

## 2012 Suggestions for Teaching *Henry V* by William Shakespeare

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### Before seeing/reading the play

1. Research the life of King Henry V of England. Several books on the subject, both fiction and non-fiction, are listed at the end of this section. These and other web sites provide information:  
<http://europeanhistory.about.com/od/famouspeople/a/personhenryveng.htm>  
<http://www.infoplease.com/biography/var/henryv.html>  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry\\_V\\_of\\_England](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_V_of_England)
2. Research the Salic Law. How was it related to Henry V's claim to the throne of France? These and other web sites provide information:  
<http://www.bartleby.com/81/14778.html>  
<http://voices.yahoo.com/does-king-henry-v-legitimate-claim-french-191955.html>  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salic\\_law](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salic_law)
3. Research Saints Crispin and Crispianus, on whose feast day (October 25) the Battle of Agincourt took place. These and other web sites provide information:  
<http://saints.sqpn.com/saint-crispin/>  
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crispin>
4. Read the two preceding plays, *Henry IV, Parts One* and *Two*, or synopses of them. Pay special attention to the journey of Hal from apparently irresponsible "madcap" Prince to King of England. What does he learn from the people he encounters: Falstaff and the Eastcheap gang, his father (King Henry IV), the nobles of his father's court, Hotspur, the Lord Chief Justice? How does each contribute to his preparations to become King? These and other web sites provide information:  
[http://www.shakespeare-literature.com/Henry\\_IV,\\_part\\_1/o.html](http://www.shakespeare-literature.com/Henry_IV,_part_1/o.html)  
[http://www.shakespeare-literature.com/Henry\\_IV,\\_part\\_2/o.html](http://www.shakespeare-literature.com/Henry_IV,_part_2/o.html)

5. Research the Battle of Agincourt. Describe the quarrel between the English and French. What weapons were favored by each side? How many fought on each side? How many were killed? What part did the longbow play in the English victory? Several books on the subject, both fiction and non-fiction, are listed at the end of this section. These and other web sites provide information:  
<http://www.britishbattles.com/100-years-war/agincourt.htm>  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle\\_of\\_Agincourt](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Agincourt)
6. Read the words and listen to the Agincourt Carol, composed in honor the English victory. These and other web sites provide information:  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agincourt\\_Carol](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agincourt_Carol)  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z3Sk3GTdbLE&feature=related>

## Resources

Learn more about Shakespeare's life and times at the following websites:

<http://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/>  
<http://www.folger.edu/template.cfm?cid=865&CFID=6230886&CFTOKEN=25420173>  
<http://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare.html>  
<http://shakespeare.palomar.edu/life.htm>  
<http://www.bardweb.net/man.html>  
<http://www.shakespearemag.com/intro.asp>

## Books

*1415 Henry V's Year of Glory*, Ian Mortimer, 2010  
*Azincourt*, Bernard Cornwell, 2009  
*Agincourt: A New History*, Anne Curry, 2006  
*Good King Harry*, Denise Giardina, 1999  
*A Bloody Field by Shrewsbury*, Edith Pargeter (Ellis Peters), 1989  
*Shakespeare's English Kings*, Peter Saccio, 1977  
*Royal Sword at Agincourt*, Pamela Bennetts, 1971  
*Harry the King*, Brenda Honeyman, 1971  
*He Rides in Triumph*, Philip Lindsay, 1953

## DVDs

*Henry V* with Kenneth Branagh, 1989

*Shakespeare Histories*, BBC, 1980

*Shakespeare's An Age of Kings*, 1960

*Henry V* with Laurence Olivier, 1944

*Renaissance Man*, 1994

## After seeing/reading the play

1. Analyze the Chorus's first speech. Describe the contract between audience and players that the Chorus outlines. What is expected of the audience? What is promised in return? What limitations inherent in a stage presentation are pointed out? How will they be overcome?
2. Find instances of animal imagery, especially swift and/or predatory animals; what is compared to them? Find instances of storm imagery; what is most commonly compared to the elements of a storm? Find examples of the imagery of war; what elements of war are referred to? What is the effect of these references on the onstage listeners? On the audience?
3. Henry IV's dying advice to his son, who will become Henry V, is to "busy giddy minds / With foreign quarrels" (*Henry IV, Part Two*, Act IV, scene iii, lines 342-343). What is this policy meant to accomplish? What are the "giddy minds" he refers to? What damage is plotted by "giddy minds" in *Henry V*? To what extent does Henry follow his father's advice? What "foreign quarrels" does he pick?
4. Why does Henry doubt his right to be king? What does he fear will result if his claim is not just? What conditions will convince him that he is the rightful king of England?
5. In *Henry IV, Part One*, Henry (aka Hal and Harry) is called "The nimble-footed madcap Prince of Wales." What does that mean? What traces of the "madcap" do you find in King Henry V? Which characters hold his past against him and why? How does Henry chafe against this obsolete image of himself? How does he combat it? Find instances in *Henry V* when his experiences with the lower classes from earlier plays serve him well as king. When do they interfere with his carrying out his duties?

