WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE WILLIAM HAZLITT

THE PLAY, HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS OF THE CHARACTER IN THE PLAY

William Shakespeare and William Hazlitt

Henry V (The Play, Historical Background and Analysis of the Character in the Play)

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EARL OF CAMBRIDGE.

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GOWER, officer in King Henry's army.

FLUELLEN, officer in King Henry's army.

MACMORRIS, officer in King Henry's army.

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Ambassadors to the King of England.

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KATHARINE, daughter to Charles and Isabel.

ALICE, a lady attending on her.

HOSTESS of a tavern in Eastcheap, formerly Mistress Quickly, and now married to Pistol.

CHORUS.

Lords, Ladies, Officers, Soldiers, Citizens, Messengers, and Attendants.

SCENE: England; afterwards France.

PROLOGUE.

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[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, Leash'd in like hounds, should famine, sword, and fire Crouch for employment. But pardon, gentles all, The flat unraised spirits that hath dar'd On this unworthy scaffold to bring forth 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 Are now confin'd two mighty monarchies, Whose high upreared 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

Printing their proud hoofs i' the receiving earth.
For 'tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings,
Carry them here and there, jumping o'er times,
Turning the 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.]

ACT FIRST.

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SCENE I. London. An antechamber in the King's palace.

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[Enter the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Ely.]

CANTERBURY.

My lord, I'll tell you: that self bill is urg'd, Which in the eleventh year of the last king's reign Was like, and had indeed against us pass'd, But that the scambling 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
By testament have given to the Church,
Would they strip from us; being valu'd 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 suppli'd; And to the coffers of the King beside, A thousand pounds by the year. Thus runs the bill.

ELY.

This would drink deep.

CANTERBURY

'Twould drink the cup and all.

ELY.

But what prevention?

CANTERBURY.

The King is full of grace and fair regard.

FIY

And a true lover of the holy Church.

CANTERBURY.

The courses of his youth promis'd it not.
The breath no sooner left his father's body,
But that his wildness, mortifi'd in him,
Seem'd to die too; yea, at that very moment
Consideration like an angel came
And whipp'd the offending Adam out of him,
Leaving his body as a paradise
To envelope 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 blessed 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; 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 rend'red 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 charter'd libertine, is still. And the mute wonder lurketh in men's ears. To steal his sweet and honey'd 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 unletter'd, rude, and shallow, His hours fill'd up with riots, banquets, sports, And never noted in him any study, Any retirement, any sequestration From open haunts and popularity.

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 obscur'd 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 ceas'd, And therefore we must needs admit the means How things are perfected.

FIY.

But, my good lord, How now for mitigation of this bill Urg'd by the commons? Doth his Majesty Incline to it, or no?

CANTERBURY.

He seems indifferent,
Or rather swaying more upon our part
Than cherishing the exhibiters 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 open'd to his Grace at large,
As touching France, to give a greater sum
Than ever at one time the clergy yet
Did to his predecessors part withal.

ELY.

How did this offer seem receiv'd, my lord?

CANTERBURY.

With good acceptance of his Majesty; Save that there was not time enough to hear, As I perceiv'd 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 Deriv'd from Edward, his great-grandfather.

ELY.

What was the impediment that broke this off?

CANTERBURY.

The French ambassador upon that instant Crav'd 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.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE II. The same. The presence chamber.

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[Enter King Henry, Gloucester, Bedford, Exeter, Warwick, Westmoreland [and 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 the ambassador, my liege?

KING HENRY.

Not yet, my cousin. We would be resolv'd, Before we hear him, of some things of weight That task our thoughts, concerning us and France.

[Enter the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Ely.]

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 And justly and religiously unfold Why the law Salique 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 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; For we will hear, note, and believe in heart That what you speak is in your conscience wash'd As pure as sin with baptism.

CANTERBURY.

Then hear me, gracious sovereign, and you peers, That owe yourselves, your lives, and services 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 Saligue land;"

Which Saligue land the French unjustly gloze 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 Salique is in Germany, Between the floods of Sala and of Elbe; Where Charles the Great, having subdu'd the Saxons, There left behind and settled certain French: Who, holding in disdain the German women For some dishonest manners of their life, Establish'd then this law, to wit, no female Should be inheritrix in Saligue land; Which Salique, as I said, 'twixt Elbe and Sala, Is at this day in Germany call'd Meisen. Then doth it well appear the Salique law Was not devised for the realm of France: Nor did the French possess the Salique land Until four hundred one and twenty years After defunction of King Pharamond, Idly suppos'd the founder of this law, Who died within the year of our redemption Four hundred twenty-six; and Charles the Great Subdu'd the Saxons, and did seat the French Beyond the river Sala, in the year Eight hundred five. Besides, their writers say, King Pepin, which deposed Childeric, Did, as heir general, being descended Of Blithild, which was daughter to King Clothair, Make claim and title to the crown of France. Hugh Capet also, who usurp'd the crown 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, Convey'd himself as the heir to the 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, 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. So do the kings of France unto this day, Howbeit they would hold up this Saligue law To bar your Highness claiming from the female, And rather choose to hide them in a net Than amply to imbar their crooked titles Usurp'd 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
Descend unto the daughter. Gracious lord,
Stand for your own! Unwind your bloody flag!
Look back into your mighty ancestors!

