of your pody, I can tell you that: God pless it and preserve it as long as it pleases his Grace and his Majesty too.

Related Characters: Captain Fluellen (speaker), Henry V

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 4.7.112-114

Explanation and Analysis

The battle is won, and Henry has named it the Battle of Agincourt. Here Fluellen, a Welsh captain in the army, reminisces about Henry's relatives, which brings the appeal to royal lineage full circle. Henry's men persuaded him to act as the "former lions of [his] blood" did, and now Fluellen praises Henry saying that he has lived up to those great ancestors. In these lines Fluellen refers specifically to Henry's Welsh relatives, saying that "all of the water in Wye" couldn't wash the King's Welsh blood ("plod") out of his body ("pody"). Note that the alliteration of *blood*and *body* is altered, yet still preserved by Fluellen's accent.

These lines also show that Fluellen feels close to his King and feels the sense of brotherhood, camaraderie, and patriotism which Henry tried to instill in his men. The lines also help to illustrate and stake a claim about English greatness: that the country is unified across its many cultures and people: British, Welsh, Scottish, etc.Henry must represent and account for all of the different cultures that he rules; as king he is the entirety of his country and his peoples. In this moment, it is the Welsh aspect of his Englishness that shines, but more broadly Henry has been successful in embodying and unifying them all.

Act 5, Scene 1 Quotes

> Will you mock at an ancient tradition, begun upon an honourable respect, and worn as a memorable trophy of predeceased valour and dare not avouch in your deeds any of your words? I have seen you gleeking and galling at this gentlemen twice or thrice. You thought, because he could not speak English in the native garb, he could not therefore handle an English cudgel: you find it otherwise; and henceforth let a Welsh correction teach you a good English condition.

Related Characters: Captain Gower (speaker), Ancient Pistol

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 5.1.74-83

Explanation and Analysis

In these lines, Captain Gower chides Pistol based on a series of interactions between Pistol and Fluellen. Pistol has mocked Fluellen, making fun of his traditions and asking him to eat his leek (which is disrespectful to a Welsh man). Fluellen has been wearing the leek past when he usually would so that he could settle things with Pistol; upon meeting Pistol, Fluellen insults him, beats him, makes him bite the leek, and gives him a coin.

Here, Gower tells Pistol that he essentially deserved the harsh treatment for mocking "an ancient tradition." Gower says he has seen Pistol "gleeking and galling at [Fluellen] twice or thrice," thinking that because of his accent, he was less threatening and demanding of respect. But after the beating, Gower claims, Pistol has found otherwise, and learned a "good English condition" from a "Welsh correction." In other words, a Welshman has taught him how to be a good Englishman, who is respectful and gentlemanly. This lesson reinforces the image of England as inclusive, culturally diverse, and honorable.

Act 5, Scene 2 Quotes

But, before God, Kate, I cannot look greenly nor gasp out my eloquence, nor have I no cunning in protestation; only downright oaths; which I never use till urged, nor never break for urging.

Related Characters: Henry V (speaker), Katherine

Related Themes:

Page Number: 5.2.148-152

Explanation and Analysis

Here Henry is in the process of wooing Katherine, the French daughter of King Charles. Henry has not only defeated the French, he seeks to solidify his and the English hold on the French throne by marrying the French Princess, Katherine, and in time producing an heir to both the English and French thrones.

The two kings have made an agreement about the marriage beforehand in verse, and now, in part due to the language barrier (Katherine speaks mainly French; Henry mainly English), Henry and Katherine, with translation help from Katherine's servant Alice, speak in prose. That Henry switches to prose here makes sense, given the content of his language, which suggests mildly that he is no great speaker and is ineloquent. He says to his future wife that he has no special words or cunning, "only downright oaths," which he never uses until urged to do so and never breaks no matter what.

In this exchange we see another kingly tactic at work, this time on the battle field of love. Henry has demonstrated that he *is* a quite capable speaker, giving powerful speeches to his men before war. But here, he takes a modest approach, intentionally appearing humble to make Katherine feel safe. Especially with the language barrier, he wants to seem like a simple husband opposed to a mighty king. Even though they are marrying for political reasons, and it is her father that has decided on the marriage, Henry wants to make it seem like Katherine has a choice. All through the play it has been clear that Henry believes that in order to rule he must also be loved by his people, and he goes to great efforts to speak and present an image that his people will love. Henry's belief and tactics with Katherine are just the same, seeking not just obedience but genuine love by presenting himself in just the right way.

Your majestee ave fausse French enough to deceive de most sage demoiselle dat is en France.

Related Characters: Katherine (speaker), Henry V

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 5.2.227-228

Explanation and Analysis

Katherine has carefully rejected Henry's advances, despite his lengthy arguments and constructed appearance of humility. In the lines preceding this quote, Henry has slightly broken the humble, unschooled character he has been building. Henry talks about what their son will do and asks what Katherine thinks, before giving her a lengthy, praising epithet in French.

To this French Katherine responds the above line, saying that Henry has "fausse [false] French enough to deceive" even the smartest women in France. The moment that Henry drops his act of humility and inserts pomp and pretension, Katherine calls him out for being false,

demonstrating that despite her accent, she is intelligent. She sees through both acts, both the exaggerated humility and the forward romantic praise in French. To proceed, Henry must say "Fie upon my false French" and be direct and honest with her. There is an implication here that perhaps, in Katherine, Henry has found someone with whom he can be honest, can and must share his true self.

> Take her, fair son, and from her blood raise up
> Issue to me; that the contending kingdoms
> Of France and England, whose very shores look pale
> With envy of each other's happiness,
> May cease their hatred.

Related Characters: King Charles (speaker), Henry V, Katherine

Related Themes:

Page Number: 5.2.360-364

Explanation and Analysis

Spoken by the King of France, this quote is one of the last in the play. Katherine has agreed (as if she had a choice) to the marriage, and for now there is peace. Here King Charles speaks to Henry, telling him to produce a male heir so that the French and English bloodlines merge (including Charles own blood), so that the "contending kingdoms / Of France and England" may have peace, instead of hating and envying each other.

These lines are optimistic, and Act 5 ends on a strong note, but the Chorus explains that the child Charles wished for, Henry VI quickly lost France and caused harm to England as well. In fact,Shakespeare's audience would have been extremely familiar with the actual history (Henry V died just months after his son was born; and Henry VI was eventually killed by a rival family, the Yorks, in the events leading up to the rise of Richard III)and have seen Shakespeare's plays about that history (the three *Henry VI* plays as well as *Richard III*), so King Charles' optimistic lines would have been seen by audience members as deeply ironic.

The failure of Henry V's son to hold on to the legacy that Henry passed down also suggests two things. First, just how capable and adept Henry V himself was. He truly did unite an England that before his reign and just after was riven by civil war, and he did so with a kind of performance and mastery of appearances that made him, at least while he was alive, a kind of cure for the underlying fractures within English society. Second, at the same time, his amazing success was temporary, itself almost no more than an appearance or illusion that disappeared or was proved false as soon he died. Just as the play could not really recreate the past (as the Chorus states in the Prologue), Henry's own performance as king could not make the brief period of his glorious reign last into the future.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

PROLOGUE

Before the play begins, the Chorus delivers a prologue wishing for a grand, lifelike portrayal of history and apologizing for the limitations imposed by the stage. He asks audience members to fill out the theater's meager representations with their own imaginations.

