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King Henry V (Arden Shakespeare: Third Series)



Synopsis

Distinguished editor T.W. Craik makes an independent and balanced examination of the many textual problems of Henry V, providing many new emendations. He begins his illustrated introduction with a commentary on the date and sources of the play, before taking up the problem of the Quarto and Folio texts; in Craik's view, the Quarto texts are evolving and incomplete versions of the play, with the First Folio best representing what was written by Shakespeare himself and performed to the public. Following his own substantial critical analysis King Henry V, the editor surveys other critical approaches to the play and lays out its performance history. Preceding the play itself is an explanation of Craik's text, with more analysis of the Quarto and Folio versions shedding light on the arduous process of compiling an edition of Shakespeare. Five appendices follow the play: The First Quarto of 1600, a map of France and the south of England, a map of the route of Henry V's army from 13 August to 17 November 1415, a genealogical table, and a doubling chart. The edition also includes a list of abbreviations used for reference.

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Customer Reviews

This play is best known for the St. Crispian's Day "Band of Brothers" speech given by King Henry just before the battle at Agincourt. It is a powerful speech that rallies people at all times and in every place. Sir Lawrence Olivier made a film version in 1944 during WWII and Kenneth Branagh made another as recently as 1989. You can count on there being more versions. Especially so when

computers can help them make spectacular battle scenes (that aren't really in the play) with less expense. Audiences love this play and they should. There is a lot to like and enjoy. I think upon repeated readings Henry becomes a more equivocal character than he seems at first. And readers of the King Henry IV plays will know him before he became King Henry and know something deeper about his personality. And of course there is the whole bit about the drive to France being sponsored by the Church to avoid confiscation of property by the Crown. Moreover, there is the slaughtering of the French prisoners, and his treatment of Falstaff (who dies offstage in this play). This isn't revisionist stuff, it is right there in the play, but it is easy to miss the first time you are trying to take in the play. In any case, this Arden edition is the one to buy and read from. Why? Because it has the most authoritative text, but that is only the beginning. It also shows variants between the early sources. The notes at the bottom of each page of the play are simply fabulous. The editor includes not only helpful notes explaining what might be obscure in the text of the play, he provides sources Shakespeare probably used such as Holinshed and makes for some very interesting study. There are also some helpful notes on how various scenes have been performed over time.

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