

# Act 3: getting tough



This sample project links to the listen live/download audio clip

## Essentials

Discuss in class or make notes on the following:

- What does Henry say will happen to Harfleur and its people if they do not surrender to the English forces?
- Do these threats reflect the reality of warfare then?
- Who would bear the responsibility if Henry's threats were carried out?

List the threats Henry makes to the Governor of Harfleur (use attached worksheet).

Update your list of references and quotations:

- For King Henry's character study
- For the play being against war
- For the play being in support of war

*Make sure to note who said it, when they said it and what they meant.*

Level 1

Level 2



Divide the class into small groups to devise and perform a short scene in which soldiers are gearing themselves up to attack Harfleur. The dialogue should express:

- What they think of Henry as a leader
- Their views on Henry's threats
- Their relationships to each other as they prepare to fight

Level 2

Level 3



Earlier in the play, King Henry says 'We are no tyrant but a Christian king', yet at Harfleur he says 'the gates of mercy shall be all shut up.'

- Make a list of all the good qualities Henry has shown us in the play so far
- Highlight the language that shows Henry to be a tyrannical leader (use worksheet 8a)
- Write an argument for or against the idea that Henry has lost the sympathy of the audience at this point in the play

## Extensions

Research and answer the following questions:

- What is a war crime? Try to find the United Nations' definition of the term.
- If Henry's army had carried out their threats, could Henry be guilty of war crimes?
- When was the United Nations founded and under what circumstances?
- Which department of the United Nations is responsible for investigating war crimes today?



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How yet resolves the Governor of the town?  
This is the latest parole we will admit.  
Therefore to our best mercy give yourselves,  
Or, like to men proud of destruction  
Defy us to our worst; for as I am a soldier,  
A name that in my thoughts becomes me best,  
If I begin the battery once again,  
I will not leave the half-achieved Harfleur  
Till in her ashes she lie buried.  
The gates of mercy shall be all shut up,  
And the fleshed soldier, rough and hard of heart,  
In liberty of bloody hand shall range  
With conscience wide as hell, mowing like grass  
Your fresh fair virgins and your flowering infants.  
What is it then to me if impious war,  
Arrayed in flames like to the prince of fiends,  
Do with his smirched complexion all fell feats  
Enlinked to waste and desolation?  
What is't to me, when you yourselves are cause,  
If your pure maidens fall into the hand  
Of hot and forcing violation?  
What rein can hold licentious wickedness

When down the hill he holds his fierce career?  
We may as bootless spend our vain command  
Upon th' enraged soldiers in their spoil  
As send precepts to the leviathan  
To come ashore. Therefore, you men of Harfleur,  
Take pity of your town and of your people  
Whiles yet my soldiers are in my command,  
Whiles yet the cool and temperate wind of grace  
O'erblows the filthy and contagious clouds  
Of heady murder, spoil and villainy.  
If not, why, in a moment look to see  
The blind and bloody soldier with foul hand  
Defile the locks of your shrill-shrieking daughters,  
Your fathers taken by the silver beards,  
And their most reverend heads dashed to the walls,  
Your naked infants spitted upon pikes,  
Whiles the mad mothers with their howls confused  
Do break the clouds, as did the wives of Jewry  
At Herod's bloody-hunting slaughtermen.  
What say you? Will you yield and this avoid?  
Or, guilty in defence, be thus destroyed?

