

ACADEMIC READING: CRITICAL THINKING BY CHRIS LIMA

Age: Young adults / Adults

Author: Chris Lima

Level: Upper intermediate to Advanced

Time: Approx. 90 minutes

Materials: one copy of the worksheet per student; computer, projector and internet access

Aims: In this lesson, students will:

- read and watch an extract of Shakespeare's *Henry V*;
- work to improve their vocabulary and language awareness;
- practise close reading a text;
- learn about critical reading in the field of literary studies;
- participate in a group seminar.

Summary: This lesson is designed to give students the opportunity to practise close reading a text. It has a strong focus on the language used by Shakespeare in the given extract to convey ideas and attitudes that are then challenged by the text itself. The lesson also focuses on how arguments need to be supported by the primary text and criticism in the field. As homework, students are requested to do some further reading and writing.



The questions are meant to be open and it is not a problem if your students cannot say much about the play at this point. You may want to provide some extra information if they require it, but avoid giving too much away at this stage.

For further information on the historical Henry V, check: www.luminarium.org/encyclopedia/henry5.htm

For further information on Shakespeare's *Henry V*, check: www.bl.uk/treasures/shakespeare/henry5.html
www.bardweb.net/content/ac/henry5.html

For the full text of the play, click on the link below: internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/doc/H5_FM/complete/

ACTIVITY 2 – VOCABULARY

Aims: to expand students' vocabulary range; to prepare for the listening activity; to help students consider the importance of word choices within the context of the text

Approximate time: 15 mins

PROCEDURE:

1. Explain that the words in this activity are from a soliloquy in Shakespeare's play that students will be reading and watching shortly.
2. Ask students to sort the words out into the columns they find most appropriate. Point out that some words may fit into more than one column. They can work individually or in pairs. Tell them to try to work without a dictionary, if possible, and just resort to one to check their answers.
3. Check the answers with the whole group.
4. Use this opportunity to drill the pronunciation of the individual words.



Key:

words related to religion	words related to position of power and privilege	words related to ordinary people
ceremony*	adulation	beggar
hell	ceremony*	labour
sins	flattery	lackey
souls	greatness	privates
worshippers	imperial	slave
	majestical	toil
	pomp	
	sceptre	



TEACHING TIP: Although the lessons in this series were designed with EAP learners at foundation programmes and undergraduate level in mind, they can also be used for advanced language learners and in English language teacher training and CPD programmes to prepare staff to teach Shakespeare themselves in the future.

ACTIVITY 1 – READING & SPEAKING

Aims: contextualization; to provide background information on Henry V as a historical figure and character; to prepare for the lesson activities

Approximate time: 10 mins

PROCEDURE:

1. Hand out the worksheets. Ask students to read the short text in the box and discuss the questions in pairs or small groups.



TEACHING TIP: There is no need to have whole-class feedback after the pair/group work but, depending on the number of students and the time available, you may wish to do so. This would give you a better idea of how familiar your students are with the play.

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ACTIVITY 3 – LISTENING & READING

Aims: to give students the opportunity to watch the monologue being delivered instead of just reading it; to facilitate understanding of the extract

Approximate time: 15 mins

PROCEDURE:

1. Set the scene for the listening. Situate the passage in the context of the play: in the evening before the Battle of Agincourt, King Henry walks around the camp in disguise and joins the soldiers in a conversation where they debate the responsibilities of going to war. After leaving the soldiers, Henry reflects on the burdens of being a king and delivers the soliloquy recorded by Samuel West in the video. Give as much information on the extract as you find suitable for your students but avoid any interpretation comments at this stage.
2. Play the recording once – www.youtube.com/watch?v=USQvp7skuTY. Ask the students just to watch it and listen for the words in activity 2.
3. Give students a few minutes to read the extract on the worksheet and, then, play the video again for the gapfill activity.
4. Play the video once again so students can double check the answers. Do a final check with the whole class.



