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ABSTRACT

This class activity sought to help English methods teachers in training to gain a better understanding about the spectrum of beliefs concerning of teaching English literature in secondary schools. The activity in this study asks the student as an intending secondary English language arts teacher to watch two video recordings of the "Once more into the breach, dear friends..." speech from Shakespeare's "Henry V" (Olivier's 1944 and Branagh's 1989 adaptations) and to respond to passages written by critics belonging to various schools of literary criticism in terms of the student's judgment of the usefulness of the approach in his/her classroom. Eleven terms and tropes are listed, and the student is asked to rate his/her familiarity with each term and his/her readiness to use it in teaching English. Each student is asked to complete the questionnaire, and the substance will be discussed in class. All information and questionnaire sections (six parts) needed to complete the study are provided in this paper--passages from "Henry V," material from the various critics, and explanation of the activity. (NKA)

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ED 461 902

English Methods Students' Responses to Schools of Literary Criticism

Philip V. Allingham, Joe Belanger, Walt Werner & Bill Davison

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Title of Project:
English Methods Students' Responses to Schools of Literary Criticism

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Purpose

As English methods instructors, we are interested in the attitudes toward and backgrounds in literary criticism which our students bring to our classes. Clearly, what we teach in secondary school classrooms and how we teach it depend on our beliefs about the purposes of teaching literature. We hope that the following activity will help you to consider various purposes for teaching literature; we also hope to gain a better understanding about what we as English methods instructors in particular and what the English teaching profession in general need to understand about the spectrum of beliefs about the purposes of teaching English literature in secondary schools.

Study Procedures

The activity in this study asks you as an intending secondary English Language Arts teacher to watch to two video recordings of the "Once more into the breach, dear friends..." speech from Shakespeare's *Henry V* (Olivier's 1944 and Branagh's 1989 adaptations) and to respond to passages written by critics belonging to various schools of literary criticism in terms of your judgment of the usefulness of the approach for your classroom. Finally, we list eleven terms and tropes, and ask you to rate your familiarity with each term and your readiness to use it in your teaching of English. There is no need to rate the usefulness of unfamiliar terms, of course.

Use of the Data

Please do not write your name or any identifying mark on this questionnaire. Since this questionnaire is a part of the English methods curriculum, each student is asked to complete the questionnaire; the substance of the questionnaire will be discussed in class. However, there is no obligation to allow your responses to be used in the research report which arises from the questionnaire. To indicate whether or not you allow your responses to be used in the research report, please check the appropriate sentence on the next page:

I WILL allow my responses to be used in the research report _____

I WILL **NOT** allow my responses to be used in the research report ____.

To protect your right to refuse, this permission page will not be visible as you submit your response booklet. Before your instructor examines the class's response booklets, the investigator or an assistant will sort the forms into two piles: those for which research consent has been granted, and those for which such consent has not been granted. Only those responses for which research permission has been granted will be used in this study. Since these questionnaires are to remain anonymous, number codes will be used in the research report. Your participation or non-participation will have no bearing on your class standing. Data will be retained in the Faculty of Education for not more than two years.

This questionnaire requires approximately _25_ *minutes to complete.*

Survey of Responses to Literature

Please do not write your name on the following survey. In order to relate your responses to the passages in the survey to demographic variables, it would help to know a number of facts about you. Please share any of the information below that you feel comfortable with sharing. If you would prefer to omit any item, please omit it and move on to the other items.

1. High school graduation: Ontario ____; other Canadian province _____ ; other _____.

2. University undergraduate coursework: Province/State:_____

   Your undergraduate major: _____
   minor(s): _____ _____

   List any graduate degrees and specializations: _____
   _____.

3. Please list the approximate number of credits you have earned in the following subjects (note: since these are not generally required subjects, you may not be familiar with them):
   English literary criticism:_____

   Critical theory: _____

   Shakespeare or Renaissance drama:_____

4. Mother tongue (please circle one): a. English; b. Other

   Please list any other languages you speak/write fluently:_____
   _____

5. Gender (please circle): F M

6. Age range: 24 and under:_____ ___ 25 - 30:_____ Over 30:_____

7. Please rank the grade levels you would prefer to teach: Elementary: _____
   Junior Secondary _____ Senior Secondary_____

Critical Perspectives of Henry's speech before the gates of Harfleur in William Shakespeare's *The Life of Henry the Fifth* (London: 1599) and the Olivier (1944) and Branagh (1989) film adaptations.

