

Agincourt: A Novel

By Bernard Cornwell

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Bernard Cornwell, the *New York Times* bestselling “reigning king of historical fiction” (*USA Today*), tackles his most thrilling, rich, and enthralling subject yet—the heroic tale of *Agincourt*. The epic battle immortalized by William Shakespeare in his classic *Henry V* is the background for this breathtaking tale of heroism, love, devotion, and duty from the legendary author of the Richard Sharpe novels and the Saxon Tales. This extraordinary adventure will captivate from page one, proving once again and most powerfully, as author Lee Child attests, that “nobody in the world does this stuff better than Cornwell.”

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Agincourt: A Novel By Bernard Cornwell Bibliography

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Editorial Review

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Book Description

"The greatest writer of historical adventures today" (*Washington Post*) tackles his richest, most thrilling subject yet--the heroic tale of Agincourt.

Young Nicholas Hook is dogged by a cursed past--haunted by what he has failed to do and banished for what he has done. A wanted man in England, he is driven to fight as a mercenary archer in France, where he finds two things he can love: his instincts as a fighting man, and a girl in trouble. Together they survive the notorious massacre at Soissons, an event that shocks all Christendom. With no options left, Hook heads home to England, where his capture means certain death. Instead he is discovered by the young King of England--Henry V himself--and by royal command he takes up the longbow again and dons the cross of Saint George. Hook returns to France as part of the superb army Henry leads in his quest to claim the French crown. But after the English campaign suffers devastating early losses, it becomes clear that Hook and his fellow archers are their king's last resort in a desperate fight against an enemy more daunting than they could ever have imagined.

One of the most dramatic victories in British history, the battle of Agincourt--immortalized by Shakespeare in *Henry V*--pitted undermanned and overwhelmed English forces against a French army determined to keep their crown out of Henry's hands. Here Bernard Cornwell resurrects the legend of the battle and the "band of brothers" who fought it on October 25, 1415. An epic of redemption, *Agincourt* follows a commoner, a king, and a nation's entire army on an improbable mission to test the will of God and reclaim what is rightfully theirs. From the disasters at the siege of Harfleur to the horrors of the field of Agincourt, this exhilarating story of survival and slaughter is at once a brilliant work of history and a triumph of imagination--Bernard Cornwell at his best.

Historical Notes on *Agincourt* by Bernard Cornwell



The battle of Agincourt (Azincourt was and remains the French spelling) was one of the most remarkable events of medieval Europe, a battle whose reputation far outranked its importance. In the long history of Anglo-French rivalry only Hastings, Waterloo, Trafalgar, and Crécy share Agincourt's renown. It is arguable that Poitiers was a more significant battle and an even more complete victory, or that Verneuil was just as astonishing a triumph, and it's certain that Hastings, Blenheim, Victoria, Trafalgar, and Waterloo were more influential on the course of history, yet Agincourt still holds its extraordinary place in English legend.

Something quite remarkable happened on 25 October 1415 (Agincourt was fought long before Christendom's conversion to the new-style calendar, so the modern anniversary should be on 4 November). It was something so remarkable that its fame persists almost six hundred years later.

Agincourt's fame could just be an accident, a quirk of history reinforced by Shakespeare's genius, but the evidence suggests it really was a battle that sent a shock wave through Europe. For years afterward the French called 25 October 1415 *la malheureuse journée* (the unfortunate day). Even after they had expelled the English from France they remembered *la malheureuse journée* with sadness. It had been a disaster.

Yet it was so nearly a disaster for Henry V and his small, but well-equipped army. That army had sailed from Southampton Water with high hopes, the chief of which was the swift capture of Harfleur, which would be followed by a foray into the French heartland in hope, presumably, of bringing the French to battle. A victory in that battle would demonstrate, at least in the pious Henry's mind, God's support of his claim to the French throne, and might even propel him onto that throne. Such hopes were not vain when his army was intact, but the siege of Harfleur took much longer than expected and Henry's army was almost ruined by dysentery.

