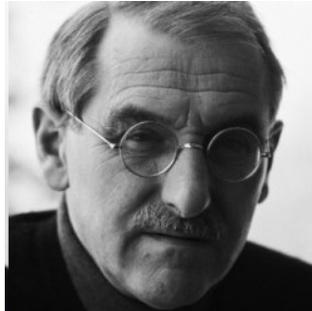


BECKET

by Jean Anouilh



THE AUTHOR

Jean Anouilh (1910-1987) was born near Bordeaux, France, the son of a tailor and a violinist. He showed an interest in writing at an early age, writing plays while still in his teens. He studied law briefly, then found work as a writer of advertising copy. At age 21 he married actress Monelle Valentin and four years later decided to devote himself entirely to a writing career. His early works were unsuccessful, but he soon gained public notice with *The Traveller Without Luggage* (1937). He was a prolific writer, turning out a play almost every year, most of which dealt with widely varied themes. Among his most famous efforts are *Antigone* (1944), an adaptation of the play by Sophocles that excoriated in allegorical style those Frenchmen who collaborated with the Nazis; *The Waltz of the Toreadors* (1952); *The Lark* (1953), about Joan of Arc; and *Becket, or The Honour of God* (1959). He also wrote screenplays and translated works by other authors into French.

Anouilh was influenced by Existentialists such as Jean-Paul Sartre and early absurdist such as the Italian Luigi Pirandello, but his popularity waned when the Theater of the Absurd reached its peak in the sixties and seventies. His plays often deal with the struggles of a pure-minded idealist to cope with a world full of corruption and the corruption he finds within himself.

Becket was written after Anouilh picked up a used book because the binding would look good on his bookshelf. After reading a chapter about Thomas à Becket, he decided, with his wife's encouragement, to write a play on the subject. Only after he prepared the first draft did he discover that the book he had used as his source was full of historical inaccuracies (among the most notable are the notion that Becket was a Saxon - a conflict at the heart of the play - and the idea that Henry's father had been king before him). As far as the portrayal of the characters is concerned, Henry II may have been a lover of pleasure, but he surely was stronger than the dependent creature pictured by Anouilh. Becket may have been a rake before his elevation to the primacy of England, and undoubtedly his new office caused him to take his stewardship over the church seriously, but he was no Saxon, and the motives and behaviors ascribed to him by Anouilh would have been unlikely in a Norman nobleman. Perhaps the most inaccurate portrayal in the play is that of Eleanor of Aquitaine (the Young Queen), who was no inept nag, but one of the most powerful women in Europe even before her marriage to Henry. One should also note that history gives no basis for the strong hint of homoeroticism that Anouilh builds into the relationship of his two protagonists.

These notes are based on the acting edition of the play translated into English by Lucienne Hill and published in 1961.

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Despite having a cast of more than forty characters, *Becket* is essentially a two-person play. The stage is dominated by King Henry II and Thomas Becket; all others are minor characters. I've included a few of the more significant minor characters in the list below.

- Henry II - King of England, he appoints his friend Thomas à Becket as Archbishop of Canterbury and later has him murdered when he stands up for his oppressed Saxon countrymen and insists on the prerogatives of the church.
- Thomas Becket - A Saxon nobleman and friend of Henry, Lord Chancellor of England, later Archbishop of Canterbury, who is murdered by order of the king for defying his insistence that clergy be tried for any offenses in civil rather than ecclesiastical courts.
- Archbishop of Canterbury - An old and wily Norman prelate who initially showed favor to Becket and predicted when he became Chancellor that he would ultimately help the church.
- Gilbert Folliot - Bishop of London, he is a Norman aristocrat who conspires with the king to lodge false charges against Becket and get him removed from office.
- Louis VII - The sly king of France who tries to use Becket as a political pawn to make life difficult for his English rival.
- Saxon girl - Rescued by Becket when Henry tries to bring her to the palace to be a prostitute, she comes there anyway when Henry claims that Becket had forgotten to fetch his prize.
- Gwendolen - Becket's mistress, coveted and taken by Henry; she commits suicide when the king takes her away from Becket.
- Young monk - A Saxon, he intends to assassinate the king, but Becket prevents his torture and eventually makes him his personal aide; he dies defending Becket when the barons from the king come to murder him.

