

# Invictus

BY WILLIAM ERNEST HENLEY

Out of the night that covers me,  
Black as the pit from pole to pole,  
I thank whatever gods may be  
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance  
I have not winced nor cried aloud.  
Under the bludgeonings of chance  
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears  
Looms but the Horror of the shade,  
And yet the menace of the years  
Finds and shall find me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,  
How charged with punishments the scroll,  
I am the master of my fate,  
I am the captain of my soul.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**“Invictus” Lesson B**

Stanza 1	
In the first two lines, what is the speaker of the poem feeling when he says he is covered by “night” in a “pit”?	
Why does the speaker “thank” the gods?	
What is a biblical allusion? What one is used here? How does it make you feel?	

Stanza 2	
What does “fell” mean as the author uses it?	
Why does he describe the circumstances of his life as fell?	
What makes someone wince? What makes someone cry?	
How does the “bludgeoning” affect the author?	
Why is it important that the speaker’s head is “bloody, but unbowed”?	

Stanza 3	
What is the speaker referring to when he says “this place”? What is “this place” like?	
Why is the threat of death “looming” over the speaker?	
Why does the speaker think the rest of the years are a threat?	
What does the fact that he is “unafraid” tell us about the speaker’s personality?	

Stanza 4	
What biblical allusions does the speaker in the poem make?	
What does it mean to be the “master of your fate”?	
What does it mean to be the “captain of your soul”?	
What does WEH think of religion? How do you know this?	

William Earnest Henley	
How old was WEH when he wrote this poem?	
Where did he write it?	
Why is that important to our understanding of the poem itself?	
What kind of person was he as an adult?	

Nelson Mandela	
Who was Nelson Mandela?	
Why is “Invictus” significant to his life?	
Why is this important in our studying of it?	
What line do you think stood out the most to Mandela during his 27 years in prison? Why?	