This one-man chorus recalls the group choruses that commented on the action in classical Greek plays. This piece of theater opens with a long-winded apology for theater's artifice, introducing the theme of appearances.

ACT 1, SCENE 1

The play opens as the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Ely worriedly discuss the potential passage of a bill that would strip the church of more than half its wealth and lands, turning them over to the king. This bill was originally proposed during the reign of Henry IV (the father of the current Henry V), but disagreement and unrest prevented it from passing.

The setting is England in 1415. At this time, the Church was a powerful landowner and Church leaders like Canterbury and Ely were frequently wealthy. The proposed bill, though, threatens to diminish that power and wealth and Canterbury and Ely thus fear its passage.

Yet Canterbury and Ely reassure themselves by reflecting on Henry V's love for the church and newfound poise, reason, and maturity. Before the death of his father, Henry V was rambunctious, impetuous, and wild, but he has become a new man since assuming the throne. Ely guesses that, even before this change, the prince had been cultivating a more refined character under "the veil of wildness."

Henry's transformation took place in the play preceding Henry V in Shakespeare's Henriad: Henry IV part 2. That transformation is crucial to his role in this play. Throughout the play, characters will continue to remark on the difference between Henry's old appearance and behavior and his new one.

Ely asks Canterbury about Henry V's attitude towards the bill, which the commons is eager to pass. Canterbury first replies that Henry V seems indifferent, then revises his answer and tells Ely that the king seems to be more partial towards the church than to those who want the bill passed. Canterbury explains that he has conveyed the Church's approval of Henry's claim to the French throne and has offered an immense donation from the Church to help raise the English army to aid in Henry V's campaign against France. He suspects Henry V is eager to hear Canterbury elaborate on England's right to France (a right he says is inherited from Henry V's great-grandfather Edward III), but their conversation was interrupted by the French ambassadors demanding a meeting. That meeting will take place momentarily, and Canterbury and Ely leave to hear it.

Canterbury has hatched a self-serving plot to protect Church property from the bill in question. By convincing Henry to wage war on France, Canterbury hopes to distract Henry from passing the bill (the bill's passage was delayed by war in the past and Canterbury hopes to delay it thus again). Canterbury will speak with the authority of the Church to persuade Henry that England's rights in France are God-given and justified. The archbishop is apparently willing to risk the deaths of many, many soldiers for the sake of his personal fortune. All of this might be taken as a dig at the Catholic Church, which by Shakespeare's time had been rejected by England in favor of Anglicanism.

ACT 1, SCENE 2

Henry V enters, along with lords Humphrey, Bedford, Clarence, Warwick, Westmorland, Exeter, and attendants. Henry V asks for Canterbury to be sent in so he can speak with him before he meets with the French ambassadors. Ely and Canterbury enter and Henry V asks Canterbury to clarify whether or not the English throne has a legitimate claim to ruling France. He urges Canterbury for God's sake to be truthful, reminding him that the decision to go to war against France will result in great bloodshed. Henry V says he will believe whatever Canterbury says.

Canterbury was right to suspect Henry's interest in his claim. Henry's wariness about war's violence introduces the theme of warfare and illustrates Henry's mature and compassionate perspective on battle: Henry understands that war is a dangerous, bloody enterprise, not just a game to win glory. Henry's willingness to trust the archbishop's words demonstrates his devout faith and sense of himself as a Christian king.

Canterbury proceeds at great and complicated length to explain that Henry V has a legitimate right to rule France. The confusion about that right is due to the Salic law (which bars women from inheriting royal standing). Though the French claim that the Salic law applies to France, Canterbury explains that the law in fact applies only to Germany and thus women in France are eligible inheritors. He points out, too, that the current French royalty owe their own positions to royal blood inherited through female lines. Thus, they have no legal ground to deny Henry V's inheritance.

Canterbury interprets Salic law to England's advantage, claiming that "Salic land" (in which the law would apply) refers to Germany rather than to France. The French, of course, claim the opposite, interpreting the law to their own king's advantage. The legal truth is hazy but the monarchs' desires are clear: both kings want to rule France.

When Henry V wonders whether the claim can be made in good conscience, Canterbury insists that even the Bible condones female inheritance. He urges Henry V to "invoke [his ancestors'] warlike spirit" and claim France. Ely, Exeter, and Westmoreland all pipe in, encouraging Henry V to live up to his ancestors, "the former lions of your blood," and wage war. Canterbury promises that the clergy will help raise the greatest army in English history.

Knowing Henry's respect for religion, Canterbury draws on Biblical evidence to support his claim. Canterbury and the rest of Henry's advisors all expect Henry to be persuaded, too, by an appeal to his lineage. A king, they believe, is shaped and beholden to the royal forefathers from whom he's inherited his throne.

Henry V explains that waging a war on France would also require readying defenses against the inevitable Scottish invasion. Canterbury insists that the Scottish threat is insignificant, reminding Henry of Scotland's failed attack on England during King Edward's war in France. Exeter reassures Henry that while "the armed hand doth fight abroad, th'advised head defends itself at home." Canterbury reiterates Exeter's point, illustrating that such a division of duties is only natural by comparing the kingdom to a beehive, whose inhabitants perform different tasks in cooperation towards a common goal. Henry V sends for the French ambassadors, announcing that he has resolved to go to war to claim France.

Again, Henry's realistic perspective on war (here, his understanding that an offense waged away from home always leaves home vulnerable to others' attacks) makes him wary. Having drawn on Biblical evidence, Canterbury now draws on evidence from the natural world (God's creation) to convince Henry that war is necessary, normal, and right. (Though a war, of course, is no necessity, will exile many men from their normal lives, and may not even be right.) Still, Canterbury successfully convinces Henry.

The French ambassadors enter. One ambassador asks Henry V whether he can deliver a message from the Dauphin (the son of the French King Charles) straightforwardly or whether he should temper it. Henry V replies that he is "no tyrant, but a Christian king" whose temper is as firmly controlled as his prisoners.

The two phrasing options – blunt vs. euphemistic – that the ambassador offers introduces the theme of language and shows how closely that theme is related to the theme of appearances. For Henry, being a Christian king means being even-tempered and rational.

The French ambassadors deliver the message: in response to Henry V's claim on several French dukedoms, the Dauphin warns Henry that "you cannot revel into dukedoms [in France]." He asks Henry to forgo his claim and sends a box of treasure more suitable to Henry's spirit. Henry opens the box and finds it full of **tennis balls**. He tells the ambassadors to tell the Dauphin that he has underestimated Henry, that Henry has become a great and powerful king, and that the Dauphin will regret teasing Henry once he sees his tennis balls turned "to gun-stones" and hears the French people curse his joke for generations. Henry declares he will have his revenge and claim his God-given right to France. The French ambassadors depart. Henry calls on everyone to prepare for war.

The Dauphin sends Henry tennis balls to mock Henry's old appearance as a frivolous teenager (an appearance that the Dauphin believes still applies to Henry's character). The tennis balls, for the Dauphin, symbolize Henry's foolishness and love of games. Yet Henry's anger and fearsome rhetoric transform the mocking tennis balls into a different symbol altogether. No longer a cavalier playboy, Henry has revealed himself to be a formidable king. If he used to sling tennis balls, he now slings gun-stones, and he threatens to shoot such balls-turned-gun-stones right back at France.