Go, my dread lord, to your great-grandsire's tomb, From whom you claim; invoke his warlike spirit, And your great-uncle's, Edward the Black Prince, Who on the French ground play'd a tragedy, Making defeat on the full power of France, Whiles his most mighty father on a hill Stood smiling to behold his lion's whelp Forage in blood of French nobility.

O noble English, that could entertain With half their forces the full pride of France And let another half stand laughing by, All out of work and cold for action!

ELY.

Awake remembrance of these valiant dead,
And with your puissant arm renew their feats.
You are their heir; you sit upon their throne;
The blood and courage that renowned them
Runs in your veins; and my thrice-puissant liege
Is in the very May-morn of his youth,
Ripe for exploits and mighty enterprises.

EXETER.

Your brother kings and monarchs of the earth Do all expect that you should rouse yourself, As did the former lions of your blood.

WESTMORELAND.

They know your Grace hath cause and means and might;

So hath your Highness. Never King of England Had nobles richer, and more loyal subjects, Whose hearts have left their bodies here in England And lie pavilion'd in the fields of France.

CANTERBURY.

O, let their bodies follow, my dear liege, With blood and sword and fire to win your right; In aid whereof we of the spiritualty Will raise your Highness such a mighty sum As never did the clergy at one time Bring in to any of your ancestors.

KING HENRY.

We must not only arm to invade the French, But lay down our proportions to defend Against the Scot, who will make road upon us With all advantages.

CANTERBURY.

They of those marches, gracious sovereign, Shall be a wall sufficient to defend Our inland from the pilfering borderers.

KING HENRY.

We do not mean the coursing snatchers only,
But fear the main intendment of the Scot,
Who hath been still a giddy neighbour to us;
For you shall read that my great-grandfather
Never went with his forces into France
But that the Scot on his unfurnish'd kingdom
Came pouring, like the tide into a breach,
With ample and brim fullness of his force,
Galling the gleaned land with hot assays,
Girdling with grievous siege castles and towns;
That England, being empty of defence,
Hath shook and trembled at the ill neighbourhood.

CANTERBURY.

She hath been then more fear'd than harm'd, my liege; For hear her but exampl'd by herself:
When all her chivalry hath been in France,
And she a mourning widow of her nobles,
She hath herself not only well defended
But taken and impounded as a stray
The King of Scots; whom she did send to France
To fill King Edward's fame with prisoner kings,
And make her chronicle as rich with praise
As is the ooze and bottom of the sea
With sunken wreck and sumless treasuries.

WESTMORELAND.

But there's a saying very old and true,
"If that you will France win,
Then with Scotland first begin."
For once the eagle England being in prey,
To her unguarded nest the weasel Scot
Comes sneaking and so sucks her princely eggs,
Playing the mouse in absence of the cat,
To tear and havoc more than she can eat.

EXETER.

It follows then the cat must stay at home;
Yet that is but a crush'd necessity,
Since we have locks to safeguard necessaries,
And pretty traps to catch the petty thieves.
While that the armed hand doth fight abroad,
The advised head defends itself at home;
For government, though high and low and lower,
Put into parts, doth keep in one consent,
Congreeing in a full and natural close,
Like music.

CANTERBURY.

Therefore doth heaven divide The state of man in divers functions. Setting endeavour in continual motion, To which is fixed, as an aim or butt, Obedience; for so work the honey-bees, Creatures that by a rule in nature teach The act of order to a peopled kingdom. They have a king and officers of sorts, Where some, like magistrates, correct at home, Others like merchants, venture trade abroad. Others, like soldiers, armed in their stings, Make boot upon the summer's velvet buds, Which pillage they with merry march bring home To the tent-royal of their emperor; Who, busied in his majesty, surveys The singing masons building roofs of gold, The civil citizens kneading up the honey, The poor mechanic porters crowding in Their heavy burdens at his narrow gate, The sad-eyed justice, with his surly hum, Delivering o'er to executors pale The lazy yawning drone. I this infer, That many things, having full reference To one consent, may work contrariously. As many arrows, loosed several ways, Come to one mark; as many ways meet in one town; As many fresh streams meet in one salt sea; As many lines close in the dial's centre; So many a thousand actions, once afoot, End in one purpose, and be all well borne Without defeat. Therefore to France, my liege! Divide your happy England into four,

Whereof take you one quarter into France, And you withal shall make all Gallia shake. If we, with thrice such powers left at home, Cannot defend our own doors from the dog, Let us be worried and our nation lose The name of hardiness and policy.

KING HENRY.

Call in the messengers sent from the Dauphin.

[Exeunt some Attendants.]