Key:

1. souls; 2. sins; 3. greatness; 4. privates; 5. ceremony;
6. worshippers; 7. flattery; 8. adulation; 9. beggar; 10. sceptre;
11. imperial; 12. pomp; 13. majestic; 14. slave; 15. hell;
16. lackey; 17. labour; 18. toil

ACTIVITY 4 – CRITICAL READING

Aims: to practise close reading; to critically analyse the text; to prepare for the group seminar

Approximate time: 20 mins

PROCEDURE:

1. You may want to elicit, introduce or briefly review the concepts of close reading and critical thinking. You can refer students to the Thinking critically box on the worksheet.
2. Ask students to go back to the text in activity 3 and answer the questions on it individually.

3. Ask students to *briefly* compare their answers in pairs or small groups so that they can feel more confident to engage in the seminar later. Do not let the discussion go on too long at this stage because it would pre-empt the seminar discussion.



Possible answers:

1. The words *souls* and *sins* here establish an association between the king's responsibility for his soldiers as the spiritual leader of his people. Although, at the time of Henry V's reign, England was still a Catholic country, at the time Shakespearean audiences watched the play at the Globe, the English monarch was also the Head of the Church of England.
2. By using *we*, Henry positions himself in the Renaissance tradition that sees the monarch as having two bodies: the body natural ('he' as a person) and the body political ('he' as the embodiment of the land and country). It may also create an association with the tripartite god of Christianity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), since the king is the representative of God on Earth.
3. The references help to create the image of the commoners working all day under the sun (Phoebus), their sleeping in the Greek equivalent of paradise (Elysium) and their rising again for another day ('help Hyperion to his horse'). They also give a more idealized view of the labours and toils of common folk by putting them in a classical context typical of the pastoral tradition. However, they also serve to distinguish Henry from the common soldiers since his superior education enables him to make such cultural connections.
4. 'wretched slave'; 'vacant mind' – Henry also uses the words 'fool', 'beggar', 'lackey' and 'child of hell' to refer to the common people.
5. They show that, far from having no worries and sleeping in paradise, as Henry argues in his soliloquy, his soldiers have a lot to be worried about, such as dying in battle and leaving their families poor and destitute. Their conversation shows that they are also awake and thinking that the next day's battle is likely to mean their death.

THINK CRITICALLY

Each lesson in this series has one or two Think critically boxes to give students some food for thought. Teachers don't need to 'do' anything with the content in the box. Point out that critical thinking is one of the most important skills to develop in EAP and in academic life. Students need to critically engage with what they read and listen to, and question concepts, attitudes and statements.

If you want to explore the concepts of close reading and critical thinking further, check the links below:

www.journals.aiac.org.au/index.php/alls/article/view/1316

www.writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu/pages/how-do-close-reading

www.uwosh.edu/facstaff/barnhill/ES-243/critical-thinking-in-literary-analysis

ACTIVITY 5 – SEMINAR

Aims: to introduce students to a common academic practice in the field of English Studies; to give students the opportunity to express their opinions and engage with others in a critical analysis of the text

Approximate time: 20 mins

PROCEDURE:

1. Conduct the seminar as a whole-class discussion or divide the class into smaller groups depending on the number of students in your group and also your own assessment of what will constitute the most effective environment for the discussion.
2. Ask students to compare and discuss their answers to the questions in activity 4.
3. Point students towards the rules and expectations for their engagement in the seminar. Make sure students understand that, at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, students in the field of English Studies are expected to take part in such discussions.
4. Point out that there are various possible answers to most of these questions but that answers should be based on textual evidence.

HOMEWORK & INDEPENDENT LEARNING

Aims: to prepare for the next lesson; to foster independent learning; to practise reading academic articles; to practise writing in academic style and register.

Approximate independent study time: 120 mins

PROCEDURE:

1. Set the homework according to the rubric. Point out to your students that it is very important that they do the homework because it is an opportunity to hone their reading and writing skills.
2. Point out that summarizing viewpoints in academic papers is at the core of academic work. Summaries can be incorporated into the 'literature review' section of academic writing, especially in the fields of ARTS AND HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES.
3. Point out the importance of paying attention to the kind of language academic writers employ and how they present evidence to support their claims.
4. Ask students to bring their summaries to the next class and/or post them to your discussion group or group blog if you have one.

Reference:

- Lima, E., 2009. *Shakespeare's, Olivier's and Branagh's 'Henry V'*. [online] Available at edessays.wordpress.com/other-essays/.

