

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-108-00582-1 - King Henry V, Volume 10  
William Shakespeare  
Excerpt  
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## THE LIFE OF HENRY V

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The Scene: first England, then France

## CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

### *Chorus*

KING HENRY *the Fifth*

HUMPHREY, DUKE OF GLOUCESTER

JOHN OF LANCASTER, DUKE OF BEDFORD

THOMAS OF LANCASTER, DUKE OF  
 CLARENCE

} *brothers to  
 the king*

DUKE OF EXETER, *uncle to the king*

DUKE OF YORK, *cousin to the king, formerly Aumerle*

EARLS OF SALISBURY, WESTMORELAND, and WARWICK

ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

BISHOP OF ELY

EARL OF CAMBRIDGE

LORD SCROOP

SIR THOMAS GREY

SIR THOMAS ERPINGHAM, GOWER, FLUELLEN, MAC-  
 MORRIS, JAMY, *officers in King Henry's army*

BATES, COURT, WILLIAMS, *soldiers in the same*

PISTOL, NYM, BARDOLPH

BOY. *A Herald*

CHARLES *the Sixth, King of France*

LEWIS, *the Dauphin*

DUKES OF BURGUNDY, ORLEANS, BRITAINE and BOURBON

*The Constable of France*

RAMBURES, and GRANDPRÉ, *French Lords*

*Governor of Harfleur*

MONTJOY, *a French herald*

*Ambassadors to the King of England*

ISABEL, *Queen of France*

KATHARINE, *daughter to Charles and Isabel*

ALICE, *a lady attending upon her*

*Hostess, formerly MRS QUICKLY, now Pistol's wife*

*Lords, Ladies, Officers, French and English Soldiers,  
 Messengers, and Attendants*

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## THE LIFE OF HENRY V

[1. Prologue]

*Enter CHORUS*

*Chorus.* O for a Muse of fire, that would ascend  
 The brightest heaven of invention:  
 A kingdom for a stage, princes to act,  
 And monarchs to behold the swelling scene.  
 Then should the warlike Harry, like himself,  
 Assume the port of Mars, and at his heels,  
 Leashed in like hounds, should Famine, Sword, and Fire  
 Crouch for employment. But pardon, gentles all,  
 The flat unraiséd spirits that hath dared  
 On this unworthy scaffold to bring forth 10  
 So great an object. Can this cockpit hold  
 The vasty fields of France? or may we cram  
 Within this wooden O the very casques  
 That did affright the air at Agincourt?  
 O, pardon! since a crooked figure may  
 Attest in little place a million;  
 And let us, ciphers to this great accompt,  
 On your imaginary forces work....  
 Suppose within the girdle of these walls 20  
 Are now confined two mighty monarchies,  
 Whose high uprearéd and abutting fronts  
 The perilous narrow ocean parts asunder.  
 Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts:  
 Into a thousand parts divide one man,  
 And make imaginary puissance.  
 Think, when we talk of horses, that you see them

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Printing their proud hoofs i'th'receiving earth:  
 For 'tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings,  
 Carry them here and there: jumping o'er times;  
 30 Turning th'accomplishment of many years  
 Into an hour-glass: for the which supply,  
 Admit me Chorus to this history;  
 Who prologue-like your humble patience pray,  
 Gently to hear, kindly to judge, our play.     ['*exit.*']

[I. I.] *London. An antechamber in the King's palace*

*Enter the ARCHBISHOP of CANTERBURY and  
 the BISHOP of ELX*

*Canterbury.* My lord, I'll tell you—that self bill  
 is urged,

Which in th' eleventh year of the last king's reign  
 Was like, and had indeed against us passed,  
 But that the scrambling and unquiet time  
 Did push it out of farther question.

*Ely.* But how, my lord, shall we resist it now?

