

21L. 010 Writing With Shakespeare

Essay Assignment for *Henry IV, Part One*

You have each been assigned a segment of introduction plus an historical text from Shakespeare's age in the Bedford edition of *The First Part of Henry the Fourth* (which I refer to by its more common title, *Henry IV, Part One*). Your first task is to read those materials carefully, making sure you understand them. Be sure to think about the *genre* of your contextual materials: these include historical narratives, play scenes, verses, conduct manuals, political tracts, and government decrees. Consider the rhetoric and purposes of the writers, to the extent you can determine those.

Once you understand your materials adequately, think about the "context" reading (the piece written during the early modern period, not the introductory pages) in relationship to Shakespeare's play. What do you understand differently or more clearly as a result of having read both of these texts together? Does the play confirm or differ from statements, stories, or opinions expressed in the other work? What is the most interesting connection or difference?

To help organize your thoughts, you might list all the shared attributes of the two works (say, shared characters, or speeches about rebellion, or accounts of specific events). Then you can detail how the treatment of those shared attributes differs in more particular ways, and why those difference might affect the work as a whole. Pick the one or two most interesting, significant aspects to compare.

Now you are ready to write.

Write a thesis-driven essay *comparing* a specific aspect of the contextual material with its parallel in *Henry IV, Part One*, using quotations from both texts as supporting evidence for your central claim. Ideally, you will show a particular way in which the parallel reveals something of interest in the play that might otherwise have escaped a reader's attention. Remember that a thesis statement organizes an essay, providing a focus that can be debated and substantiated using the texts as evidence. Do not merely list parallels or describe the two texts; instead, develop a focused point of comparison that highlights either their similarity or difference.

Give your essay a title. Edit it, using the stylesheet and referring to *Easy Writer* for help with grammatical questions, punctuation, and organization. Print out the essay and proofread it carefully. Put it aside for several hours, and then read it again.

Due SES #17.

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