FURTHER READING FOR TEACHERS:

- BritishBattles.com, 2011. *The Battle of Agincourt*. [online] BritishBattles. Available at: www.britishbattles.com/100-years-war/agincourt.htm [accessed 24 Sep. 2014].
- Garrett-Petts, W. F. 2013. *Writing about Literature: A Guide for the Student Critic*. London: Broadview Press.
- Headrick, P., 2013. *The Wiley Guide to Writing Essays About Literature*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Shakespeare, W., 2008. *The Norton Shakespeare*. New York & London: W. W. Norton & Co.
- Seargeant, P., 2009. 'Ideologies of English in Shakespeare's Henry V'. *Language and Literature*, 18(1), pp.25–44.

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ACTIVITY 1 – READING & SPEAKING

Read the information on Henry V, one of the most famous kings of medieval England.

Henry V

Henry became king of England in 1413 when he was 26 years old. Two years later, he was sailing to France. English monarchs believed they had an ancestral claim to the French throne and Henry was determined to take France back for the English crown. He first besieged and then captured the port of Harfleur and, on 25 October, 1415, St Crispin's Day, he defeated the French at the Battle of Agincourt. This was an impressive and historical victory, since the English army consisted of about 8,500 men while the total French army size is estimated as above 12,000 men.

Now, discuss the following questions in pairs or small groups.

- What characters and scenes do you expect to find in Shakespeare's play *Henry V*?
- Have you seen a stage performance or film version of the play?
- How do you think Shakespeare portrays Henry? Is he a noble king and a hero or is he a ruthless warrior and a foreign invader?

ACTIVITY 2 – VOCABULARY

The words below come from one of Henry's most famous speeches in the play. Write each word into the most appropriate column.

adulation	beggar	ceremony	flattery	greatness	hell	imperial	labour	lackey
majestical	pomp	privates	sceptre	sins	slave	souls	toil	worshippers

words related to religion	words related to positions of power and privilege	words related to ordinary people

ACTIVITY 3 – LISTENING & READING

In Act IV, Scene i, on the night before the battle of Agincourt, a sleepless Henry reflects on the responsibilities of a king.

Watch a video where an actor performs Henry V's famous soliloquy. Fill in the gaps using the words from the box in activity 2.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=USQvp7skuTY

Upon the king! Let us our lives, our _____ (1),
 Our debts, our careful wives,
 Our children and our _____ (2) lay on the king!
 We must bear all. O hard condition,
 Twin-born with _____ (3), 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!
 And what have kings, that _____ (4) have not too,
 Save ceremony, save general ceremony?
 And what art thou, thou idle _____ (5)?
 What kind of god art thou, that suffer'st more
 Of mortal griefs than do thy _____ (6)? (...)
 What drink'st thou oft, instead of homage sweet,
 But poison'd _____ (7)? O, be sick, great greatness,
 And bid thy ceremony give thee cure!
 Think'st thou the fiery fever will go out
 With titles blown from _____ (8)?
 Will it give place to flexure and low bending?
 Canst thou, when thou command'st the _____ (9)'s knee,
 Command the health of it? No, thou proud dream,
 That play'st so subtly with a king's repose;
 I am a king that find thee, and I know
 'Tis not the balm, the _____ (10) and the ball,
 The sword, the mace, the crown _____ (11),
 The intertissued robe of gold and pearl,
 The farcèd title running 'fore the king,
 The throne he sits on, nor the tide of _____ (12)
 That beats upon the high shore of this world,
 No, not all these, thrice-gorgeous ceremony,
 Not all these, laid in bed _____ (13),
 Can sleep so soundly as the wretched _____ (14),
 Who with a body fill'd and vacant mind
 Gets him to rest, cramm'd with distressful bread;
 Never sees horrid night, the child of _____ (15),
 But, like a _____ (16), from the rise to set
 Sweats in the eye of Phoebus and all night
 Sleeps in Elysium; next day after dawn,
 Doth rise and help Hyperion to his horse,
 And follows so the ever-running year,
 With profitable _____ (17), to his grave:
 And, but for ceremony, such a wretch,
 Winding up days with _____ (18) and nights with sleep,
 Had the fore-hand and vantage of a king.

