

'Henry V' - Act Four

Henry the Man

The Chorus transports us in Act Four to the battle field and the English army's camp, where throughout the Act we learn of Henry as a man, rather than just a leader and king.

What does the Chorus tell us about the English in this extract? Label the technique, what it says and how it makes the audience react.

Proud of their numbers and secure in soul,
The **confident and over-lusty** French
Do the **low-rated English** play at dice;
And chide the cripple tardy-gaited night
Who, like a foul and ugly witch, doth limp
So tediously away. The poor condemned English,
Like sacrifices, by their watchful fires
Sit patiently and inly ruminate

The morning's danger, and their gesture sad
Investing lank-lean; cheeks and war-worn coats
Presenteth them unto the gazing moon
So many horrid ghosts. O now, who will behold
The royal captain of this ruin'd band
Walking from watch to watch, from tent to tent,
Let him cry 'Praise and glory on his head!'
For forth he goes and visits all his host.
Bids them good morrow with a modest smile
And calls them **brothers, friends and countrymen.**

Upon his royal face there is no note
How dread an army hath enrounded him;
Nor doth he dedicate one jot of colour
Unto the weary and all-watched night,
But freshly looks and over-bears attaint
With cheerful semblance and sweet majesty;
That every wretch, pining and pale before,
Beholding him, plucks comfort from his looks:

A largess universal **like the sun**
His liberal eye doth give to every one,
Thawing cold fear, that mean and gentle all,
Behold, as may unworthiness define,
A little touch of Harry in the night.

Act Four Scene One

1. What is Henry thinking on the eve of battle? Give two quotations and explain how they show his personal worries and thoughts about the upcoming fight.

2. "I am a gentleman of the company"

Why does King Henry lie about his identity in camp? Read through his conversation with the officers and men to decide on at least **three** reasons he deceives them.

A.

B.

C.

3. Can you find three things that the men say about the King to the imposter 'Harry le Roy'?

A.

B.

C.

4. Read Henry's speech starting "So, if a son that is by his father sent..."

How does the king respond to his men's worries and ideas?

Henry's Soliloquy

Look at the extracts from Henry's soliloquy after the soldiers exit. What are his thoughts and feelings? How does Shakespeare show the king as a real man, and not just a powerful leader.

Meaning:

Upon the king! let us our lives, our souls,
Our debts, our careful wives,
Our children and our sins lay on the king!
We must bear all. O hard condition,
Twin-born with greatness, subject to the breath
Of every fool, whose sense no more can feel
But his own wringing! What infinite heart's-ease
Must kings neglect, that private men enjoy!

Effect:

Translate the middle!

Meaning:

The slave, a member of the country's peace,
Enjoys it; but in gross brain little wots
What watch the king keeps to maintain the peace,
Whose hours the peasant best advantages.

Effect:

Analysing and Understanding

And finally - like in the first activity, can you highlight six elements you want a partner to identify and explore for its purpose and effect - how do these lines present Henry the man?

O God of battles! steel my soldiers' hearts;
Possess them not with fear; take from them now
The sense of reckoning, if the opposed numbers
Pluck their hearts from them. Not to-day, O Lord,
O, not to-day, think not upon the fault
My father made in compassing the crown!
I Richard's body have interred anew;
And on it have bestow'd more contrite tears
Than from it issued forced drops of blood:
Five hundred poor I have in yearly pay,
Who twice a-day their wither'd hands hold up
Toward heaven, to pardon blood; and I have built
Two chantries, where the sad and solemn priests
Sing still for Richard's soul. More will I do;
Though all that I can do is nothing worth,
Since that my penitence comes after all,
Imploring pardon.