ACT 2, PROLOGUE

The Chorus enters and recounts the current state of affairs: all England's youth are excited to go to war. France, fearful of England's attack, has found three corrupt Englishmen (Lord Scroop of Masham, Earl of Cambridge, and Sir Thomas Grey) to take French money in exchange for murdering Henry V before he leaves England. The Chorus asks for the audience's patience as the play's "abuse of distance" transports the play, now, to Southampton and soon to France and back again.

Once again, the Chorus apologizes for the play's insufficiencies, specifically for failing to observe "unity of place"—a classical belief that all dramatic action in a play should occur in the same physical location.

ACT 2, SCENE 1

Act 2 opens in Eastcheap, a seedy district of London, where Lieutenant Bardolph and Corporal Nym, two commoners in the English army, have been drinking. Bardolph asks Nym whether he has befriended the soldier Ancient Pistol yet. Nym replies that he is indifferent to Pistol and that, when the opportunity arises, he will smile and "hold out mine iron," but won't fight. He goes on to list the merits of his sword. Bardolph announces he will hold a breakfast over which all three men can bond as brothers-in-arms against France. Nym shrugs off this suggestion, saying he will live and die "as I may." When Bardolph points out that Pistol has wrongfully married Hostess Quickly, the hostess of a London tavern who was originally betrothed to Nym, Nym shrugs it off: "things must be as they may," he says, then casually paints the possibility of being murdered in one's sleep. "Well, I cannot tell," he concludes.

By interspersing scenes of the royal court with scenes of commoners, the play presents a diverse portrait of English life. Nym's responses to Bardolph's comments imply hidden meanings lurking behind his words' most literal appearances. Though Nym says he won't fight Pistol, his extended praise for his sword suggests he's primed for a duel. Though Nym claims indifference towards Pistol's marriage with Hostess Quickly, his rhetorical description of murder suggests that he's more bloodthirsty than he lets on.

Pistol and Hostess Quickly enter and immediately rebuff Bardolph for addressing Pistol as his host, insisting that Hostess Quickly cannot rent rooms. Nym and Pistol draw their swords and exclaim contempt for one another, but Hostess Quickly promptly makes them sheathe their weapons. They resort to name-calling and verbal threatening. When they draw swords again, Bardolph draws his sword as well and says he will stab whoever strikes first. They sheathe, but continue to insult and threaten one another. Pistol tells Nym to marry a prostitute, for he will never have Hostess Quickly.

Pistol and Hostess Quickly interpret Bardolph's language too literally – Bardolph probably only says "host" to be polite, but they assume he actually expects to be put up at Hostess Quickly's tavern. When Hostess Quickly demands that Nym and Pistol sheathe their swords, the two resort to a battle of words, using their language as weapons.

Falstaff's page, Boy, enters and begs Pistol and Hostess Quickly to come to his master, who is very ill. Hostess Quickly remarks, "the king has killed his heart." She leaves with the boy. Pistol and Nym continue to argue, despite Bardolph's efforts to "make you two friends." Nym demands Pistol pay his betting debt to Nym; Pistol suddenly agrees, promising to pay Nym and to be Nym's friend as well. "I'll live by Nym, and Nym shall live by me," he avows, announcing his moneymaking plan to become a salesman at the military camps.

The battle of words is resolved by words: Pistol doesn't actually pay Nym his debt, but his promise to do so in the future seems enough to satisfy Nym. Pistol views war as a simple moneymaking opportunity that has nothing to do with glory, honor, or patriotism.

Hostess Quickly enters frazzled and begs everyone to come to Falstaff, who is suffering brutal fevers. She runs off and Nym and Pistol reflect that, though a good king, Henry V "hath run bad humours" on Falstaff. They depart for Falstaff's bedside.

Distancing himself from his old best friend Falstaff was a crucial step in Henry's transformation from frolicsome prince to serious king. That distance, though, has proven fatally painful to Falstaff—and there are some critics who see in Henry—despite Henry being portrayed as having incredibly kingly traits of patriotism, moral rectitude, and thoughtfulness for his people--a kind of cold-bloodedness, too, that would allow him to abandon and betray a friend like Falstaff.

ACT 2, SCENE 2

In Southampton, Exeter, Bedford and Westmoreland discuss the king's secret discovery of the traitors' conspiracy and the traitors' despicably false efforts to make themselves look loyal to the king. Henry V enters with the traitors: Scroop, Cambridge and Grey. Henry is about to board a ship to France, and Scroop, Cambridge and Grey are flattering him shamelessly, praising the English people's utter loyalty and adoration for its king.

The conspiracy plot and the traitors' sycophantic behavior cast a sinister light on the theme of appearances. The conspirators' loving appearance conceals their murderous true selves. Their own falseness besmirches the perfect loyalty of the English people that they're praising.

Henry V calls on Exeter to release a man jailed yesterday for criticizing the king while drunk. Scroop, Cambridge, and Grey insist the man must be fiercely punished, a severity which Henry attributes to their "too much love and care of me." Henry does not heed their advice, explaining that small crimes should be shown mercy and dismissed, reserving scrutiny for capital crimes.

Though Henry knows the truth about the traitors, he strategically chooses to appear ignorant at first. This false appearance allows him to demonstrate his mercifulness while simultaneously leading the traitors' to reveal their own viciousness.

Henry V asks who will be in charge during his absence and, when Scroop, Cambridge and Grey say that they should be left in charge, Henry hands them papers that reveal he's discovered their conspiracy. When the three traitors ask for mercy, Henry reminds them that he has suppressed his sense of mercy on their own advice. He criticizes the traitors at elaborate length, expressing his disgust at their two-facedness and willingness to betray him for money. "…so finely bolted didst thou seem:," says Henry, "and thus thy fall hath left a kind of blot to mark the full-fraught man and best indued with some suspicion."

Henry discards his own false appearance to indict the traitors for theirs. His previous façade pays off as he is able to point to the traitors' recent mercilessness and show how hypocritical they are in now asking Henry for mercy. Henry's description of their individual wrongs tarnishing all *men shows just how damaging an encounter with false appearances can be: afterwards, even the innocent start to look suspicious.*

Exeter arrests Scroop, Cambridge and Grey, who each pronounce regret and repentance, begging for God's and Henry V's forgiveness. Henry calls on God to show them mercy. He explains that he does not seek revenge for himself but for the sake of his kingdom's safety and in compliance with its laws. He sends them off, "poor miserable wretches," to be executed. Henry proclaims the coming war will surely proceed smoothly since God's grace has already revealed the treason hindering it. He takes off for France.

Again, Henry articulates how important unemotional level-headedness and impersonal, rational thinking are to his vision of himself as king. He can, as an individual man, pity and forgive the traitors. But, as king, Henry will do whatever is best for his people and his kingdom.

ACT 2, SCENE 3

Pistol, Nym, Bardolph, Hostess Quickly and Boy enter, and Pistol calls on the men to be brave because Falstaff is dead "and we must earn therefore." Hostess Quickly laments Falstaff's death, vouching for his place in Heaven despite his sins concerning alcohol and women.

