

Henry V Act 3 Discussion Questions

Scene 1

- 1) Read the following passage. According to Henry, how should a man react to war? What does a man stand to gain/achieve from war?

Henry

Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more;
Or close the wall up with our English dead.
In peace there's nothing so becomes a man
As modest stillness and humility:
But when the blast of war blows in our ears,
Then imitate the action of the tiger;
Stiffen the sinews, summon up the blood,
Disguise fair nature with hard-favour'd rage;
Then lend the eye a terrible aspect;
Let pry through the portage of the head
Like the brass cannon; let the brow o'erwhelm it
As fearfully as doth a galled rock
O'erhang and jutty his confounded base,
Swill'd with the wild and wasteful ocean.
Now set the teeth and stretch the nostril wide,
Hold hard the breath and bend up every spirit
To his full height. On, on, you noblest English.
Whose blood is fet from fathers of war-proof!
Fathers that, like so many Alexanders,
Have in these parts from morn till even fought
And sheathed their swords for lack of argument:
Dishonour not your mothers; now attest
That those whom you call'd fathers did beget you.
Be copy now to men of grosser blood,
And teach them how to war. And you, good yeoman,
Whose limbs were made in England, show us here
The mettle of your pasture; let us swear
That you are worth your breeding; which I doubt not;
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

Scene 2

- 2) Look at The Boy's speech that begins at line 29 and goes to line 55. What is his basic perception of Bardolph, Pistol, and Nym? Use textual evidence to explain your answer.

Scene 3

- 3) Look at the excerpt from the speech in scene 3. What is Henry threatening in this speech? Should we take him seriously? Do you think he would actually allow this to happen? Explain your answer.

Therefore, you men of Harfleur,
Take pity of your town and of your people
Whiles yet my soldiers are in my command,
Whiles yet the cool and temperate wind of grace
O'erblows the filthy and contagious clouds
Of heady murder, spoil, and villainy.
If not, why, in a moment look to see
The blind and bloody soldier with foul hand
Desire the locks of your shrill-shrieking daughters,
Your fathers taken by the silver beards
And their most reverend heads dashed to the walls,
Your naked infants spitted upon pikes
Whiles the mad mothers with their howls confused
Do break the clouds, as did the wives of Jewry
At Herod's bloody-hunting slaughtermen.
What say you? Will you yield and this avoid
Or, guilty in defense, be thus destroyed?

Scene 4

- 4) Why do you think that Shakespeare put this scene in the play? There is no right or wrong answer here. Talk with your groupmates and come to some thoughtful conclusion on this question.

Scene 5

- 5) What is the attitude of the French noblemen in this scene? How do you think this attitude may have contributed to Henry's success in taking Harfleur?

Scene 6

- 6) Explain what happens to Bardolph in this scene. Why does this happen to him? Do you feel like this is harsh? Why do you feel Henry allows this to happen?
7) A messenger is sent by the King of France to Henry to ask how much he is willing to pay for ransom when captured. What does Henry offer up as ransom at the end of scene 6?

Scene 7

- 8) What are the French talking about in this scene? Characterize their attitude on the night before the Battle of Agincourt. Would you say this is consistent with their attitude throughout the play? Explain.