

Writing Activity: Holding Out for a Hero



This activity works well after viewing the film, but it can be used at any point in the curriculum.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Analyze the character of King Henry
- Categorize Henry's actions
- Argue for the level of Henry's heroism

MATERIALS

- Holding Out for a Hero Handout (page 3)

INTRODUCTION

In an earlier activity from the Introduction and Context section of the Curriculum Overview and Pause Points document, we asked students to brainstorm about their own heroes and predicted what King Henry would be like based on the phrase “A king becomes a hero.” If you have not yet completed that activity, revisit that material before moving on.

This activity asks students to reflect on the question: *Is King Henry really a hero?*

INSTRUCTIONS

Step One: Students use the Holding Out for a Hero handout to reflect on the heroism in each quote. Students mark an “H” if they think this moment is *heroic*, and an “NH” if they think it's *not heroic*.

Step Two: Out of the 12 quotes on the handout, students pick three to build an argument (or thesis) about why King Henry is either heroic or not heroic, considering the questions below.

- What do these quotes tell you about the king?
- Why do other characters' opinions about the king matter?
- Does someone have to be brave all the time to be heroic?

Step Three: Students outline their arguments and pieces of evidence. If you use the optional take-home activity (page 2), their outline can be in the style of a five-paragraph essay.

Step Four: Divide the class into groups of at least four. Students share their findings from their individual worksheets and their arguments (supported by the three quotes they selected) for whether Henry is a hero or not.

Step Five: Once groups have finished sharing, come back together as a class to discuss Henry as character, and whether the subtitle of “A king becomes a hero” is fitting for this production. Use discussion prompts below as needed. This can also work well as a class debate, with the class divided into two groups: “Heroic” and “Not Heroic.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What makes a hero?
- Is Henry a hero?
- If not, how would you categorize him?
- Is “A king becomes a hero” a good subtitle for this production? What subtitle would you use to describe the play?
- How did knowing the context of these quotes impact your perception of the language?
- Is King Henry really a hero?

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

As a take-home activity, students compose the five-paragraph essay they outlined in class.

Holding Out for a Hero

WRITING ACTIVITY: HOLDING OUT FOR A HERO



Step One: Below are a collection of King Henry's lines and lines spoken about Henry that reflect his heroism as a leader. Next to each quote, put an "H" if you think this moment is *heroic*, and an "NH" if you think it's *not heroic*.

H or NH?	Quote	Context
	<p>"The breath no sooner left his father's body But that his wildness, mortified in him, Seemed to die too."</p> <p>- Archbishop of Canterbury (Act One, Scene One)</p>	<p>The archbishop remarks that Henry's wild party days seemed to come to an end when his father died.</p>
	<p>"But tell the Dauphin I will keep my state, Be like a king, and show my sail of greatness When I do rouse me in my throne of France, For I will rise there with so full a glory That I will dazzle all the eyes of France, Yea, strike the Dauphin blind to look on us."</p> <p>- Henry (Act One, Scene Two)</p>	<p>King Henry declares war with France after receiving tennis balls as a gift from the Dauphin.</p>
	<p>"Touching our person seek we no revenge, But we our kingdom's safety must so tender, Whose ruin you have sought, that to her laws We do deliver you."</p> <p>- Henry (Act Two, Scene Two)</p>	<p>King Henry punishes Scroop, Cambridge and Grey according to how they wished for traitors to be punished.</p>
	<p>"I desire Nothing but odds with England. To that end, As matching to his youth and vanity, I did present him with the Paris balls."</p> <p>- Dauphin (Act Two, Scene Four)</p>	<p>The Dauphin mocks Henry for being a youthful and irresponsible king by gifting him tennis balls.</p>
	<p>"For, my good liege, [England] is so idly kinged, Her scepter so fantastically borne, By a vain, giddy, shallow, humorous youth, That fear attends her not."</p> <p>- Dauphin (Act Two, Scene Four)</p>	<p>The Dauphin shares that he is not threatened by England's invasion into France due to their weak king.</p>

H or NH?	Quote	Context
	<p>“On, on, you noble English, Be copy now to men of grosser blood, And teach them how to war. And you, good yeomen, Whose limbs were made in England, show us here The mettle of your pasture.”</p> <p><i>- Henry (Act Three, Scene One)</i></p>	King Henry motivates a disheartened English army to continue fighting at Harfleur.
	<p>“Therefore, you men of Harfleur, Take pity of your town and of your people, Whiles yet my soldiers are in my command... What say you? Will you yield, and this avoid? Or guilty in defense be thus destroyed?”</p> <p><i>- Henry (Act Three, Scene Four)</i></p>	King Henry gives the Governor of Harfleur the option to avoid violence in their city by yielding to the English army.
	<p>“We would have all such offenders so cut off, 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.”</p> <p><i>- Henry (Act Three, Scene Seven)</i></p>	King Henry unbinds Bardolph, only to strangle him with those same binds as a means of capital punishment.
	<p>“Every subject’s duty is the king’s, but every subject’s soul is his own.”</p> <p><i>- Henry (Act Four, Scene One)</i></p>	King Henry visits those in his camp to ease them before the Battle of Agincourt.
	<p>“If these men do not die a good death, it will be bad for the king who led them to this, when it would be wrong for a subject to disobey him.”</p> <p><i>- Williams (Act Four, Scene One)</i></p>	An English soldier, Williams, says King Henry will have to reckon with all the deaths he caused on the battlefield.
	<p>“We few, we happy few, we band of brothers — For he today that sheds his blood with me Shall be my brother;”</p> <p><i>- Henry (Act Four, Scene Three)</i></p>	King Henry rallies his troops before battle, comparing them to a band of brothers.
	<p>“They do offend our sight. We’ll cut the throats of those we have, And not a man of them that we shall take Shall taste our mercy.”</p> <p><i>- Henry (Act Four, Scene Seven)</i></p>	King Henry kills French soldiers.

Step Two: Out of the previous 12 quotes, pick three to build an argument about why King Henry is either heroic or not heroic. What do these quotes tell you about the king? Why do other characters' opinions about the king matter? Does someone have to be brave all the time to be heroic? Then, come to an overarching conclusion based on the quotes you pulled.

Quote
Reasoning

Quote
Reasoning

Quote

Reasoning