Pistol's use of "earn" plays on two senses of the word: 'earn' can mean either 'make money' or 'grieve.' His instruction to the men appears to carry both meanings. Mistress Quickly's belief that Falstaff is bound for heaven despite his personal sins recalls Henry's comment in just the previous scene that it is for God to show the traitors mercy. Falstaff is no traitor—just a man who indulged his pleasures—but here too God is invoked as one who will give Falstaff mercy.

As the men depart for the war, Pistol warns Hostess Quickly to guard his possessions, keep her wits about her, and trust nobody. "The world is 'pitch and pay,'" he tells her, men are faithless and "oaths are straws."

Pistol warns his wife against the world, which he believes is made up of false appearances and untrustworthy language.

ACT 2, SCENE 4

In France, King Charles, the Dauphin, the Duke of Berri, the Duke of Brittany and the Constable of France have gathered to discuss the English attack. King Charles wants to rally the strongest defenses possible, but the Dauphin scoffs at his father's fears and tells him that England is "idly kinged" by a "vain, giddy, shallow, humorous youth" who poses no real threat. The Constable shushes him, reminding the Dauphin how stately and resolute was the Henry who met the French ambassadors. King Charles reminds everyone that Henry V is of King Edward's "victorious stock," whose bloody attack once devastated France.

The French discussion teases out the relationship between the themes of kingship and appearances. The Dauphin's image of Henry as a harmless party-boy treats Henry's old appearance as his essential character. Yet King Charles and the Constable understand that Henry's old appearance concealed an altogether different character, a character that is now manifest in a new appearance of power. Such power is not just one of Henry's traits, it is seen as being deeply embedded in his very essence because of his family history – it is, literally, in his blood.

A messenger announces the arrival of Henry V's ambassadors. Before they enter, the Dauphin urges his father to stand up to the English, "self-love" being preferable to "self-neglecting" Exeter enters and delivers Henry's message: in the name of God, he asks King Charles to surrender his "borrowed glories" or else suffer brutally violent attack. King Charles says he will give his answer tomorrow. The Dauphin asks if there is any message for the Dauphin, whom he represents. Exeter says Henry V sends the Dauphin ill will and that, unless King Charles surrenders the throne, Henry will punish the Dauphin for his mockery. The Dauphin responds, "I desire nothing but odds with England." Exeter asks King Charles to hurry his decision as Henry is already on French territory. They all exit.

The Dauphin wants his father to convey an appearance of power rather than submission. In the Dauphin's mind, submission is cowardly and he has no sympathy for his father's practical-minded fears of the English. Yet the Dauphin's own actions seem more cowardly than brave. He hides behind the false appearance of being the Dauphin's representative rather than admitting that he is the Dauphin himself.

ACT 3, PROLOGUE

The Chorus describes Henry V's fleet's passage across the channel in lavish detail. "Work, work your thoughts, and therein see a siege," the Chorus commands. The French ambassador, he recounts, has delivered a message to Henry at Harfleur: King Charles offers Henry his daughter Katherine and a few scant, useless dukedoms as dowry. Refusing King Charles' offer, Henry has launched an attack. Cannons fire. The Chorus departs, asking the audience to "be kind" and supplement "our performance with your mind."

The Chorus once again asks the audience to pardon the play. Entreating audience members to "work your thoughts" and supplement "with your mind" in order to see fuller action presents the theater as a partnership rather than a one-way performance: the actors and the audience's imaginations work together to build an appearance of events on stage.

ACT 3, SCENE 1

Henry V, Gloucester, Exeter, and other lords and soldiers enter. Henry V gives a rousing speech to the troops. He addresses them as "dear friends" and calls on them to discard their peacetime ways and render themselves as fierce as tigers, as resolute as wave-battered rocks. He calls them "noblest English" and reminds them of the ancestral war heroes coursing through their veins. He calls on them to be honorable by imitating "men of grosser blood." He says even the lowest among them have "noble lustre" in their eyes and sends the signal for all to charge on through the breach in the town wall, crying "'God for Harry, England, and Saint George!'"

Canterbury and Ely referred to Henry's eloquence in Act 1, but this is the first time that the full extent of that eloquence is displayed firsthand on stage. Henry's virtuosic rhetoric balances a complex set of appeals: it appeals to its listeners' dignity and nobility while also appealing to their ferocity. Above all, it appeals to their sense of camaraderie, with each other, with Henry, with all Englishmen, and with God.

ACT 3, SCENE 2

Nym, Bardolph, Pistol and Boy hang back on the battlefield. Bardolph shouts at all the others to charge onwards through the breach, but Nym protests that he doesn't want to die. Pistol and Boy protest too and break into song, wishing they were back in the pub in England. Captain Fluellen, a Welsh officer in Henry's army, enters and orders them to charge. Pistol tells Fluellen to "abate thy manly rage" around "men of mould." All but Boy charge off. Alone on stage, Boy confesses he can't consider Nym, Bardolph and Pistol true men as they are all essentially cowards and thieves. They want him to start stealing too, but he is disgusted at the thought.

Despite Henry's inspiring speech, the commoners' perspective on war takes no comfort in claims about war's honor or glory. The men view war simply as a death-threat and are thus reluctant to engage in it. "Mould" means clay, and by calling himself and his compatriots "men of mould," Pistol is calling them mortal. They are not, he implies, caught up in the noble "manly" ideals of battle that Fluellen subscribes to. They are just trying to stay alive.

Captain Gower, an English officer, and Fluellen enter and Gower tells Fluellen that the Duke of Gloucester requests him at the mines. Fluellen (with a Welsh **accent**) protests that the mines are "not according to the disciplines of war." Gower insists, saying Gloucester is himself following the orders of the Irish Captain MacMorris, who Fluellen dismisses as "an ass" and an ignoramus about the true "Roman disciplines" of war. Captain MacMorris and the Scottish Captain Jamy enter. MacMorris announces (with an Irish accent) that "the work ish ill done" and the town has trumpeted for retreat. MacMorris and Jamy (in Scotch accent) rebuff Fluellen's efforts at discussion, insisting, "it is no time to discourse." Fluellen praises Jamy's knowledge of war's disciplines and tries to discuss them with MacMorris. He starts to insinuate something about Ireland and MacMorris bristles. The town trumpets for a ceasefire.

For Fluellen, war is all about historical tradition and he thus evaluates those around him based on their familiarity and respect for Roman war discipline. Yet MacMorris and Jamy have little regard for Fluellen's perspective, considering war a thing of the present to be handled in the most effective way, regardless of tradition. Note how Fluellen, MacMorris, and Jamy's strong accents display England's diversity—Welsh, Irish, and Scottish—and prove that members of English subcultures can rise unimpeded to high ranks in the English army.

ACT 3, SCENE 3

The Governor of Harfleur and citizens stand on the town walls with the English troops below them. Henry V enters and asks the Governor whether he will surrender, warning him that this is his last chance for mercy. If the Governor doesn't take this chance, Henry promises to demolish Harfleur, unleashing soldiers "with conscience wide as hell" to rape, kill, and pillage. "What is it then to me," Henry asks, "if impious war, array'd in flames like to the prince of fiends, do, with his smirch'd complexion, all fell feats enlink'd to waste and esolation?" He paints a gruesomely graphic portrait of the consequences: unstoppable soldiers brutalizing Harfleur's vulnerable population, impaling infants on pikes, beating aged fathers, and raping daughters.

