

Short Assignment 2

“Prince: I shall hereafter, my thrice-gracious lord, be more myself” (3.2.93)

When it was first on stage, *Henry IV: Part One* by Shakespeare was a hit with play-goers. Not only did the play depict part of England’s history, but it also included Prince Harry who would later become King Henry V. Henry V was a widely popular king with the people of England so they were naturally intrigued and excited to see him depicted on stage. However, the rebellious young prince that they saw on stage didn’t exactly match his reputation in the beginning of the play. As the play progressed, he transformed into a character that one could easily see becoming a magnificent king. This change occurs with his line “I shall hereafter, my thrice-gracious lord, be more myself” (3.2.93) in response to his father’s speech and serves the purpose of informing the audience of the switch.

Early on in the play, Prince Harry or Hal is seen joking and drinking with common thieves at a tavern. This was certainly not the image that the audience would expect the future great king to have in his youth. However, he justifies himself and reassures the audience that this is not his permanent state of being through his soliloquy at the end of Act One Scene 2. With no evidence of his transformation arriving soon, the audience is left wondering when he will shed his rebellious act. They are left wondering until Act Three Scene Two when the king finally confronts Hal about his behavior, even stating that Hal “hast lost thy princely privilege with vile participation” (3.2.86-87). While the king is unaware of the prince’s plan, the audience is and is therefore anticipating his response. This scene becomes the moment of truth to reveal whether or not Hal’s speech is simply justifying his association with common thieves or if he truly does have a plan to use his past to his benefit.

While the king’s speech serves to prompt the prince into action and inform the audience that this scene could be the turning point, Hal’s simple response reveals the truth. While Hal stating that he will “be more myself” (3.2.93) has no relevance to his father, the audience knows his intentions. Because of his previous speech in Act One Scene Two, the audience is aware that his unfavorable actions are not his true self. This is a direct signal to those watching that he is going to begin acting like the noble and loved future king that they know from history. This is supported by him saying he will redeem the king’s good thoughts “on Percy’s head” (3.2.132) and “will wear a garment of all blood and stain my features in a bloody mask, which, washed away, shall scour my shame with it” (3.2.135-137). It is also supported by Hal’s later actions when he follows through with his word and slays Percy or Hotspur in Act Five Scene Four.

If Shakespeare had angered anyone by portraying the prince as someone who associates himself with common taverns and thieves, he certainly redeemed their favor by the end. After the line “I shall hereafter, my thrice-gracious lord, be more myself” (3.2.93), Hal signals to the audience that he is going to change his ways and later proves this with his actions. This line cements the idea that Hal was pushing during his soliloquy in Act One Scene, that is, that his current self is not his true self. This allows the prince to shine even brighter when he gains back his father’s favor, just as he had promised.