PART ONE: Read the following excerpt from Shakespeare's *Henry V*, III, i.
{Alarum. Enter King Harry [and the English army], with scaling ladders}

KING: 1. Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more,
2. Or close the wall up with our English dead.
3. In peace there's nothing so becomes a man
4. As modest stillness and humility,
5. But when the blast of war blows in our ears,
6. Then imitate the action of the tiger.
7. Stiffen the sinews, conjure up the blood,
8. Disguise fair nature with hard-favoured rage.
9. Then lend the eye a terrible aspect,
10. Let it pry through the portage of the head
11. Like the brass cannon, let the brow o'erwhelm it
12. As fearfully as doth a gallèd rock
13. O'erhang and jutty his confounded base,
14. Swilled with the wild and wasteful ocean.
15. Now set the teeth and stretch the nostril wide,
16. Hold hard the breath, and bend up every spirit
17. To his full height. On, on, you noblest English,
18. Whose blood is fet from fathers of war-proof,
19. Fathers that like so many Alexanders
20. Have in these parts from morn till even fought,
21. And sheathed their swords for lack of argument.
22. Dishonour not your mothers; now attest
23. That those whom you called fathers did beget you.
24. Be copy now to men of grosser blood,
25. And teach them how to war. And you, good yeomen,
26. Whose limbs were made in England, show us here
27. The mettle of your pasture; let us swear
28. That you are worth your breeding which I doubt not,
29. For there is none of you so mean and base
30. That hath not noble lustre in your eyes.
31. I see you stand like greyhounds in the slips,
32. Straining upon the start. The game's afoot.
33. Follow your spirit, and upon this charge
34. Cry, "God for Harry! England and Saint George!"
{Alarum, and chambers go off. Exeunt.}

PART TWO: RATING OF CLASSROOM USEFULNESS

(This section contains six commentaries on the preceding speech.)

Please read each of the following selections, then indicate your perception of the commentary's classroom utility by circling the appropriate number below. On the Likert scale, 5 denotes a high level of agreement, 1 a high level of disagreement. Finally, circle the letter of the correct answer for each multiple-choice question.

Selection A: from the website "English 366: Studies in Shakespeare" [1].

Answering questions about Henry's real personality are inherently difficult, simply because, with one notable exception, we never see Henry except in a public role. For most of the play, Henry simply is the role he is playing at the moment, and the sum total of the various roles doesn't add up to a coherent personality. In fact, that totality raises some awkward questions. If Henry is as pious as he likes to appear--demanding a moral justification for going to war, constantly invoking the name of God in all his public pronouncements, insisting on the importance of mercy, and so on--then why does he go to war in the first place? How can he threaten such immoral violence on Harfleur, kill the prisoners of war, execute Bardolph (once his friend or crony, in the days of hanging out with Falstaff), and so on? Or how can he at least not manifest some momentary misgiving? Is there not some logical inconsistency here, especially since he seems to do it all so easily, without inner debate or emotional strain? Henry seems to invoke principles which he himself then denies in his actions.

Would definitely not use 1 2 3 4 5 Would definitely use

The critical perspective exercised by the writer here is chiefly

A. Freudian.
B. New Historicist.
C. political and ethical.
D. rhetorical and linguistic.

Selection B: Damian Cannon. [2]

Ultimately *Henry V* is an amazing achievement given the circumstances, succeeding as a call-to-arms beyond all expectation. When Olivier launches into stirring rhetoric, the blood boils and the sinews harden; no wonder his dispirited troops respond! Given this, it's possible to overlook the fact that this adaptation tends to purify and emasculate Henry; no longer is he the complex and aggressive figure of Shakespeare's imagination. This was the tone required at the time and Olivier hit it dead centre. Other elements of note are the vibrant

colour photography (another against the odds triumph) and the fitting score of William Walton. If you can take the intentionally artificial framing device, then *Henry V* can be considered to lie amongst the very best of Shakespeare's filmed plays.

Would definitely not use 1 2 3 4 5 Would definitely use

The critical perspective exercised by the writer here is chiefly

A. linguistic.
B. New Criticism.
C. psychological.
D. Cinematographic.

Selection C: Mark R. Leeper. [3]

The advantage of the longbow over its shorter predecessors is, of course, range. It is entirely feasible to create a shower of falling arrows that your enemy must enter before he can even come near you, provided you have brought enough arrows along. This is *probably* the reason that the English at the Battle of Agincourt were able to kill what is quoted as ten thousand French while losing only 29 of their own numbers. Bill Shakespeare's script for the current *HENRY V* tends really to downplay the technological advantage the English had at the battle, implying the imbalance in casualty figures can be attributed instead to the fact that Old Hank really knew how to give one heck of a good pep-talk. Well, song-writers tend to glorify song-writers, and film-makers like to make films about film-makers, so it isn't surprising that Shakespeare's stuff tends to glorify wordsmiths. Even though the actual casualty numbers were probably closer to 200 and five thousand, Shakespeare still seems to over-rate Henry's speech-making.

Would definitely not use 1 2 3 4 5 Would definitely use

The critical perspective exercised by the writer (Mark Leeper) is chiefly

A. New Historicist.
B. Deconstruction.
C. Psychoanalytic.
D. Reader-Response.

Selection D: Amanda Joseph and Wendy Mathieu. [4]

3. **a**) In a group create a two-column chart. In the first column, list personal qualities and values that are important in everyday life, beginning with the traits that King Henry identifies

at the beginning when he says, "In peace there's nothing so becomes a man as modest stillness and humility." In the second column, list the qualities that are required by soldiers, beginning with those that the King describes in "when the blast of war blows in our ears." **b**) Individually, write an essay discussing the discrepancies between the two sets of traits: How do you think humans overcome their peacetime natures when they are required to fight in a war? How do you think you would manage in that situation? **c**) Share your essay with the group, inviting members to comment on the evidence you used.