*Canterbury.* It must be thought on...If it pass  
 against us,

We lose the better half of our possession:  
 For all the temporal lands which men devout  
 10 By testament have given to the Church  
 Would they strip from us; being valued thus—  
 As much as would maintain, to the king's honour,  
 Full fifteen earls, and fifteen hundred knights,  
 Six thousand and two hundred good esquires:  
 And, to relief of lazars and weak age,  
 Of indigent faint souls past corporal toil,  
 A hundred almshouses right well supplied:

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And to the coffers of the king beside,  
 A thousand pounds by th'year: thus runs the bill.  
*Ely.* This would drink deep.  
*Canterbury.* 'Twould drink the cup and all. 20  
*Ely.* But what prevention?  
*Canterbury.* The king is full of grace and fair regard,  
 and a true lover of the holy Church.  
*Ely.* The courses of his youth promised it not.  
*Canterbury.* The breath no sooner left his father's body,  
 But that his wildness, mortified in him,  
 Seemed to die too: yea, at that very moment,  
 Consideration like an angel came,  
 And whipped th' offending Adam out of him;  
 Leaving his body as a Paradise, 30  
 T'envelop and contain celestial spirits....  
 Never was such a sudden scholar made:  
 Never came reformation in a flood,  
 With such a heady currance, scouring faults:  
 Nor never Hydra-headed wilfulness  
 So soon did lose his seat—and all at once—  
 As in this king.  
*Ely.* We are blesséd in the change.  
*Canterbury.* Hear him but reason in divinity;  
 And, all-admiring, with an inward wish  
 You would desire the king were made a prelate: 40  
 Hear him debate of commonwealth affairs;  
 You would say it hath been all in all his study:  
 List his discourse of war; and you shall hear  
 A fearful battle rendered you in music.  
 Turn him to any cause of policy,  
 The Gordian knot of it he will unloose,  
 Familiar as his garter: that, when he speaks,  
 The air, a chartered libertine, is still,  
 And the mute wonder lurketh in men's ears,

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I. I. 50

- 50 To steal his sweet and honeyed sentences:  
 So that the art and practic part of life  
 Must be the mistress to this theoric;  
 Which is a wonder, how his grace should glean it,  
 Since his addiction was to courses vain,  
 His companies unlettered, rude, and shallow,  
 His hours filled up with riots, banquets, sports;  
 And never noted in him any study,  
 Any retirement, any sequestration,  
 From open haunts and popularity.
- 60 *Ely.* The strawberry grows underneath the nettle,  
 And wholesome berries thrive and ripen best  
 Neighbour'd by fruit of baser quality:  
 And so the prince obscured his contemplation  
 Under the veil of wildness, which, no doubt,  
 Grew like the summer grass, fastest by night,  
 Unseen, yet crescive in his faculty.  
*Canterbury.* It must be so; for miracles are ceased:  
 And therefore we must needs admit the means  
 How things are perfected.
- Ely.* But, my good lord,  
 70 How now for mitigation of this bill  
 Urged by the commons? Doth his majesty  
 Incline to it, or no?  
*Canterbury.* He seems indifferent—  
 Or rather swaying more upon our part  
 Than cherishing th' exhibitors against us:  
 For I have made an offer to his majesty,  
 Upon our spiritual convocation,  
 And in regard of causes now in hand,  
 Which I have opened to his grace at large,  
 As touching France, to give a greater sum  
 80 Than ever at one time the clergy yet  
 Did to his predecessors part withal.

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*Ely.* How did this offer seem received, my lord?

*Canterbury.* With good acceptance of his majesty:  
 Save that there was not time enough to hear,  
 As I perceived his grace would fain have done,  
 The severals and unhidden passages  
 Of his true titles to some certain dukedoms,  
 And generally to the crown and seat of France  
 Derived from Edward, his great-grandfather.

*Ely.* What was th' impediment that broke this off? 90

*Canterbury.* The French ambassador upon that instant  
 Craved audience; and the hour, I think, is come  
 To give him hearing: is it four o'clock?

*Ely.* It is.

*Canterbury.* Then go we in, to know his embassy:  
 Which I could with a ready guess declare,  
 Before the Frenchman speak a word of it.

*Ely.* I'll wait upon you, and I long to hear it.

[*they go*]

[I. 2.] *The Presence-chamber in the palace*

*KING HENRY* in his chair of state; *GLOUCESTER*,  
*BEDFORD*, *EXETER*, *WARWICK*, *WESTMORELAND* at a  
 table below; attendants

*King Henry.* Where is my gracious Lord  
 of Canterbury?

*Exeter.* Not here in presence.

*King Henry.* Send for him, good uncle.

*Westmoreland.* Shall we call in th'ambassador,  
 my liege?

*King Henry.* Not yet, my cousin: we would  
 be resolved,  
 Before we hear him, of some things of weight  
 That task our thoughts, concerning us and France.

