

IV. Questions 32 to 41 in your Questions Booklet are based on this excerpt from the play *Henry the Fifth*.

from HENRY THE FIFTH, Act IV, scene i

CHARACTERS:

King Henry V — King of England

John Bates } soldiers in the King's army  
Michael Williams }

*The army of King Henry V is camped at Agincourt in France preparing for battle at daybreak with the French army. In the cloak of darkness, and disguised as a soldier, Henry joins two soldiers who are talking.*

**WILLIAMS:** 'Tis certain, every man that dies ill, the ill upon his own head, the King is not to answer it.

**BATES:** I do not desire he should answer for me; and yet I determine to fight lustily for him.

5 **KING HENRY:** I myself heard the King say he would not be ransom'd.

**WILLIAMS:** Ay, he said so, to make us fight cheerfully; but when our throats are cut, he may be ransom'd and we ne'er the wiser.

**KING HENRY:** If I live to see it, I will never trust his word after.

10 **WILLIAMS:** You pay him then. That's a perilous shot out of an eldergun,<sup>1</sup> that a poor and a private displeasure can do against a monarch! You may as well go about to turn the sun to ice with fanning in his face with a peacock's feather. You'd never trust his word after! Come, 'tis a foolish saying.

**KING HENRY:** Your reproof is something too round.<sup>2</sup> I should be angry with you, if the time were convenient.

15 **WILLIAMS:** Let it be a quarrel between us, if you live.

**KING HENRY:** I embrace it.

**WILLIAMS:** How shall I know thee again?

**KING HENRY:** Give me any gage<sup>3</sup> of thine, and I will wear it in my bonnet; then if ever thou dar'st acknowledge it, I will make it my quarrel.

20 **WILLIAMS:** Here's my glove; give me another of thine.

**KING HENRY:** There.

**WILLIAMS:** This will I also wear in my cap. If ever thou come to me and say, after to-morrow, "This is my glove," by this hand, I will take thee a box on the ear.

25 **KING HENRY:** If ever I live to see it, I will challenge it.

**WILLIAMS:** Thou dar'st as well be hang'd.

**KING HENRY:** Well, I will do it, though I take thee in the King's company.

**WILLIAMS:** Keep thy word; fare thee well.

*Continued*

<sup>1</sup>eldergun — pop-gun made by removing the pith from a piece of elder wood

<sup>2</sup>round — harsh

<sup>3</sup>gage — pledge

30 **BATES:** Be friends, you English fools, be friends. We have French quarrels enow,<sup>4</sup>  
if you could tell how to reckon.

**KING HENRY:** Indeed, the French may lay twenty French crowns to one they  
will beat us, for they bear them on their shoulders; but it is no English  
treason to cut French crowns, and to-morrow the King himself will be a  
clipper.<sup>5</sup>

35

*(Exeunt soldiers.)*

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. O hard condition,  
40 Twin-born with greatness, subject to the breath  
Of every fool whose sense no more can feel  
But his own wringing!<sup>6</sup> What infinite heart's-ease  
Must kings neglect, that private men enjoy!  
And what have kings, that privates have not too.  
45 Save ceremony, save general ceremony?  
And what art thou, thou idol Ceremony?  
What kind of god art thou, that suffer'st more  
Of mortal griefs than do thy worshippers?  
What are thy rents? What are thy comings in?  
50 O Ceremony, show me but thy worth!  
What is thy soul of adoration?<sup>7</sup>  
Art thou aught else but place, degree, and form,  
Creating awe and fear in other men?  
Wherein thou art less happy being fear'd  
55 Than they in fearing.  
What drink'st thou oft, instead of homage sweet,  
But poison'd flattery? O, be sick, great greatness,  
And bid thy Ceremony give thee cure!  
Think'st thou the fiery fever will go out  
60 With titles blown from adulation?  
Will it give place to flexure and low bending?  
Canst thou, when thou command'st the beggar's knee,  
Command the health of it? No, thou proud dream,  
That play'st so subtly with a king's repose;  
65 I am a king that find thee, and I know  
'Tis not the balm, the sceptre, and the ball,  
The sword, the mace, the crown imperial,  
The intertissued robe of gold and pearl,  
The farced<sup>8</sup> title running 'fore the King,  
70 The throne he sits on, nor the tide of pomp  
That beats upon the high shore of this world, —

*Continued*

<sup>4</sup>enow — enough

<sup>5</sup>clipper — a pun on *clip* (1) to cut off (2) to trim the edges of coins for gold or silver

<sup>6</sup>wringing — writhing

<sup>7</sup>thy . . . adoration — the secret of the adoration paid thee

<sup>8</sup>farced — stuffed, pompous

No, not all these, thrice-gorgeous Ceremony,  
Not all these, laid in bed majestical,  
Can sleep so soundly as the wretched slave,  
75 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 hell,  
But like a lackey from the rise to set  
Sweats in the eye of Phoebus,<sup>9</sup> and all night  
80 Sleeps in Elysium;<sup>10</sup> next day after dawn,  
Doth rise and help Hyperion<sup>11</sup> to his horse,  
And follows so the ever-running year  
With profitable labour to his grave:  
And, but for ceremony, such a wretch,  
85 Winding up days with toil and nights with sleep,  
Had the fore-hand and vantage of a king.  
The slave, a member of the country's peace,  
Enjoys it, but in gross brain little wots<sup>12</sup>  
What watch the King keeps to maintain the peace,  
90 Whose hours the peasant best advantages.

*William Shakespeare*

<sup>9</sup>Phoebus — from Greek mythology: god of the sun

<sup>10</sup>Elysium — from Greek mythology: isles of the Blessed

<sup>11</sup>Hyperion — from Greek mythology: personification of the sun

<sup>12</sup>little wots — little knows