CLASSICS LIBRARY · STORY MAP

Henry VI, Part 1

William Shakespeare · *c. 1591 · original English text (Project Gutenberg #1500)*

Hung be the heavens with black, yield day to night! So Bedford opens, in Westminster Abbey, at the funeral of Henry V. The hosted text is Shakespeare's English, Project Gutenberg #1500, the first part of the Henry VI trilogy. For grades 10–12. Quote the play, not only the list of scenes.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

What becomes of a kingdom when a great king is dead, a child wears the crown, and a war in France is already going badly, and how should a school read this first part as the start of a three-play civil wound?

"Hung be the heavens with black, yield day to night! Comets, importing change of times and states, Brandish your crystal tresses in the sky, And with them"

Act I, Scene I, Westminster Abbey

Henry V is dead. Bedford, Gloucester, Exeter, Winchester, and the rest stand in the Abbey, and the news from France is already bad. The child king, the quarrel of the nobles, the war, and Joan of Arc all belong to this first part. Teach it as the opening of a trilogy, for grades 10–12, with gravity. Label the three parts honestly. Quote Bedford's first line, not the table of scenes.

KEY CHARACTERS

Bedford
Who opens the play in the Abbey: "Hung be the heavens with black"

Henry VI
The child king, whose father's death is the first fact of the play

Gloucester and Winchester
Protector and bishop, already at odds in the first scenes

Talbot, and Joan of Arc
The English war's great captain, and the French figure the English will not honor; teach her with gravity

A FUNERAL, AND A BLACK SKY

> *"Hung be the heavens with black, yield day to night! Comets, importing change of times and states, Brandish your crystal tresses in the sky, And with them"*
>
> Act I, Scene I, Westminster Abbey

Grades 10–12
Read the full text free at classicslaunch.org.

01

Westminster Abbey

ACT I, SCENE I

The heavens are to be hung with black. Comets are to scourge the stars that have consented unto Henry's death. The play opens as a funeral, not as a battle.

- The first line is exact: "Hung be the heavens with black, yield day to night!"
- The speaker is Bedford, Regent of France. The place is Westminster Abbey.
- This is PG #1500, the first of three parts. For grades 10–12.
- Quote the play, not the opening list of scenes.

> *"Hung be the heavens with black, yield day to night! Comets, importing change of times and states, Brandish your crystal tresses in the sky, And with them"*
>
> Act I, Scene I, Westminster Abbey

02

A Child's Crown, and a Quarrel

ACT I AND AFTER

The dead king's son is a child. Gloucester is Protector; Winchester is already a rival. The English quarrel is in the Abbey before the French war has even been fought on the stage.

- Teach the nobles' quarrel as the seed of the later civil war.
- This part already looks toward the whole trilogy.
- Keep the names as the play prints them.
- 10–12.

> *"Hung be the heavens with black, yield day to night! Comets, importing change of times and states, Brandish your crystal tresses in the sky, And with them"*
>
> Act I, Scene I

03

France, and a War Going Badly

THE FRENCH SCENES

Orleans and the English losses are in the first act's news, and then on the stage. Talbot will be the English war's great name in this part.

- Do not treat the French war as a pageant only. The play is about a kingdom coming apart.
- Keep "Orleans" as this file spells it, without a later accent if the file has none.
- Teach both courage and the cost.
- Quote this file.

> *"Hung be the heavens with black, yield day to night! Comets, importing change of times and states, Brandish your crystal tresses in the sky, And with them"*
>
> Act I, Scene I

04

Joan of Arc

THE FRENCH SCENES

Joan appears in this play. The English characters will not speak of her as a later sanctity would. Teach her presence with gravity and with care, and do not let the play's insults be the last word of the lesson.

- This is Shakespeare's early history play, not a later life of Joan. Say so.
- The trial of Joan is a different hosted work, already mapped. Do not confuse the two.
- Tact. Gravity.
- 10–12.

> *"Hung be the heavens with black, yield day to night! Comets, importing change of times and states, Brandish your crystal tresses in the sky, And with them"*
>
> Act I, Scene I

05

The First of Three Parts

THE PLAY AS A WHOLE

Label this honestly as Part 1. The story of Henry VI is not finished here. A school should know that Parts 2 and 3 follow, and should not stop as if the funeral had settled England.

- Catalogue 10–12.
- Original English, PG #1500.
- The Temple Garden and the roses, if you reach them, belong to the civil quarrel.
- Bedford's first line is the right first quotation.

> *"Hung be the heavens with black, yield day to night! Comets, importing change of times and states, Brandish your crystal tresses in the sky, And with them"*
>
> Act I, Scene I, Westminster Abbey

A Dead King · A Kingdom Quarreling · A War in France · The First of Three · Gravity

What to watch for as you read

GRADES 10–12

1. The play opens in Westminster Abbey: "Hung be the heavens with black, yield day to night!" The speaker is Bedford, at the funeral of Henry V. Quote the play, not the list of scenes.
2. This is Shakespeare, c. 1591, PG #1500, Henry VI, Part 1. For grades 10–12. Label the three parts honestly.
3. The nobles' quarrel is already in the Abbey. Teach it as the seed of the later civil war.
4. Joan of Arc appears in this play. The English characters will not speak of her as a later sanctity would. Teach with gravity and care. Do not confuse this play with the already mapped trial of Joan.
5. This part does not finish the story of Henry VI. Parts 2 and 3 follow.

Quotations are verbatim from the original English text (Project Gutenberg #1500), Project Gutenberg #1500, the public-domain text hosted at classicslaunch.org/works/henry-vi-part-1/. Citations give book and chapter (or canto and line) so every line can be checked.