*The Archbishop of CANTERBURY and the Bishop of ELY  
 enter and make obeisance*

*Canterbury.* God and his angels guard your  
 sacred throne,

And make you long become it!

*King Henry.* Sure, we thank you...

My learned lord, we pray you to proceed,

10 And justly and religiously unfold

Why the law Salic that they have in France

Or should or should not bar us in our claim:

And God forbid, my dear and faithful lord,

That you should fashion, wrest, or bow your reading,

Or nicely charge your understanding soul

With opening titles miscreate, whose right

Suits not in native colours with the truth:

For God doth know how many now in health

Shall drop their blood in approbation

20 Of what your reverence shall incite us to.

Therefore take heed how you impawn our person,

How you awake our sleeping sword of war;

We charge you in the name of God, take heed:

For never two such kingdoms did contend

Without much fall of blood, whose guiltless drops

Are every one a woe, a sore complaint

'Gainst him whose wrongs gives edge unto the swords

That makes such waste in brief mortality....

Under this conjuration, speak, my lord:

30 For we will hear, note, and believe in heart,

That what you speak is in your conscience washed

As pure as sin with baptism.

*Canterbury.* Then hear me, gracious sovereign, and  
 you peers,

That owe yourselves, your lives, and services



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## HENRY V

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To this imperial throne....There is no bar  
 To make against your highness' claim to France,  
 But this which they produce from Pharamond:  
 "In terram Salicam mulieres ne succedant"—  
 "No woman shall succeed in Salic land":  
 Which Salic land the French unjustly gloze 40  
 To be the realm of France, and Pharamond  
 The founder of this law and female bar.  
 Yet their own authors faithfully affirm  
 That the land Salic is in Germany,  
 Between the floods of Sala and of Elbe:  
 Where Charles the Great, having subdued the Saxons,  
 There left behind and settled certain French:  
 Who holding in disdain the German women  
 For some dishonest manners of their life,  
 Established then this law—to wit, no female 50  
 Should be inheritrix in Salic land:  
 Which Salic, as I said, 'twixt Elbe and Sala,  
 Is at this day in Germany called Meisen.  
 Then doth it well appear the Salic law  
 Was not deviséd for the realm of France:  
 Nor did the French possess the Salic land  
 Until four hundred one and twenty years  
 After defunction of King Pharamond,  
 Idly supposed the founder of this law,  
 Who died within the year of our redemption 60  
 Four hundred twenty-six: and Charles the Great  
 Subdued the Saxons, and did seat the French  
 Beyond the river Sala, in the year  
 Eight hundred five....Besides, their writers say,  
 King Pepin, which deposéd Childeric,  
 Did, as heir general, being descended  
 Of Blithild, which was daughter to King Clothair,  
 Make claim and title to the crown of France.

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## THE LIFE OF

1.2.69

Hugh Capet also, who usurped the crown  
 70 Of Charles the duke of Lorraine, sole heir male  
 Of the true line and stock of Charles the Great,  
 To find his title with some shows of truth,  
 Though in pure truth it was corrupt and naught,  
 Conveyed himself as th'heir to th'Lady Lingare,  
 Daughter to Charlemain, who was the son  
 To Lewis the emperor, and Lewis the son  
 Of Charles the Great: also King Lewis the tenth,  
 Who was sole heir to the usurper Capet,  
 Could not keep quiet in his conscience,  
 80 Wearing the crown of France, till satisfied  
 That fair Queen Isabel, his grandmother,  
 Was lineal of the Lady Ermengare,  
 Daughter to Charles the foresaid duke of Lorraine:  
 By the which marriage the line of Charles the Great  
 Was re-united to the crown of France.  
 So that, as clear as is the summer's sun,  
 King Pepin's title and Hugh Capet's claim,  
 King Lewis his satisfaction, all appear  
 To hold in right and title of the female:  
 90 So do the kings of France unto this day.  
 Howbeit they would hold up this Salic law  
 To bar your highness claiming from the female,  
 And rather choose to hide them in a net  
 †Than amply to imbare their crooked titles,  
 Usurped from you and your progenitors.  
*King Henry.* May I with right and conscience make  
 this claim?  
*Canterbury.* The sin upon my head, dread sovereign!  
 For in the book of Numbers is it writ,  
 When the man dies, let the inheritance  
 100 Descend unto the daughter....Gracious lord,  
 Stand for your own, unwind your bloody flag,