6. Find instances throughout the play in which King Henry's religious devotion are revealed. What does he expect of God? What does he believe God expects of him? What bargains does he strike with God?
7. Identify lines in the text in which King Henry places the responsibility for his invasion of France and his actions there on others. On whom, and with what justification?
8. Who sends the tennis balls to Henry in Act I, scene ii? What do they symbolize? What is the attitude of the person who delivers them? What courses of action are open to Henry? What course does he choose? How does his status change during this scene?
9. What do the traitors Cambridge, Scroop and Grey intend? What reasons do they give for their intentions? What would have been the consequences of their success? How does Henry thwart them?
10. Describe the death of Falstaff (Act II, scene iii). To what extent is Henry responsible for the death of his former friend and mentor? What is the effect of hearing about Falstaff's death, as opposed to seeing it? What does his death symbolize?
11. What are the conditions at the beginning of the Battle of Harfleur? What are the French doing? What are the English doing? What is Henry trying to accomplish? What tactics does he employ? What would failure cost the English?
12. Refer to your reading of the *Henry IV* plays. What was Henry's relationship with Bardolph in the earlier plays? By condemning his former friend to death, what messages does Henry send and to whom? What does this action reveal?
13. Describe the relationship between Henry and the French herald, Montjoy. What causes their relationship to change throughout the play?
14. Based on Shakespeare's characterization of the captains Fluellen, Gower, Jamy and MacMorris, what are the cultural stereotypes of the Welsh, English, Scots and Irish, respectively? What prejudices does each harbor? What rivalries exist among them? What non-stereotypical qualities distinguish each? What is Henry's responsibility in uniting such diversity? To what extent does he succeed and how?

15. What are the cultural stereotypes of the French? Which characters live up to these stereotypes and which surpass them? What impression of the French do you take away from the play?
16. Compare Henry with his French counterpart, the Dauphin. What are the values of each? The thing(s) they most prize? The respect in which each is held? Their abilities?
17. Trace the events in which the Dauphin miscalculates Henry's abilities. Why does he make these mistakes? Assess the gravity and the consequences of each miscalculation.
18. As he moves through the English camp on the night before the Battle of Agincourt, whom does the disguised Henry encounter? What attitudes do these individuals reveal? What do they teach Henry about the responsibilities of being a king? How do they influence his prayer to the "God of battles"? What fears does his prayer expose? According to Henry, what is his father's crime? How must Henry pay for it?
19. What is the physical condition of the English army on the morning of the Battle of Agincourt? The emotional condition? What techniques does Henry use to transform them into a fighting force?
20. Compare the Constable's speech before the battle (Act IV, scene ii, lines 15–37) with Henry's (Act IV, scene iii, lines 18–67). Who does each address? Describe the attitude of each. What does each promise his followers?
21. Compare and contrast King Henry IV's speech from *Henry IV, Part Two* that ends with, "Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown" (Act III, scene i) with his son's speech in *Henry V* from Act IV, scene i that begins, "Upon the king." What does kingship require? What is the toll it takes on both these kings? How are Henry V's responsibilities greater than those of any other English man? How is he able to bear them?
22. Comment on Henry as a charismatic leader. In what situations is his charisma particularly apparent? How do others respond to it? Which of his objectives would he be unlikely to achieve without his charisma?

23. Tell the story from the point of view of the Boy. If you are familiar with *Henry IV, Part Two*, include the Boy's part in that, plus what you imagine his history to be between the events of that play and *Henry V*. What qualities and promise are lost when the Boy is killed?
24. According to the Duke of Burgundy, how does war damage a land and its people? What benefits does a land enjoy in times of peace?
25. As Princess of France, what is Catherine's destiny? How is she prepared for it? Describe Henry's strengths and weaknesses as a suitor. What tactics does he use to win Catherine? What options does she have? What tactics does she use to increase his difficulty and her value? In your opinion, what are their chances of happiness?
26. As the play ends, what has Henry won? According to the Epilogue, what becomes of his gains?
27. Which of Henry's actions strike you as immoral and/or unethical? How does he justify them? To what extent do the ends justify his means?
28. Describe Henry V's values, taking into account his words and his actions. Which appear to belong to Henry the man, which to Henry the king? On what points are they in harmony? Where are they in conflict?
29. Find lines in the text that describe the glories of war. Find lines that describe the horrors. Which version of war does Henry seem to side with? Which side does Shakespeare seem to support? Which side does OSF's production take?

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