Would definitely not use 1 2 3 4 5 Would definitely use

The critical focus of these writers is chiefly

A. Marxist and Feminist.
B. Semiotic and Linguistic.
C. theatrical and psychological.
D. pedagogical and Reader-Response.

Selection E: H. R. Coursen.[5]

The stylization of the Olivier film tends toward the theatrical in a way we would not accept in a more recent film, as Branagh's blood, rain, sweat, mud, and mist show us. Olivier tends to watch events from a static camera, suggesting a fixed view of history. Branagh's camera moves, arguing no fixed premises and perhaps even a selective view of history, one inscribed by the editing of the winners, and then by all-enveloping time, as the ideological camera runs out of film. . . . . We notice, however, how neatly the Branagh translates to television. The smaller screen obviously conditions the field of depth that the theoretically larger screen chooses to deploy or reduce. Television is all foreground, as the BBC version shows us.

Would definitely not use 1 2 3 4 5 Would definitely use

The critical perspective exercised by H. R. Coursen is that of a critic of

A. film and video.
B. theatre and cinema.
C. literary and visual texts.
D. figurative and literal meanings.

Selection F: Based on Chris Baldick et al. [6]

In *The Life of Henry V* Shakespeare neatly combines chauvinist propaganda, hagiography, history, and heroic epic, a synthesis nowhere so obvious as in the first scene of the third act. As Mowat and Werstine point out, the play "represents war in such a variety of ways and thereby tests whatever understanding of war we may bring to it" (xiii). Henry, at once the masculine paragon of chivalric courage and compassionate leadership, eggs on his men, assuring them "that they can never be more truly and gloriously the sons of their fathers than in making war" (Mowat and Werstine xiii). His final exhortation to his mixed bag of Welsh, English, and Scottish soldiers to "follow [their] spirit" neatly equates religious devotion and militant nationalism: in this war as in so many others, the leader asserts that God is on their side. Shakespeare here creates a larger than life figure, the hero-king and warrior-saviour, treating him reverentially, as if he were a substitute for Saint George himself. The Tudor writer transforms the historical youthful adventurer and political opportunist into a mythic figure "of great national or even cosmic importance" (Abrams 52) through the protagonist's and the Chorus's ornate speeches whose "ceremonial style . . . is deliberately distanced from ordinary speech and proportioned to the grandeur and formality of the heroic subject" (Abrams 52), which is in fact a war of imperial expansion and class exploitation.

Would definitely not use 1 2 3 4 5 Would definitely use

The critical perspective exercised by the writer here is chiefly that of

A. New Criticism.
B. resistant reading.
C. deconstructionist.
D. generative-transformational grammar.

PART THREE: YOUR PERSONAL FAVOURITE

Please indicate which selection you feel would be the most useful interpretation for the classroom, then give the reasons for your choice.

_____

_____

_____

_____

PART FOUR: THE SELECTION YOU MOST DISLIKED

Please indicate which selection you feel would be the least useful interpretation for the classroom, then give the reasons for your choice.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

PART FIVE: CRITICAL LANGUAGE FOR THE CLASSROOM

Please help us determine which of the following terms or phrases you know and which you would be prepared to use in your classroom (i. e., where you work, or where you anticipate working):

Term	Familiarity 1= unfamiliar . . .5 = very familiar	Potential Usefulness 1 = not useful; 5 = very useful
1. Deconstruction	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
2. Hegemony	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
3. Patriarchy	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
4. Privileged reading	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
5. Post-modern	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
6. Culture text	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
7. Commodity text	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
8. Intertextuality	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
9. Transparent text	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
10. Voice	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
11. Subaltern	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

PART SIX: We welcome your personal observations and comments.

End Notes

[1] "The Ironies of Success in Politics: An Introduction to Shakespeare's *Henry V,*" from English 366: Studies in Shakespeare":
http://www.mala.bc.ca/~johnstoi/eng366/lectures/henry5.htm .
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[2] Damian Cannon, from the website *"Henry V* (1944)--A Review." Movie Reviews: UK, 2000." http://www.film.u-net.com/Movies/Reviews/HenryV_1944.html .

[3] Mark R. Leeper, from the website "*Henry V*--A Film Review (1990)." http://us.imdb.com/Reviews/07/0713

[4] Amanda Joseph and Wendy Mathieu, "Analyze and Interpret," *Viewpoints 11* (Toronto: Prentice Hall, 2001) page 449.

[5] H. R. Coursen, "Pistol in History," *Teaching Shakespeare with Film and Television: A Guide* (Westport, Conn., and London: Greenwood Press, 1997) 177-178.

[6] Chris Baldick, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine's prefatory comments to the New Folger Library edition of *Henry V* (New York: Washington Square, 1995); and M. H. Abrams' *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 5th edn. (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1988).

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