NOTABLE QUOTATIONS

“Well, Thomas Becket, are you satisfied? I am naked at your tomb and your monks are coming to flog me. What an end to our story. You, rotting in this tomb, larded with my Barons' daggers, and I, naked, shivering in the draught, and waiting like an idiot for those brutes to come and thrash me. Don't you think we'd have done better to understand each other?” (Henry, Act I, scene 1)

“Everything but the honour of God.” (Becket, Act I, scene 1)

“Every thought in my head came from you, you know that.” (Henry, Act I, scene 1)

“I adore hunting and only the Normans and their proteges had the right to hunt. I adore luxury and luxury was Norman. I adore life and the Saxon’s only birthright was slaughter. I’ll add that I adore honor” (Becket, Act I, scene 2)

“All wars are holy wars, Bishop. I defy you to find me a serious belligerent who doesn’t have Heaven on his side, in theory.” (Henry, Act I, scene 3)

“He was with me for a long time. His is a strange, elusive nature. Don’t imagine he is the ordinary libertine that outward appearances would suggest. I’ve had plenty of opportunities to observe him. He is as it were detached. As if seeking his real self.” (Archbishop of Canterbury, Act I, scene 3)

“One has to gamble with one’s life to feel alive.” (Becket, Act I, scene 4)

“Mark you, that must make life a lot simpler, if you’ll be hanged at the least show of initiative.” (Henry, Act I, scene 5)

“England will be fully built when the Saxons are your sons as well.” (Becket, Act I, scene 5)

“The populace must live in fear - it’s essential. The moment they stop being afraid they have only one thought in mind - to frighten other people instead.” (Henry, Act I, scene 5)

“Beauty is the one thing which doesn’t shake one’s faith in God.” (Becket, Act I, scene 6)

“What looks like morality in you is nothing more than aesthetics.” (Henry, Act I, scene 6)

“So long as Becket is obliged to improvise his honor, he will serve you. And if one day, he meets it face to face . . . But where is Becket’s honor?” (Becket, Act I, scene 6)

“There’s one thing I do love, my prince, and that I’m sure of. Doing what I have to do and doing it well.” (Becket, Act II, scene 1)

“One must never drive one’s enemy to despair. It makes him strong. A good occupational force must not crush, it must corrupt.” (Becket, Act II, scene 2)

“If I become Archbishop, I can no longer be your friend.” (Becket, Act II, scene 3)

“I could not serve both God and you.” (Becket, Act II, scene 3)

“Forgive me, Lord, but I never enjoyed myself so much in my whole life. I don’t believe You are a sad God. The joy I feel in shedding all my riches must be part of Your divine intentions.” (Becket, Act II, scene 4)

1) “One can become a saint, certainly, but not in a single day.” (Queen Mother, Act III, scene 1)

“You’ve sent me back the three Lions of England, like a little boy who doesn’t want to play with me any more.” (Henry, Act III, scene 1)

“Becket is my enemy. I am forced to fight him and to crush him, but at least he gave me, with open hands, everything that is at all good in me.” (Henry, Act III, scene 3)

“Beware the Pope. He’ll sell you for thirty pieces of silver. The man needs money.” (Louis VII, Act III, scene 4)

“I don’t want to receive him at all. I gather he is a sincere man. I am always disconcerted by people of that sort. They leave me with a bad taste in my mouth.” (Pope, Act III, scene 5)

“We loved each other and I think he cannot forgive me for preferring God to him.” (Becket, Act IV, scene 1)

“I’m waiting for the honour of God and the honour of the King to become one.” (Becket, Act IV, scene 2)

“We must only do - absurdly - what we have been given to do - right to the end.” (Becket, Act IV, scene 2)

“I should never have seen you again. It hurts too much.” (Henry, Act IV, scene 2)

“Will no one rid me of him? A priest! A priest who jeers at me and does me injury. Are there none but cowards like myself around me? Are there no men left in England?” (Henry, Act IV, scene 3)

“Here it comes. The supreme folly. This is its hour.” (Becket, Act IV, scene 4)

NOTES

Act I, scene 1 - The scene takes place in Canterbury Cathedral. Henry II enters, clad only in trousers and a cloak, throws off the cloak, and kneels to pray before the tomb of Thomas Becket. Henry and his dead friend hold a conversation, recognizing that the conflict that kept them apart was that between the honor of the realm and the honor of God. Henry reminisces about their friendship as young men, wonders if Thomas resented it when he took his mistress Gwendolyn from him, and muses on the irony of having to submit himself to penitential flogging in order to gain the support of the Saxons whom he despised and Thomas championed. The rest of the play thus is told in flashback.