Now are we well resolv'd; and, by God's help,
And yours, the noble sinews of our power,
France being ours, we'll bend it to our awe,
Or break it all to pieces. Or there we'll sit,
Ruling in large and ample empery
O'er France and all her almost kingly dukedoms,
Or lay these bones in an unworthy urn,
Tombless, with no remembrance over them.
Either our history shall with full mouth
Speak freely of our acts, or else our grave,
Like Turkish mute, shall have a tongueless mouth,
Not worshipp'd with a waxen epitaph.

[Enter Ambassadors of France.]

Now are we well prepar'd to know the pleasure Of our fair cousin Dauphin; for we hear Your greeting is from him, not from the King.

FIRST AMBASSADOR.

May't please your Majesty to give us leave Freely to render what we have in charge, Or shall we sparingly show you far off The Dauphin's meaning and our embassy?

KING HENRY.

We are no tyrant, but a Christian king, Unto whose grace our passion is as subject As is our wretches fett'red in our prisons; Therefore with frank and with uncurbed plainness Tell us the Dauphin's mind.

AMBASSADOR.

Thus, then, in few.

Your Highness, lately sending into France,
Did claim some certain dukedoms, in the right
Of your great predecessor, King Edward the Third.
In answer of which claim, the prince our master
Says that you savour too much of your youth,
And bids you be advis'd there's nought in France
That can be with a nimble galliard won.
You cannot revel into dukedoms there.
He therefore sends you, meeter for your spirit,
This tun of treasure; and, in lieu of this,
Desires you let the dukedoms that you claim
Hear no more of you. This the Dauphin speaks.

KING HENRY.

What treasure, uncle?

EXETER.

Tennis-balls, my liege.

KING HENRY.

We are glad the Dauphin is so pleasant with us. His present and your pains we thank you for. When we have match'd our rackets to these balls,

We will, in France, by God's grace, play a set Shall strike his father's crown into the hazard. Tell him he hath made a match with such a wrangler That all the courts of France will be disturb'd With chaces. And we understand him well. How he comes o'er us with our wilder days, Not measuring what use we made of them. We never valu'd this poor seat of England; And therefore, living hence, did give ourself To barbarous licence; as 'tis ever common That men are merriest when they are from home. 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 that I have laid by my majesty And plodded like a man for working days, But 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. And tell the pleasant prince this mock of his Hath turn'd his balls to gun-stones, and his soul Shall stand sore charged for the wasteful vengeance That shall fly with them; for many a thousand widows Shall this his mock mock out of their dear husbands. Mock mothers from their sons, mock castles down; And some are yet ungotten and unborn That shall have cause to curse the Dauphin's scorn. But this lies all within the will of God. To whom I do appeal; and in whose name Tell you the Dauphin I am coming on To venge me as I may, and to put forth My rightful hand in a well-hallow'd cause. So get you hence in peace; and tell the Dauphin

His jest will savour but of shallow wit, When thousands weep more than did laugh at it.— Convey them with safe conduct.—Fare you well.

[Exeunt Ambassadors.]

EXETER.

This was a merry message.

KING HENRY.

We hope to make the sender blush at it.
Therefore, my lords, omit no happy hour
That may give furtherance to our expedition;
For we have now no thought in us but France,
Save those to God, that run before our business.
Therefore, let our proportions for these wars
Be soon collected, and all things thought upon
That may with reasonable swiftness add
More feathers to our wings; for, God before,
We'll chide this Dauphin at his father's door.
Therefore let every man now task his thought,
That this fair action may on foot be brought.

[Exeunt.]

ACT SECOND.

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PROLOGUE.

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[Flourish. Enter Chorus.]

CHORUS.

Now all the youth of England are on fire, And silken dalliance in the wardrobe lies. Now thrive the armourers, and honour's thought Reigns solely in the breast of every man. They sell the pasture now to buy the horse, Following the mirror of all Christian kings, With winged heels, as English Mercuries. For now sits Expectation in the air, And hides a sword from hilts unto the point With crowns imperial, crowns, and coronets, Promis'd to Harry and his followers. The French, advis'd by good intelligence Of this most dreadful preparation, Shake in their fear, and with pale policy Seek to divert the English purposes. O England! model to thy inward greatness, Like little body with a mighty heart, What mightst thou do, that honour would thee do, Were all thy children kind and natural! But see thy fault! France hath in thee found out A nest of hollow bosoms, which he fills With treacherous crowns; and three corrupted men,

One, Richard Earl of Cambridge, and the second, Henry Lord Scroop of Masham, and the third, Sir Thomas Grey, knight of Northumberland, Have, for the gilt of France,—O guilt indeed!— Confirm'd conspiracy with fearful France; And by their hands this grace of kings must die, If hell and treason hold their promises, Ere he take ship for France, and in Southampton. Linger your patience on, and we'll digest The abuse of distance, force a play. The sum is paid; the traitors are agreed; The King is set from London; and the scene Is now transported, gentles, to Southampton. There is the playhouse now, there must you sit; And thence to France shall we convey you safe, And bring you back, charming the narrow seas To give you gentle pass; for, if we may, We'll not offend one stomach with our play. But, till the King come forth, and not till then, Unto Southampton do we shift our scene.

[Exit.]