ACTIVITY 4 – CRITICAL READING

Close read the extract from Act IV, Scene i. Answer the questions below.

1. What associations between religion and the figure of the king does Henry create in the following lines?

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.

2. Why do you think Henry uses the first person plural (*we*) instead of the first person singular (*I*)? What are the implications of his choice of pronoun?
3. What associations do Henry's references to classical Greek gods and myths (Phoebus, Elysium, Hyperion) create and how might these impact on the reader?
4. Henry states that the king 'laid in bed majestic' cannot 'sleep so soundly as the wretched slave / Who with a body fill'd and vacant mind / Gets him to rest'.

Which words in these lines may undermine Henry's image as a king who considers his soldiers as brothers, as he later claims in the famous St Crispin's Day speech (Act IV, Scene iii)?

5. Just before this soliloquy, a disguised Henry goes around the camp and joins the soldiers in their conversation. How might the lines below affect our reading of Henry's argument that ordinary people do not have the heavy burden of worries and responsibilities of a king?

Williams (a common soldier):

... the king himself hath
a heavy reckoning to make, when all those legs and
arms and heads, chopped off in battle, shall join
together at the latter day and cry all 'We died at
such a place;' some swearing, some crying for a
surgeon, some upon their wives left poor behind
them, some upon the debts they owe, some upon their
children rawly left.

6. Read an extract from a critical essay in which the author discusses the scene. How far is the writer's position justified by the text? To what extent do you agree or disagree with her?

THINK CRITICALLY

[An] unresolved ambivalence becomes obvious in 4.1, when Henry disguises himself as a commoner and ventures among his rank and file. Initially he argues for the essential similarity between himself and his followers. (...) Henry [later] refuses accepting the extraordinary burden his followers would confer upon him. Yet, his refusal is based not on his earlier assertion of the shared humanity of king and subject, but on a conviction of the king's special position. (...) On the other hand, Shakespeare also shows effectively the King's genuine isolation from ordinary pleasures of work and play that normal people can take for granted. (Maus, 2008, pp.1476–1477)

Maus, K. E., 2008. 'Henry V'. In Shakespeare, W. *The Norton Shakespeare*. 2nd edition. Greenblatt, S., Cohen, W., Howard, J.E. & Maus, K.E. (eds). New York & London: W. W. Norton & Co.

Reading critically means being able to identify and examine the arguments presented in a text, considering possible influences on and limitations of these arguments, examining interpretations of the text made by other readers and writers, and deciding to what extent you are prepared to accept such arguments, opinions or conclusions.

In the field of literary studies, you are expected to read both literary texts and critical essays, paying close attention to the words used by the writers. You can:

- close read for formal elements, such as key words, images and patterns – group the results under headings, such as setting, point of view, imagery and characterization;
- close read for patterns of dualism and positions of superiority of one term over the other, such as king/private men – choose a theme, idea, problem or question in the text that has something to do with such positions;
- use different lines of criticism to inform the analysis – for example, you can look at a text from a historical, feminist, Marxist and/or postcolonial perspective.

ACTIVITY 5 – SEMINAR

Discuss your answers to the questions in activity 4.

When taking part in a literary seminar, you are expected to:

- listen carefully and politely to other students' opinions and arguments;
- contribute with your own views, either agreeing or disagreeing with others;
- support your arguments with lines and language from the text you are discussing;
- support your arguments by referring to your reading of relevant works of criticism;
- keep a critical stance, an open mind and a respectful attitude towards the authors you refer to and towards your fellow seminar participants.

HOMEWORK & INDEPENDENT LEARNING

Read an article where the author discusses two different film adaptations of Shakespeare's *Henry V*.

Lima, E., 2009. *Shakespeare's, Olivier's and Branagh's 'Henry V'*. [online] Available at edessays.wordpress.com/other-essays/.

While you read, complete the following tasks.

1. Circle at least five words that can be considered quite formal and not often used in colloquial speech.
2. Underline at least three instances where the author makes use of cautious language.
3. What does the author use as evidence to support his ideas and arguments?

Write a 150–200 word summary of the article where you also critically comment on the main arguments presented. Don't forget to add the proper reference to the article in your summary.