

GCSE English

Shakespeare Coursework Support

*Henry V*

Susan Milliken



© This free sample may be copied and used but not repackaged or sold in any form.

[www.qaresources.co.uk](http://www.qaresources.co.uk)

# Structuring essays

## The beginning, the middle and the end

Your essay should be divided into three parts: the introduction, the development (or body of the essay) and the conclusion.

**The introduction** might consist of one or two general, but relevant, comments. Or it might be a brief summary of what you intend to say. It should engage the reader's interest. It need not be more than two or three sentences.

Here is an introduction for the essay about Henry's communication skills:

Henry is a good communicator who adapts his skills to suit the occasion. He is educated, easy to talk to and prepared to listen. He is also self-confident and used to authority. This gives him an advantage that the soldiers lack. Katherine, as a woman, is used to male dominance.

*This introduces your answer by referring to its main topic. It also establishes Henry's advantages as a communicator in his dealings with the soldiers and with Katherine.*

### The development (or body)

This is the main part of your essay. It should be an extended version of your plan, with close reference to the text, and short quotations to support your comments.

You may find these hints useful.

- Check the order of points in your plan and change it if you wish.
- Use a fresh paragraph for each new point. Let the subject matter decide the length and number of sentences and paragraphs.
- Use connectors to link your sentences and paragraphs. They help to show your line of thinking. Examples: 'Therefore', 'However', 'Also' 'On the other hand', 'Another example', and 'As a result'.
- Check frequently that everything in your answer is relevant to the question.
- Make sure you have included all the points you made in your plan.

**The conclusion** often summarises what has been said in the development, but it could be a general comment on the topic.

Here is one conclusion for the essay above:

Henry is persuasive, eloquent at times, authoritative, logical, quick-thinking and versatile. He is also ready to listen to others' views. These communication skills give him an advantage in dealing with others.

*This summarises the main points.*

## Practice: Dramatic function

Consider this essay question.

*What dramatic purposes do Bardolph, Pistol and Nym serve in Henry V?*

- 1 Discuss why these men are in the play. Here are some pointers:
  - their link with the King's past
  - comic relief
  - their attitudes to war – a theme
  - their friendship – another theme
  - insight into an ordinary soldier's life
  - contrast with other soldiers
  - contrast between social classes
  - the deaths of Bardolph and Nym
  - Pistol's fumbling attempts to take a prisoner for ransom
  - his plans to return to England.
- 2 What else might you include?
- 3 Write a detailed plan to show how you would develop the essay.
- 4 Write an introduction and conclusion.

# Using quotations and evidence

## Quotations

A good answer will include short quotations reinforcing different points in the essay. Here are some guidelines.

- The ability to choose relevant quotations shows a good understanding of the play.
- Make sure you copy quotations exactly.
- Use them to illustrate your comments, not to replace them.
- Don't use them to repeat yourself.
- Keep them short. Copying out several sentences is a waste of time.
- Enclose quotations in speech (quotation) marks.
- If possible, include them in a sentence:
  - Turning to flattery, Henry calls Katherine his '*divin déesse*'.
  - Williams's retort, 'You pay him then!' signals an abrupt change of mood.
- If you do want to use a longer quotation it should be set out on a separate line, introduced by a colon or a comma:

Henry believes passionately that soldiers fighting together share a special brotherhood:

For he today that sheds his blood with me  
Shall be my brother, be he ne'er so vile  
This day shall gentle his condition.

## Practice

Look back at your plan for the essay on Bardolph, Pistol and Nym. Which quotations would you use to illustrate their speech mannerisms, their attitudes to war, and Pistol's capture of Monsieur le Fer?

## Evidence

Besides quotations, you should also make close reference to the extracts, providing evidence to support your comments.

- Read this part of Luke's discussion of the dramatic function of Bardolph, Pistol and Nym.

