

Name: _____ Class: _____

Invictus

By William Ernest Henley
1875

William Ernest Henley (1849-1903) was an English poet, critic, and editor. The following poem, published in 1875, is his best known work, which he wrote just after the amputation of his foot due to tuberculosis.¹ As you read, take notes on the poem's form and how it contributes to the tone of the speaker.

[1] Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable² soul.

[5] In the fell³ clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings⁴ of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath⁵ and tears
[10] Looms⁶ but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace⁷ of the years
Finds and shall find me unafraid.

It matters not how strait⁸ the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
[15] I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul.



"I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul" by Aristocrats-hat is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

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1. a disease caused by bacterial infection
2. **Unconquerable (adjective):** unable to be defeated
3. fierce, cruel, or terrible
4. beatings
5. **Wrath (noun):** violent anger
6. **Loom (verb):** to appear in a large, strange, or frightening form
7. **Menace (noun):** a threat
8. narrow (archaic)