Act I, scene 2 - The scene now shifts to the king’s bedroom, where he is being rubbed down by a page. Thomas Becket, a young Saxon nobleman and friend of the king, enters, dismisses the page, and finishes the massage. Henry remarks about the strangeness of keeping a Saxon as an insider in

a Norman court, noting that his barons think Thomas will murder him in his sleep. Both men are young, frivolous, and pleasure-loving. Becket talks about the material advantages of collaborating with his Norman overlords, boasts about his new gold dinner plates, and invites the king to dinner to break in his forks, a novel implement in that day. Henry insists that Becket order a dozen for him, delighting in the idea of setting them before his barons, who will have no idea what to do with them.

Act I, scene 3 - The king is now meeting with the members of his privy council, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the bishops of London, York, and Oxford. He waltzes into the room and promptly announces that he has decided to restore the office of Lord Chancellor and appoint Becket to the post. Becket claims he is unqualified, but Henry will hear none of it. He also insists that the church pay an absentee tax to the crown in lieu of providing troops for the army, which they have steadfastly refused to do. Becket, who is a deacon studying for the priesthood, takes the king's side in the dispute by arguing that, just as a ship has but one captain, so a realm has but one ruler, and that is the king by divine right. The clergymen insist that God speaks through the Pope, but Henry cuts through all the verbiage by stating bluntly that the real issue is not divine inspiration, but money, and that he needs money from the church in order to fight his wars. Becket adds that the crown will use coercion if necessary. After the king leaves the room, the clergymen fume, considering everything from appealing to Rome to excommunicating the king to using their power to crush the upstart Becket. The Archbishop of Canterbury warns them, however, that Becket is deeper than he appears and may one day be the church's greatest friend.

Act I, scene 4 - The king and Becket are hunting in the forest, accompanied by four barons. As a downpour begins, Henry asks Becket if he loves him, or if he loves his mistress Gwendolyn, but Becket has no answer.

Act I, scene 5 - They take shelter from the rain in the hut of a Saxon peasant. The king demands that the peasant light a fire, but Becket explains that peasants are only allowed so much wood, and if they take one stick more, they are hanged. Henry appears unfazed by this injustice and again orders the man to build a fire. When Becket refers to the man as "my son," the king insists on knowing why. He then spots the peasant's daughter hiding in a pile of rags, drags her out, admires her somewhat soiled beauty, and asks her age, but she doesn't respond out of fear. Henry tells Becket that, if he made her a whore in the palace, she would retain her beauty longer, and thus he would be doing her a favor. Soon the girl's brother comes in and Becket realizes that trouble is brewing. He takes the boy outside to fetch some juniper juice from his saddlebag, where the boy attacks him with a knife. Becket disarms him but is wounded in the process, and the boy runs away. Becket tries to conceal his injury from the king, but Henry notices it and teases that he was wounded in the defense of the realm. When he offers Becket a present, the Chancellor, knowing Henry's intentions, asks for the Saxon girl. Henry, foiled in his lust, reluctantly agrees, but insists on a favor in return in the future. After the king leaves the hut, Becket tells the peasant that his daughter is safe, that his son must hide with a band of outlaws in the forest, and then gives him a pouch of money. After Becket leaves, the girl expresses her disappointment at not being taken to the palace, and her father beats her furiously.

Act I, scene 6 - The scene takes place in the bedroom of the Lord Chancellor's palace. While a raucous party is going on in the great hall, Becket comes into the bedroom to visit his mistress Gwendolyn, who is playing a harp. Becket tells her that she is a refuge from the follies of the court and the ecclesiastics and, though she belongs to him as a war captive, she expresses her love, which

makes him feel uncomfortable. At this point the king staggers drunkenly into the room and reports that the barons are fighting one another with the new forks. Becket goes out to calm things down while Henry moves toward Gwendolyn, caressing her and telling her to sing him a sad song. She does so, and Henry then asks for her in return for the favor of releasing the Saxon girl. Becket is horrified, but he cannot refuse after giving his word. He and Gwendolyn say their sad goodbyes, and Becket furiously tears the cover from the bed. The next thing he knows a soldier throws the Saxon girl into the room; Henry, laughing, pokes his head back in to tell Becket that he remembered what his friend had forgotten. The girl automatically begins to undress, but almost immediately a frightened king reenters the room. He tells Becket that as soon as he placed Gwendolyn in his litter, she pulled out a knife and killed herself. He then orders the girl to go away and tells Becket that he will sleep with him because he is too afraid to sleep alone.