Henry's speech demonstrates again what a powerful tool language is on his tongue. Yet here, that power is vicious and combative rather than supportive and sustaining. His imagery assaults the minds of the French and the audience alike and constitutes the most graphically violent portion of the play. That violence is perpetrated by words (i.e. mental action) rather than by bodies (i.e. physical action), but its effect is no less palpable or terrifying. Henry's language, used as a weapon, fills its listeners with fear and makes them cringe. Henry's threat also feels genuine—as a king representing and building his nation, he will do these things, even if a normal man might not be able to bear responsibility for such slaughter.

The Governor announces that he has gotten word from the Dauphin that France cannot raise adequate defenses at present. He will thus surrender his town to England. Henry V orders Exeter to take charge of Harfleur, fortify it against the French and treat all of its citizens mercifully.

As soon as the French surrender, Henry snaps out of aggressive mode, sheathes his (physical and linguistic) weapons, and resumes the role of merciful king that he embodied at play's start.

ACT 3, SCENE 4

In the French palace, Katherine asks her lady-in-waiting, Alice, in French, if Alice will give her an English lesson. Alice begins teaching Katherine the English names for the parts of the body. Katherine complains that the words' 'foot' and 'gown' have wicked, lewd sounds, but dutifully pronounces them (with a French **accent**). Alice praises her. They leave for dinner.

Katherine's difficulty learning English demonstrates the strength of the language barrier between France and England. Her complaint about the words' wickedness alludes to another difficulty: pronounced in her French accent, the English words 'foot' and 'gown' sound like actual French curse words, making her speak vulgarly without meaning to.

ACT 3, SCENE 5

Also in the French palace, King Charles, the Dauphin, the Duke of Bourbon, and the Constable discuss the advance of Henry V's forces into France. The Constable, the Dauphin and the Duke of Brittany lament the barbarous English, calling them "bastard Normans" and "our scions, put in wild and savage stock." They marvel that such a damp, dull climate as England's could yield such fierce warriors, putting French men to shame in the eyes of French women, who lust after English men now.

France chimes in on the theme of England. For the French, England is not its own nation but only an illegitimate, ill-bred offshoot of France (whose William the Conqueror conquered England in 1066.) Yet despite their disgust, the French manage to pay the English a compliment by noticing how at odds the Englishmen's fiery vigor is with England's soggy landscape.

King Charles calls for everyone to rally a strong defense. He orders them to the battlefield: "for your great seats now quit you of great shames" and capture Henry V. The Constable notes that Henry V's troops are so sick and famished, he'll surely surrender as soon as he sees France's army. King Charles sends the herald Montjoy to ask what ransom England will give. The Dauphin is eager to fight but King Charles orders him to stay in Rouen.

As king, Charles takes responsibility for motivating the troops and presenting the war as a point of honor that it would be humiliating for the French to back down from. The Constable strengthens the king's case by noting that this point of honor should not be hard to win (given the sickly state of England's army which has been on the march for weeks in foreign territory, compared to the French soldiers who have not had to face any such deprivation.)

ACT 3, SCENE 6

In the English camp, Gower and Fluellen discuss recent victories at the bridge over the River Ternoise. Fluellen praises Pistol, now a lieutenant at the bridge, for valiance and gallantry. Pistol enters and reports that Bardolph has stolen a pax (a golden image of the crucifixion) from the church and Exeter has ordered him to be hanged. Pistol asks Fluellen to lobby Exeter for Bardolph's life, arguing that the pax was "of little price." When Fluellen sides with Exeter, Pistol curses him and exits. Gower exclaims that Pistol is a dishonorable rogue and thief. Fluellen maintains that Pistol is a brave and gallant soul who has proven himself at the bridge.

Fluellen has misinterpreted Pistol's appearance, thinking him a much more honorable person than he is. Curiously, even after Pistol curses him Fluellen continues to see Pistol as honorable (though Gower assesses Pistol more accurately). Pistol's argument on Bardolph's behalf presumes that the theft of something small is less wrong than the theft of something large.

Henry V enters with his soldiers. Fluellen reports Exeter's victory at the bridge. When Henry asks how many English have been lost, Fluellen says just one: Bardolph, who will be executed for robbing a church. Henry approves of the execution and emphasizes that no English soldiers should rob, taunt, or abuse the French people on penalty of death. He observes, "…when lenity and cruelty play for a kingdom, the gentler gamester is the soonest winner."

Unlike Pistol, Henry believes theft is deeply immoral regardless of the stolen object's value. By approving Bardolph's execution, he reiterates this viewpoint to his soldiers and warns them not to steal (or to perpetrate any other immoral cruelties) towards the French. It's worth noting that as a boy under Falstaff's mentorship, Henry likely engaged in petty crimes not so dissimilar from Bardolph's. As king, though, he wants, and needs, his kingdom to operate with dignity and honor.

Montjoy enters and delivers King Charles' message: though the French troops have "seemed dead," they "did but sleep." He orders the English to repent and to come up with a ransom to pay France back for the damage the English have caused. Henry V asks Montjoy's name, then relays his response: though the English troops are tired and ill, they are not backing down. He tips Montjoy for delivering the message and Montjoy exits. Assuring a worried Gloucester that they are in God's hands, Henry makes plans to camp beyond the river and rest before the next day's march.

The French are at pains to make the English believe that they misjudged France's appearance at Harfleur and that France's defenses are much more formidable than they seemed. By asking Montjoy's name and tipping him, Henry acts kindly and reasonably. Henry recognizes the messenger as a human being and doesn't consider him too low for the king's notice. Furthermore, Henry doesn't take out his anger towards his enemy on his enemy's powerless messenger.

ACT 3, SCENE 7

That same night, the Constable, Lord Rambures, the Duke of Orléans, and the Dauphin talk together in the French camp. They are eager to fight the English and wish it were already morning. The Constable, Orléans, and the Dauphin brag about their armor and horses. Sexual innuendoes about horses abound. A messenger arrives and reports that the English are fifteen hundred paces from the French camp. The Constable, Orléans and Rambures pretend to pity the English, making fun of them for being foolish and "fat-brained." They are convinced of a swift French victory the next day.

The French use boastful language to bolster their already-strong sense of confidence. The Dauphin and others articulate their view of England's people as idiotic fools and sure losers. Yet, at the same time, their cocky, boyish behavior provides an implicit point of contrast with the English. Compared to the French soldiers, the English seem levelheaded and mature.

ACT 4, PROLOGUE

The Chorus' describes, in detail, both armies poised to fight the next morning. It is 3 a.m. The French are "confident and over-lusty" while the English "inly ruminate the morning's danger," their "lank-lean cheeks and war-worn coats" making them look like "ghosts." Still, Henry V walks among his ravaged troops "with cheerful semblance and sweet majesty," dispensing "a largess universal like the sun" so that "every wretch…plucks comfort from his looks." The play will now turn to the battle, whose rendition on stage, the Chorus laments, will "disgrace…the name of Agincourt." He asks the audience to think of the "true things" "their mock'ries" imitate.