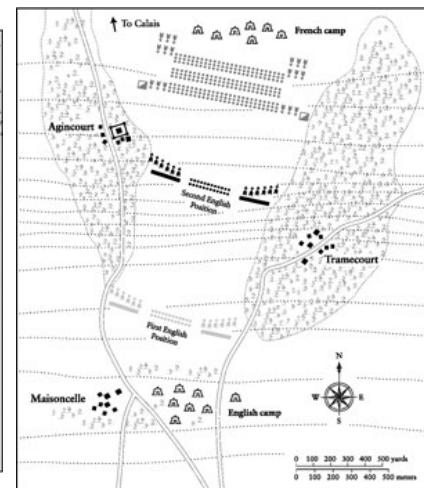
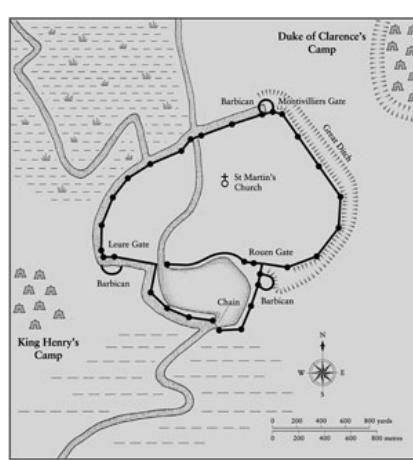
The tale of the siege in the novel is, by and large, accurate, though I did take one great liberty, which was to sink a mineshaft opposite the Leure Gate. There was no such shaft, the ground would not allow it, and all the real mines were dug by the Duke of Clarence's forces that were assailing the eastern side of Harfleur. The French counter-mines defeated those diggings, but I wanted to give a flavor, however inadequately, of the horrors men faced in fighting beneath the earth. The defense of Harfleur was magnificent, for which much of the praise must go to Raoul de Gaucourt, one of the garrison's leaders. His defiance, and the long days of the siege, gave the French a chance to raise a much larger army than any they might have fielded against Henry if the siege had ended, say, in early September.

Maps of the Battlefield (Click to Enlarge)



England and France, 1415:

One of the most dramatic victories in British history, the battle of Agincourt--immortalized by Shakespeare in *Henry V*--pitted undermanned and overwhelmed English forces against a French army determined to keep their crown out of Henry's hands.



The French Coast:

The British campaign, which started at Harfleur, ended more than two months later on 25 October at Agincourt.

Harfleur:

Henry's army landed in northern France on 13 August 1415 and besieged the port of Harfleur.

The Battle Lines:

“We few, we happy few, we band of brothers; For he today who sheds his blood with me shall be my brother.” – William Shakespeare, *Henry V*

From Publishers Weekly

A literary veteran of the Napoleonic Wars and the U.S. Civil War, Cornwell returns to the Hundred Years War era in this action-packed if slightly melodramatic epic about King Henry V and the Battle of Agincourt in 1415. Nicholas Hook, an English forester, is on the run after interfering with a rapist priest and ends up a mercenary defender at Soissons, where he saves a young and beautiful novitiate, Melisande. With his French prize in tow, he returns to England and signs on with Henry's army as an archer. Back on French soil, he fights and slogs his way to Agincourt, where 6,000 Englishmen confront 30,000 French soldiers. Hearing the voice of St. Crispinian whispering to him in times of personal crisis, Hook has his hands full with the French and defending himself from the vengeance-seeking rapist priest and Melisande's father. The crisply rendered battle scenes are adrenaline rushes of blood, thunder and clashing swords that transport the reader back to the early 15th century. Unfortunately, Hook's Hollywood-ready construction undercuts the you are there feeling of Cornwell's otherwise vivid recreation of Henry V's greatest military triumph. (Jan.)

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Shakespeare immortalized Agincourt in his historical play, *King Henry V*, through the eyes of England's king. Although King Henry still makes some prominent appearances, *Agincourt* examines this battle from the perspective of a common soldier. Critics agreed that the nonstop action and gory violence may not appeal to all readers. But those interested in military historical fiction will find *Agincourt* a compelling read that exposes the hunger, cold, blood, and scheming power plays of battle. A few reviewers faulted the two-dimensional characterization, others the convoluted subplots, and still others a biased English perspective, but readers interested in the topic will find *Agincourt* an intriguing supplement to Shakespeare's work. Copyright 2009 Bookmarks Publishing LLC

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Ernestine Worrell:

Have you spare time to get a day? What do you do when you have a lot more or little spare time? Yep, you can choose the suitable activity for spend your time. Any person spent their very own spare time to take a walk, shopping, or went to the actual Mall. How about open or read a book titled *Agincourt: A Novel*? Maybe it is for being best activity for you. You recognize beside you can spend your time with the favorite's book, you can better than before. Do you agree with it is opinion or you have other opinion?

Marvis Byrnes:

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Lillian Thrasher:

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