Act II, scene 1 - The scene now shifts to a forest in France, where England and France are at war. Four barons sit round the fire in front of the king's tent and discuss Becket. They loathe and distrust him because he is a Saxon, but admire his bravery, especially since he had saved the king's life the day before. Becket arrives and tells the men to prepare to enter the city to celebrate mass in the cathedral. He then goes to wake the king and finds him in bed with a French girl. Henry offers the girl to Becket, but he insists on getting down to business. His concern is that, while Henry is off fighting in France, the clergy back in England are consolidating their power. As Henry prepares for the meeting with the French, soldiers bring in a young monk with his hands bound. He was discovered with a knife on him, and Becket realizes that he intended to assassinate the king. Becket recognizes the man as a fellow Saxon who reminds him of himself in his youth, warns him that killing the king will not free his people, and places him in the custody of the Provost with orders to send him back to his convent in Hastings.

Act II, scene 2 - Henry enters the French city on horseback and is pleased to hear the people cheering him loudly. When he marvels at how much his new French subjects love him, Becket explains that the people in the crowd were paid to cheer and that soldiers in plain clothes are scattered among them to make sure they cheer loudly. All Henry is interested in is ogling the girls.

Act II, scene 3 - In a side room of the cathedral, Henry and his retainers wait for the service to begin. Becket arrives and informs them that a plot against the king's life has been discovered, forcing the evacuation of the cathedral. While the king jumps at every shadow, Becket sees to the evacuation. A messenger then arrives with a letter informing the king that the Archbishop of Canterbury has died. Henry is ecstatic, but Becket is saddened because the old man had been something of a mentor to him and the first Norman who had ever treated him kindly. The king suddenly has a brainstorm and announces that he intends to appoint Becket as the new Archbishop. Becket insists that he is unqualified, unworthy, and not even a priest. Henry tells him that, as a deacon, he can be quickly ordained as a priest and later elevated to the office of bishop. The king intends to strong-arm the bishops and bribe the Pope if necessary to get what he wants. Becket fears a conflict of interest and warns Henry that, should he follow through with his crazy scheme, the two can no longer be friends.

Act II, scene 4 - Back at Becket's palace, the servants are cleaning out the place in order to give everything away. Becket enters and says that the banquet given that night is to be for the poor. He is clearly taking pleasure in divesting himself of his possessions, and finally stands in a simple

monk's robe in an empty room. He worries that he has enjoyed giving things away too much, that his sacrifice has been far too easy.

Act III, scene 1 - In the royal palace, Henry waits for Becket to join him. He is surrounded by family - his mother, his wife, and two of his sons (the younger of which will grow up to be Richard the Lion-Hearted), all of whom he heartily detests. He complains that he hasn't had any fun in months because Becket has been traveling to fulfill his new office. The women scoff at Becket as a pretentious fool for giving everything away and criticize Henry for trusting him. A messenger then arrives with a letter from Becket along with the seal of the Lord Chancellor. He has resigned his political office in order to give his full attention to his spiritual one, and Henry suddenly feels dreadfully alone.

Act III, scene 2 - At the episcopal palace, the young monk who had been arrested in France is brought in. His superiors report that he continues to be obstinate, but Becket insists on being alone with him. He tells the young man that he must observe the coming council and make his judgments about Becket then. When the bishops of London, Oxford, and York arrive, Becket tells them that he will stand by the excommunications of two of the king's favorites - one had murdered a priest and the other had insisted on trying a priest in a civil court. The king has struck back, accusing Becket of misappropriation of funds, an obviously absurd charge. When the young monk hears of Becket's willingness to stand even against the king, he is impressed.

Act III, scene 3 - In the king's palace, Gilbert Folliot, Bishop of London, is telling Henry that he intends to charge Becket with conducting a Black Mass at the instigation of the Devil. After he leaves, Henry continues to bicker with his wife and mother. Becket is seriously ill, but a page reports that he answers the charge by forbidding the court to issue a judgment against their spiritual father. He then calmly walks out of the court while his enemies fume helplessly. He intends to leave the country and seek asylum in France.