The Chorus' description presents another facet of Henry's role as king. Even at the darkest hour (of the night, of the English spirit), Henry radiates bright optimism so that his subjects' may derive comfort from his sunny disposition. Again, the Chorus criticizes theater's false appearances, contrasting them with the "true things" of lived history.

ACT 4, SCENE 1

Henry V, Bedford, and Gloucester are in discussion at the English camp. Though he admits they're in danger, Henry stays optimistic: he notes that by rendering the English sleepless with worry, the French have turned the English into early risers, which is good for their health. Erpingham enters and, after borrowing Erpingham's cloak, Henry says he needs time alone to think and sends the men away to his tent. Alone on stage, Henry marvels at himself: "God-a-mercy, old heart! Thou speak'st cheerfully."

As king, Henry is responsible for keeping his people's spirits high and projecting confident assurance in England. Yet Henry's private exclamation to himself suggests that his public appearance and public language are separate from his personal perspective. He is not just king. He is knowingly performing *his role as king because it is necessary to hide his inner doubt in order to keep his men strong and optimistic.*

Pistol enters and, not recognizing Henry V under Erpingham's cloak, asks who he is. Henry claims he is a Welsh gentleman soldier named Harry le Roy. Pistol gives him the fig for being Fluellen's friend, then exits. Fluellen and Gower enter. Fluellen is scolding Gower for speaking too loudly, insisting that everyone spoke softly in Pompey's war camp, and dismissing Gower's protests that the French are loud too. "If the enemy is an ass," Fluellen asks, "is it meet…that we should also…be an ass?" They exit. Henry reflects that Fluellen is brave and responsible.

As in Act 1 scene 2, Henry assumes a false appearance, but now that false appearance extends to his very identity, not just his behavior. Henry's fake name is a play on words: 'le Roi' means 'the King' in French and Henry thus picks himself a surname that sounds like "King" in a crude French accent. In this case, by disguising himself, Henry can cease to be king for a while, and in so doing can reveal his own true thoughts and more easily access the true thoughts of his men (who would never reveal their true thoughts to their actual king—they would instead perform as model soldiers). Fluellen, Henry observes, may sometimes seem like a blowhard but he is ultimately a good war captain.

Three common soldiers - John Bates, Alexander Court, and Michael Williams - enter and ask Henry V who he is. Henry says he is a soldier under Erpingham, who thinks the English troops are doomed but won't tell the king so the sight of a fearful king won't "dishearten his army." Henry confides that he himself thinks "the king is but a man, as I am," as susceptible to human limitations and fear as anyone else.

Henry speaks candidly to the theme of appearances while disguised by a false appearance. By expressing doubt in England's troops and in his kingly powers, Henry reveals his truest and innermost feelings to the common soldiers, feelings that he would never articulate in his role as king.

John Bates says that despite the king's appearance of courage, he no doubt wishes he were back at home. Henry V protests that the king is glad to be here. Bates wishes, then, that the king were here alone and could be ransomed, sparing many men their lives. Henry says he'd gladly die for the king, since the king's cause is just and "honourable," but Bates and Williams remain unconvinced that the war is for good. Williams, especially, doubts the king's choice to risk so many men's lives: "if the cause be not good," Williams speculates, "the king himself hath a heavy reckoning to make" on Judgment Day.

Bates and Williams express a common soldier's perspective on the war: for them, the war is not bound up in the king's concern for inherited lineage, sovereignty, and glory. The war is simply something that will definitely kill many men and may kill them. From this perspective, the king's decision to wage war may not only be wrong, but could even be considered a sin punishable by God on Judgment Day.

Henry V is indignant, insisting the king is not responsible for a soldier's death just as a father who sends his son on a voyage is not responsible if that son dies in sin at sea: "…they purpose not their death, when they purpose their services." Besides, Henry continues, no matter the purity of the king's motives for a war, his soldiers will have sinned in the past. "War is [God's] beadle, war is [God's] vengeance," and it's not the king's fault if the soldiers die damned: "every subject's duty is the king's, but every subject's soul is his own." Bates and Williams concede that men must answer for their own sins, but Williams still scoffs at Henry's faith in the king. He and Henry exchange gloves and agree to fight if they meet in the future. Bates, Court, and Williams exit.

Speaking in the appearance of a fellow common soldier, Henry airs his views as king. From Henry's perspective, the king asks soldiers to fight but he doesn't ask them to die. Their deaths, he claims, are their own business and are determined by the kinds of lives they lived before the war (sinful or not) rather than by the circumstances of dying in battle. Williams and Bates agree that the men's sins are their own, but are less agreeable that the king's will is so tightly bound to God's will that the king bears no responsibility for the men's deaths. (This argument may also indicate why it was so important to Henry to have the Church's blessing on the war—because once he had it he can view himself as following God's will in pursuing it).

Henry V soliloquizes on the difficulties of being king: the king must bear the burden of everyone else's problems and has none of the "infinite heart's-ease…that private men enjoy." The only thing that distinguishes the king from other men is worthless, "idle ceremony." "What kind of god art thou," Henry asks, "that suffer'st more of mortal griefs than do thy worshippers?" For the king must often withstand "poisoned flattery" and ceremony provides no comfort. He envies the peaceful sleep of a common laborer, "who with a body filled and vacant mind, gets him to rest." The laborer is able to enjoy peace while the king, who must ever maintain that peace, cannot.

Henry's soliloquy affords insight into the personal toll that the kingship takes on him. The roles Henry has to play leave no room for individual leisure and deny him peace of mind. Henry considers this absurd: the king, who is supposedly the most vaulted, pampered member of the kingdom, is in fact the most stressed and the longest suffering. Meanwhile, the king has no special defenses or superpowers to manage that stress: the only thing he has that common men lack is sham ceremony, which is in reality no help at all.

Erpingham enters and calls Henry V to meet with his nobles. He exits and Henry prays, asking God to fill his troops with courage and to forget his father's wrongdoings in obtaining the crown. He reminds God that he has given King Richard's body a new burial, has paid five hundred poor people to mourn him twice a day, has built two chantries dedicated to Richard, and that he will do more, "imploring pardon." Gloucester enters and Henry exits with him.

Henry's prayer points to the effect past kings have on the role of the present king. Henry feels he has to continue to repent for the wrongdoings of his father, King Henry IV, who deposed his predecessor, King Richard II, by bloody means. In some ways, by attacking France, Henry V is building a kind of historical bridge to his great uncle Edward—a bridge that bypasses his father who came to the throne perhaps illegally—to a great monarch who came to the throne legitimately. In this way, By attacking France, it can be argued that Henry V is trying to legitimize his own holding on the English throne.

ACT 4, SCENE 2

It's morning in the French camp. The Dauphin, the Duke of Orleans, and Lord Rambures are eagerly mounting their horses for battle and boasting about their vigor. The Constable and Grandpre enter and egg the men on, pontificating on the French troops' strength and the pathetic frailty of the English. All are convinced of imminent French victory.

Once again, the Dauphin and his cronies use language to pump up their egos and diminish England. But compared to Henry V's eloquence as king and the legitimate doubts he reveals in his soliloquy's, the preening Dauphin seems—to be blunt—like a phony.