Shakespeare uses these characters to highlight one of the themes of the play – warfare. Nym in particular is a coward. They are ordinary soldiers who receive little pay and feel they have the right to make something out of the war.

Each has a different speech mannerism, though all swear and make empty boasts. They are quick to pick a quarrel. They add humour, such as the time when Pistol tries to speak French to take a Frenchman ransom, and later when he is forced to eat a leek.

But there are serious bits too. I feel sorry that Bardolph is condemned to die for stealing a pax. He shouldn't have done it, but he probably hoped to make some much-needed money by selling it. Later we learn that Nym suffers the same fate. But Pistol survives the war and plans to go home to a life of crime.

In spite of their quarrels the three soldiers are good friends, and illustrate another theme of the play, friendship. They also knew Henry before he became King.

## Comment

Luke clearly knows the play quite well, but he does not produce enough evidence to demonstrate his full understanding. Each point he makes should be illustrated by close reference to the play. There are no quotations.

Luke does, however, show a personal response to Bardolph's fate.

### *Now read Luke's second attempt.*

Perhaps one of their most important functions is to highlight one of the themes in the play – warfare.

The life of ordinary soldiers was not easy. They were not paid well and if they were captured they were killed, unlike the nobles who would be held for ransom. Perhaps it is not altogether surprising that Pistol intends to make what he can out of the war. 'For I shall sutler be unto the camp, and profits will accrue,' he tells Nym. Sadly, this does not happen. Bardolph – and later Nym – are hanged for stealing.

Although it was generally accepted that soldiers would steal from local citizens, the King had specifically forbidden it. I feel sorry for Bardolph. He shouldn't have disobeyed the King's orders, but he didn't have much money and the temptation must have been great.

Pistol survives the war, even managing to take and hold a prisoner for ransom. He intends to return to his old life of crime in London. 'To England will I steal, and there I'll steal', he puns.

The three men also represent a kind of friendship, another theme in the play. They enjoy tavern life together in England, and although Nym and Bardolph nearly come to blows over Nell, they vow to be 'sworn brothers' in France. Pistol is very distressed at the thought of Bardolph's death, and tries to persuade Llewellyn to prevent it. Llewellyn's refusal leads to one of the funniest parts of the play when Pistol, forced to eat a leek, is totally humiliated for his arrogant behaviour. Although we might feel a little sorry for him, the incident provides comedy after the tense situation on the battlefield.

Bardolph, Pistol and Nym provide a link with the former life of the King when, as Prince Hal, he lived a dissolute life. This highlights the contrast with Henry now, when he shows the best qualities of kingship, another theme in the play. Their shared friendship with Sir John Falstaff, and concern at his death, provides another link with Henry, who had shrugged off his old friend

when he came to the throne. I think this reveals a less attractive side of the King. So, perhaps, does Henry's refusal to intervene to save Bardolph's life, but it could be argued that the King could not make any exceptions.

The men have different speech mannerisms, but they share a liking for oaths and empty threats. 'Pish for thee, Iceland dog, thou prick-eared cur of Iceland,' Pistol spits out when insulted by Nym. Their language adds comic relief to balance some of the more serious events in the play, such as Henry's interview with the traitors. It also provides a distinct contrast to the language of the more sober soldiers such as Bates and Williams.

Pistol's attempts to speak French to Henry, whom he does not recognise, and when he takes Monsieur le Fer prisoner for ransom, add a further element of humour. It is doubtful whether Pistol appreciates that he would not have been successful had the Boy not been with him.

## Comment

This is a great improvement on Luke's first attempt. He shows his knowledge of the historical background of warfare in the fifteenth century, discusses incidents in the wider context of the play, supports his comments with textual evidence, and uses some quotations. His paragraphs now flow more smoothly.

With a coursework essay, however, he has the time and opportunity to include more detailed reference and quotations.

## The wider context

Sometimes the topic you write about will have direct parallels or contrasts with other parts of the play. Referring to these, and discussing similarities or differences, will reflect your overall understanding.