Act III, scene 4 - In the court of Louis, King of France, ambassadors have come from Henry to demand the extradition of Becket. Louis claims to have no knowledge of his presence in France, but as soon as the ambassadors leave, he summons Becket from the next room. He is pleased to do anything possible to make things more difficult for the King of England, and thus offers Becket his protection, though he warns him that any change in the political situation might cause him to withdraw that protection in the future. Becket asks for safe conduct to visit the Pope, but Louis warns him that the Bishop of Rome is not to be trusted.

Act III, scene 5 - In the papal palace, Pope Alexander III and one of his cardinals are discussing Becket. The Primate of England wants to be relieved of his duties because his office was conferred upon him illegitimately without papal authority. The two churchmen weave plots within plots and decide to accede to Becket's request, then immediately reappoint him to the office in the proper manner, figuring to embarrass Henry in the process. They then intend to send Becket to a very strict Cistercian monastery in France.

Act III, scene 6 - Becket is praying in the monastery. He sees that the strict lifestyle of the monks is nothing more than another form of pride, and he determines to leave the cloister and return to

England to do the task God has assigned him - to defend the Church of England against the English king as Archbishop of Canterbury.

Act IV, scene 1 - Back in Louis' palace, the French king tells Becket that the interests of France now require that he send Becket back to England; Louis is preparing to make war on the Holy Roman Empire and wants England's help, and Becket is the price of that assistance. He fears that Becket faces martyrdom and offers to try to bring about a reconciliation between Henry and his wayward subject.

Act IV, scene 2 - Henry and Becket meet on a windswept plain in France. They discuss trivial things, then get down to business. Becket refuses to ratify the three articles accepted by the bishops in his absence that required compromising the independence of the clergy from civil courts and the ability of bishops to appoint priests in their dioceses, but agrees to the other nine. He also refuses to lift the excommunications of the English nobles. Henry, anxious to see his friend restored, agrees to allow Becket to return to England, but Becket knows the king and assures him that the two of them will never meet again.

Act IV, scene 3 - Henry is in his palace in France with his family and his barons. He announces his intention of promoting his young son to the throne as co-regent and having him crowned by the Archbishop of York solely for the purpose of humiliating Becket. He then ejects his family members from the room in a fit of rage. The barons tell him that Becket has not only arrived safely in England, but has been given a hero's welcome, and he demands of them if any men remain who can rid him of this troublesome priest. In some confusion, they leave the room, and the king cries in agony when he realizes where they have gone.

Act IV, scene 4 - In Canterbury Cathedral, the young monk dresses Becket in his regalia. They know the murderers are on the way, and the young monk wants nothing more than to take one of the attackers with him. When the barons arrive, Becket calmly goes on with the service. As the nobles approach, the young monk seizes the heavy silver cross and prepares to defend his master, but is quickly cut down, after which Becket is brutally murdered. The play then returns to the opening scene, where Henry is being flogged by Saxon monks. After the flogging has ended, the king is told that the Saxons have come to his aid and have put down the rebellion being led by his young son. He then orders that Becket be revered as a saint and entrusts one of the barons who murdered him with seeking out his friend's killers and bringing them to justice.

ESSAY QUESTIONS

Discuss the following in a five-paragraph essay:

1. Compare the treatment of the conflict between Normans and Saxons in Jean Anouilh's *Becket* to that in Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*. The two narratives take place a generation apart - Richard the Lion-Hearted was the son of Henry II - yet both share similar views of the cultural climate of England in the late twelfth century. How do the two writers assess the conflict similarly, and in what ways do they portray critical differences?