ACT 4, SCENE 3

Gloucester, Bedford, Exeter, Erpingham, Salisbury, and Westmoreland are in the English camp, grimly wishing for more soldiers. The battle is about to begin and the English are outnumbered five to one. Henry V enters and pooh-poohs their fears. "If we are mark'd to die, we are enow to do our country loss; and if to live, the fewer men, the greater share of honour."

Gloucester and the other English lords are looking at the war from a practical perspective. Their forces are steeply outnumbered and so they wish for more troops. Yet Henry airs a more optimistic, romantic perspective, appealing to the men's sense of honor and glory.

Henry V goes on to deliver a rousing speech, insisting he is glad there are no more troops, that he would not want to fight in the company of anyone not brave enough to come to battle. Those afraid, he says, can go home – he'll give them passports and a travel stipend. But those who stay and fight he calls "we happy few, we band of brothers," and declares that England will forever afterwards celebrate this day, St. Crispin's Day, in memory of their bravery and honor. They will be household names and heroes. The men are duly inspired.

This speech marks the climax of the play. In it, Henry wields his dazzling rhetorical powers to lift his soldiers' spirits and unite them in an image of themselves that will prove the strongest weapon of all. His language invites the soldiers to see themselves as brave, noble men, regardless of class, and places common soldiers on equal footing with the king himself. They are all a "band of brothers," united in a patriotic cause that will make them English heroes.

Montjoy comes in to ask on behalf of the Constable if Henry V will give himself over as ransom now before his troops' certain defeat. Henry refuses, conveying his faith in his soldiers' valor and England's impending victory. He tells Montjoy not to come asking for ransom ever again. Montjoy exits and Henry V muses to himself that he suspects Montjoy will come once more. York enters asking to permission to lead the troops and Henry gives it, sending everyone off to battle.

As usual, Henry's role as king demands unshakeable public confidence in his troops. Yet Henry's private suspicion that Montjoy will return (i.e. to collect Henry's ransom after Henry's forces have been defeated) suggests that his outward show of confidence may hide uncertainty within.

ACT 4, SCENE 4

On another part of the battlefield, Pistol has captured a French soldier and threatens him in egregious French. He will kill the French soldier, he swears, unless the soldier pays him ransom. Boy, who speaks much better French than Pistol, translates. The French soldier says he is a gentleman and will pay Pistol handsomely for sparing his life. Pistol agrees and the French soldier thanks Pistol on his knees, praising him as "the most brave, valorous, and thrice-worthy signieur of England." Pistol considers himself merciful. Pistol and the French soldier exit and Boy reflects on Pistol's absolutely empty heart and utter cowardliness. Boy considers him even worse than Bardolph and Nym – Pistol doesn't even steal "adventurously." Boy leaves to guard the army tents.

Though Pistol's exchange with the French soldier is highly comical, it addresses serious aspects of the themes of language and warfare. Pistol and the French soldier's belabored conversation shows the strength of the language barrier. The soldier's words of praise speak more to the man's own relief at being spared than they do to Pistol's valor. Pistol's own use of the word 'mercy' is likewise inexact – he has not shown the soldier 'mercy' in any Christian sense. Rather, he has treated war as an economic opportunity and forced an opponent to pay him on pain of death.

ACT 4, SCENE 5

On another part of the battlefield, the French are losing and the Constable, the Duke of Orleans, the Duke of Bourbon, the Dauphin and Rambures bemoan French defeat. They are astounded and miserably ashamed. Bourbon commands everyone out into the field so that they might as least "die in honour."

Stripped of the cocky self-assurance France flaunted before battle, the Duke of Bourbon tries to motivate French soldiers by other means: if they cannot fight on the strength of their egos, they can fight for their sense of dignity and honor.

ACT 4, SCENE 6

Henry V, Exeter, and the troops are gathered as Exeter reports York's noble death: badly wounded, York stumbled upon his dead cousin Suffolk on the battlefield, kissed his bloody face, lay down beside him, asked Exeter to commend his service to the King, and died. Exeter sheepishly admits the scene brought him to tears. Henry says there is nothing to be ashamed of, that the story has gotten him teary too. An alarm sounds signaling French reinforcements and Henry orders the English soldiers to kill their prisoners.

Exeter is initially embarrassed by his own emotion, thinking tears unsuitable to the manly composure demanded by war. Yet Henry's assurances illustrate the king's compassion and show that he understands war is a human matter, not without emotion. At the same time, Henry then orders that the French prisoners be killed as soon as the tide of the battle seems to be turning—a cold-blooded move that ensures the prisoners can't be freed and fight once more against the English. Henry displays both compassion and cold-bloodedness at nearly the same instant—all to build and protect the power of England.

ACT 4, SCENE 7

On another part of the field, Fluellen and Gower are irate that a group of French soldiers have abandoned the battle, raided the English camps, stolen supplies, slaughtered the guard boys, and set the king's tent on fire. They are glad that Henry V ordered the French prisoners' throats slit. Fluellen compares Henry to Alexander the Great, though Fluellen says 'Big' instead of 'Great,' which comes out sounding like 'Pig' because of Fluellen's **accent**. Like Alexander the Great, Fluellen says, Henry is gallant, was born in a town with a river, and killed his best friend, Sir John Falstaff.

The French soldiers who abandoned the battle and resorted to theft have not lived up to their king's Act 3 scene 5 injunction to fight courageously and honorably. Fluellen intends to speak seriously but his accent renders his language comical. Still, despite its comedy, Fluellen's metaphor casts Henry in a grand light by comparing him to the historical hero Alexander the Great.

Henry V enters furious, ordering no mercy be shown French soldiers. Montjoy enters and asks Henry's permission for the French to go out on the battlefield and sort out the corpses of their noblemen from the corpses of their commoners, now unworthily touching noble blood. Montjoy admits that the English have won the battle and Henry grants him the permission he asks. Henry names the fight the Battle of Agincourt. Fluellen reminisces about Henry's great-uncle Edward's victory in France and reminds Henry of his Welsh blood, then proclaims how proud he is to be Henry's countryman.

The French request to sort out their corpses reveals how important class distinctions are to France, even in war. This perspective stands in implicit contrast to Henry's professed notion of an English "band of brothers," united in honor and courage regardless of social standing. Fluellen's comments reveal that Henry, being Welsh, is himself a representative of England's multicultural diversity.

Henry V calls in Williams and asks him about the glove in his cap. Williams recounts his oath to fight the man he argued with the night before. When asked, Fluellen concurs that Williams must keep his oath. Henry urges Williams to keep it and dismisses him after discovering William is Gower's soldier. Henry then gives Fluellen a glove to wear in his cap that he says he took from Alencon in battle. Any man who challenges it, Henry claims, will be a friend of Alencon and should be brought before Henry. Henry sends Fluellen off to fetch Gower and, after he exits, sends Warwick and Gloucester to follow him, explaining that the glove is Williams' and that Fluellen may be beaten up for it. Henry admits that he should be wearing the glove himself and asks them to stop any fight Fluellen and Williams might get into.

Now that the war is won, Henry can have a bit of fun. Here he coordinates an elaborate array of false appearances, misleading Fluellen and Williams alike. Still, he mercifully deploys Warwick and Gloucester as referees to make sure his handiwork does not cause serious harm.

