

# Henry V

## Schools' synopsis by Rebecca Lenkiewicz

Cry 'God for Harry, England and St. George!'

It's England in the fifteenth Century. One man, the Chorus, appears. He encourages us to use our imaginations to make 'this wooden O', the Globe theatre into palaces, seas and battlefields.

The Bishop of Ely and the Archbishop of Canterbury discuss the new king. Whilst he was a Prince, 'Hal' was known for his drinking and wild behaviour. But since his father's recent death Hal has surprised everyone. He is serious about his duty and country. He is now King Henry the Fifth. And England is in a troubled state. Henry asks the advice of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Recently Henry has asked France for some of his dukedoms to be returned. But actually should he be asking for the whole of France to be his by birthright? Canterbury encourages him to make that claim.

A French messenger, Montjoy, arrives with a message from the Dauphin who is the heir to the French throne. The French prince has also sent a 'tun of treasure'. The message is that Henry is too young to dabble in battle. The treasure turns out to be tennis balls. Suggesting that Henry is better suited to a tennis court than a battlefield. Henry declares war on France.

The Boar's Head tavern is the regular drinking place for Lieutenant Bardolph and Corporal Nym. They are expert drinkers and thieves. They talk of Ancient Pistol who Nym is furious with. Pistol has married Nell Quickly who was actually engaged to Nym. Pistol arrives and he and Nym have a spat. But Mistress Quickly interrupts with news of their old friend Falstaff. He was a hell raiser and friend to the king. Falstaff is dying now but Henry no longer acknowledges him. Nym tells Nell Quickly to 'shog off' but a Boy enters and tells them that Falstaff is fading fast.

Mistress Quickly:

'The king hath killed his heart.'

In Southampton King Henry deals with three traitors. They are his old friend Lord Scroop, Sir Thomas Grey and the Earl of Cambridge. They have been in the secret service of the French and have plotted to murder Henry. They beg for mercy but their king has them executed.

Mistress Quickly tells of Falstaff's last moments and how he will surely go to heaven despite all his faults. Pistol, Nym, Bardolph and the Boy prepare for France and Pistol says goodbye to his wife Nell Quickly.

Henry and his fleet prepare to sail. Once in France they advance through the country. They gain victories against all expectations. At Harfleur Henry rallies his soldiers on. He tells them how in peacetime they may be modest but in wartime:

'Then imitate the action of the tiger: / Stiffen the sinews, summon up the blood.'

After conquering Harfleur the men are tired and ready to retreat. The French are sure that they can crush them now. When the French ask Henry if he will be ransomed he refuses. Bardolph is caught stealing and condemned to be hanged. Pistol argues for him, tries to save his life, but cannot.

The Princess Katharine of Valois practises her English with her maid Alice. She knows that she may be offered as a wife to King Henry. This would unite her France with his England. She tries to repeat and recite 'de nails' which are on 'de arms' which have 'de bilbows.'

The English arrive at Agincourt and set up camp. Dawn breaks. Henry borrows a cape so that he can walk around unrecognised in the half light. He mingles with the soldiers just hours before the battle. They debate the rights and wrongs of the fight. But even when some doubt the cause itself they are still loyal to Henry as their king. Once alone again Henry talks of the huge responsibility of being a leader. In the morning he prays to God and then addresses his men. The Earl of Westmoreland says he wishes they had more troops. But Henry replies wonderfully to all the soldiers. He assures them that they are a perfect number. That each man will be proud to have been part of this battle on St. Crispin's Day. He describes themselves as:  
'We few, we happy few, we band of brothers.'

The battle begins. The English fight brilliantly. They miraculously win with just a few hundred casualties. The French losses are around ten thousand. Montjoy approaches the king. Is it another challenge or insult? No. The French simply want to count and fetch their dead. The English have won.

King Henry meets Katharine and they try to speak each other's language. Henry apologises for being a soldier and not a poet but Katharine seems to like him. He tries to kiss her and she is seemingly outraged. But she still agrees to marry him.

Peace comes with this union. Their son will be the King of France and their marriage will unite their two countries.