ACT 4, SCENE 8

Williams and Fluellen are in hot dispute over the glove. Gower tries and fails to calm them down. Warwick, Gloucester, Henry V, and Exeter enter and Fluellen calls Williams a traitor and a friend of Alencon. Williams insists the glove belongs to the Englishman he met and swore to fight. Henry reveals that the glove is his own and, though Fluellen urges him to execute Williams, he accepts Williams' plea for pardon and has the glove filled with crowns for Williams to take home. Fluellen then tries to give Williams money too, but is refused.

As in Act 2 scene 2, Henry demonstrates that a good king understands that not all criticism against the king has to be punished. Here, Henry accepts that Williams' critique was elicited by Henry's own disguise. There is also an implicit sense that Henry is much more comfortable, for good reason, with the honest disagreement displayed by Williams than he was of the dishonest "disagreement" engaged in by the conspirators in Act 1. By immediately revising his own behavior to mimic Henry's, Fluellen shows how influential the king's actions are.

A herald enters and delivers the casualty report to Henry V. Ten thousand Frenchmen are dead - including many nobles, knights, esquires, and gentlemen – but only twenty-nine Englishmen were killed, of which only four were nobles. Henry declares their victory belongs to God alone and says he'll execute any Englishman who claims otherwise. He calls for a procession through the village singing prayers and giving the dead Christian burial.

Henry could easily gloat over this stark ratio and use it to enhance his own glory. Instead, Henry acknowledges his own subservience to God and acts extremely humbly, demanding that all Englishman follow his example.

ACT 5, PROLOGUE

The Chorus asks the audience's pardon for the play's omission of events that cannot "in their huge and proper life" be represented on stage. He recounts these events: Henry V travels to Calais and on to London where, though the populace is giddy with pride and his soldiers wish to throw him a victory parade, Henry refuses personal glory and gives full credit to God. The Holy Roman Emperor travels to England on behalf of France to order peace between them. Henry then returns to France, where the act opens.

As usual, the Chorus focuses on the disparity between real events and their diminished portrayal on stage. His account of off-stage action shows that Henry maintains his humble, Christian attitude even in the face of mass crowds eager to celebrate him.


ACT 5, SCENE 1

In the English camp in France, Gower asks Fluellen why he is still wearing a leek in his cap since St. Davy's Day was yesterday. Fluellen explains that "rascally" Pistol came to him the day before with bread and salt, asking him to eat his leek. He could not fight Pistol then and there but he will wear the leek until he has the chance to. Pistol enters and Fluellen dares him to eat the leek, insulting and beating him until Pistol finally takes a few bites. Fluellen then gives him a coin and exits. Gower tells the indignant Pistol that his beating was deserved and advises him not to make fun of ancient, honored cultural traditions or to underestimate those who speak with accents. He exits.

Mocking Fluellen's Welsh traditions, Pistol exhibits cultural insensitivity and a narrow-minded attitude towards English sub-cultures. Yet, not to be cowed by Pistol's prejudices, Fluellen stands his ground with pride. Gower, like Pistol, is of English descent, but he chooses to take Fluellen's side, suggesting that, for good Englishmen, values like tolerance and inclusiveness are more important than bloodlines.

Alone on stage, Pistol recounts that his wife Hostess Quickly has just died of venereal disease, depriving him of a stable home. He is growing old, he thinks, and his dignity has been beaten out of him. He resolves to return to England, become a pimp and a pickpocket, and tell everyone his wounds are battle scars.

Pistol hasn't changed since the start of the play and remains immoral. He is as comfortable trafficking in false appearances as he was before and during the war. While Henry refuses to use the war for his own benefit—giving all credit to God—Pistol seeks to use the war for financial gain by making himself look like a hero. (Though one could argue that Henry actually gets even more credit by being humble than he would if he were basking in his glory…)

ACT 5, SCENE 2

In the French palace, Henry V has arrived to negotiate a peace treaty with King Charles and Queen Isabel, bringing along Exeter, Bedford, Warwick, Gloucester, Clarence, and Westmoreland. The Duke of Burgundy, Katherine, and Alice are also present. King Charles and Queen Isabel welcome Henry warmly and the Duke of Burgundy recounts France's current state of chaos, conveying his hopes that peace can restore health and order. Henry announces that he'll make peace if King Charles will accept his list of demands. King Charles exits to review the demands along with everyone except Henry, Katherine, and Alice. Katherine's hand in marriage, Henry tells Katherine, is his primary demand.

Henry here wields tremendous kingly power: his negotiation consists entirely of his own demands. Marrying Katherine is important to Henry because the marriage would, by conjoining the French and English royal lines, solidify England's claim to rule in France. The warmth with which Henry is greeted by the French may seem off after such vicious battles were fought between the two, but, first, what else are the French going to do, considering they were defeated? And, second, it highlights to an extent the difference between the nobles and common men, in that the nobles can meet peacefully after the war.


Henry V tries to woo Katherine and the two engage in a comical exchange in French and English, with Alice attempting to bridge misunderstandings. Henry presents himself to Katherine as a homely, humble soldier unschooled in fancy romantic rhetoric, describing his blunt simplicity in virtuosic, pun-rich language. Katherine is reluctant to indulge him and calls the language of men deceitful, repeatedly evading Henry's proposals (in **accented** English) and reminding him that the choice is her father's, not her own. When Henry insists the marriage will please her father, Katherine agrees to it. Henry violates her sense of propriety by kissing her on the hand then on the lips.

Henry and Katherine's exchange elaborates the relationship between the themes of language and appearances. Henry claims to be humble and plain but the rich and elaborate rhetoric in which he makes those claims contradicts the claims themselves. Furthermore, his repeated pleas to the princess are made on false grounds, as Katherine herself points out: it's not up to Katherine to accept Henry – the choice is Charles'. Katherine's accented and broken English embodies the language barrier across which the war was fought.

King Charles, Queen Isabel, and the Duke of Burgundy return with Exeter, Bedford, Warwick, Gloucester, Clarence, and Westmoreland. The Duke of Burgundy asks Henry V about wooing Katherine and the two engage in an innuendo-laced exchange about courting tactics. King Charles announces that he has agreed to honor all of Henry's demands and blesses Henry's marriage to Katherine. He declares his hopes that the marriage will smooth out relations between England and France, bearing heirs to the French throne. Queen Isabel likewise blesses the marriage as a peacemaker. She calls on God to, "Combine your hearts in one, your realms in one!" Henry declares he'll take the oath securing France and England's alliance on his wedding day. All exit.

Henry and the Duke's exchange abounds in puns which invest their words with sexual implications beyond the words' surface appearances. King Charles and Queen Isabel's blessings speak to their daughter's wedding as a political agreement. This is no love marriage. Rather, marrying Katherine will seal Henry's right over France and will (the French royalty hopes) prevent future struggles between England and France.

EPILOGUE

The Chorus enters and describes the preceding play as the author's "rough" and "all-unable" efforts to portray "this star of England." Henry V, the Chorus goes on, was succeeded by his son Henry VI, who lost France and crippled England, events which have frequently been portrayed on this stage. He closes by asking the audience to accept the play at hand for the sake of those other plays.

The Chorus delivers a final apology for theater's shortcomings, recalling the prologue and bringing the play full-circle. This is a play bracketed by doubt in the power of theatre. By explaining how quickly England lost its seat in France, the Chorus similarly implies the ineffectuality of war.

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