2. Men in places of great authority are often very lonely. Certainly this is the case for the two protagonists in Jean Anouilh's *Becket*. Why do you think this is true? Need it be true? Use insights from the play to support your conclusions.
3. In Jean Anouilh's *Becket*, both main characters are pictured as struggling with serious moral weaknesses. What are the chief moral flaws of the two protagonists, and how do these flaws influence the action and contribute to the themes of the play?
4. In Jean Anouilh's *Becket*, to what extent are the two main characters foils for one another? Support your conclusion with specific incidents and quotations from the play.
5. Jean Anouilh's *Becket* portrays a close friendship between two men, Henry II and Thomas à Becket. When we see such friendships pictured on the stage or screen, our minds tend to go immediately to thoughts of homosexuality. Do you believe this was the playwright's intention? Are we supposed to read a homoerotic subtext into the play, or are we expected to see a close friendship more along the lines of that of David and Jonathan in the Bible? Use quotations from the play to support your conclusion.
6. Analyze the motives for Becket's stand against the king in Jean Anouilh's *Becket*. Is he right to take the stand he does? Include in your moral analysis both the issues on which he chooses to be inflexible and his motives for doing so, and be sure to support your answer from Scripture.
7. In Act I, scene 5 of Jean Anouilh's *Becket*, Henry II says, "The populace must live in fear - it's essential. The moment they stop being afraid they have only one thought in mind - to frighten other people instead." Is this an accurate assessment of human nature? Is it a valid justification for absolute monarchy? Support your conclusions from the play and from Scripture.
8. In Act I, scene 6 of Jean Anouilh's *Becket*, Henry II says to Becket, "What looks like morality in you is nothing more than aesthetics." Is Henry right? Is Becket more concerned with how things look than with what is right and wrong? Support your conclusions with specific quotations from the play.
9. In Act IV, scene 2 of Jean Anouilh's *Becket*, the Archbishop of Canterbury says, "We must only do - absurdly - what we have been given to do - right to the end." Anouilh was strongly influenced by Existentialists such as Jean-Paul Sartre, as this quotation indicates. What other evidence do you see in the script of existential philosophy? Be specific.
10. Discuss the theme of the consequences of military conquest in Jean Anouilh's *Becket*. The playwright pictures conquest as poisoning both the conqueror and the conquered. Why is this the case? Do you think he is right in his assessment? Why or why not?

11. Often those who pen historical dramas anachronistically incorporate modern ideas into the plays, especially through the dialogue they give to their main characters. Discuss ways in which this is true in Jean Anouilh's *Becket*. What ideas and themes that would have been totally foreign to the men of the twelfth century but were quite central to the thinking of those in the middle of the twentieth century can be found in the dialogue of the play? Choose three specific examples and analyze why they are anachronistic.
12. Often those who pen historical dramas anachronistically incorporate modern ideas into the plays, especially through the dialogue they give to their main characters. Compare and contrast the incorporation of modern themes as it occurs in Jean Anouilh's *Becket* and Robert Bolt's *A Man for All Seasons* - two plays that were written one year apart. One might expect that the two would address similar thematic material. To what extent is this true? Consider especially the struggles of the title characters with issues of morality and responsibility.
13. Often those who pen historical dramas anachronistically incorporate modern ideas into the plays, especially through the dialogue they give to their main characters. Compare and contrast the incorporation of modern themes as it occurs in Jean Anouilh's *Becket* and George Bernard Shaw's *Saint Joan*. Give special attention to attitudes toward truth, organized religion, and morality as they are portrayed through the words of the protagonists.
14. Both Joan of Arc and Thomas à Becket were martyrs and have been declared saints by the Catholic Church. Consider how these two characters are portrayed in Jean Anouilh's *Becket* and George Bernard Shaw's *Saint Joan*. According to these two secular playwrights, of what did their sainthood consist? How do these portrayals communicate what the playwrights themselves consider to be the essence of goodness in a human life? To what extent do their visions agree?
15. In Jean Anouilh's *Becket*, both of the main characters express doubts about Becket's ability to love anyone. Is this a valid assessment within the context of the play? Use quotations and incidents to support your conclusion as to whether or not Becket is capable of real love. Note that you will also have to state clearly the definition of love that serves as the basis for your answer.
16. To what extent do historical inaccuracies influence one's ability to appreciate a work of literature? Jean Anouilh's *Becket* contains many such inaccuracies (see the last paragraph under the section on the author). Once you know these things, do they decrease your ability to enjoy the play? Why or why not? Deal specifically with the different inaccuracies that are cited in the introduction.
17. When Henry II cries out, "Who will rid me of this meddling priest," do you believe that he intended that his barons murder Becket? Answer the question using the characterization of Henry found in Jean Anouilh's *Becket*. What about the psychology of the king pictured in Anouilh's script led you to your conclusion?

18. Jean Anouilh's *Becket* contains many historical inaccuracies (see the last paragraph under the section on the author). This is not unusual in historical dramas. Consider the extent to which such historical dramas can create in those who read or view them a mistaken understanding of the past. Is this a serious issue? Why or why not? Address specifically those inaccuracies that are found in Anouilh's play.
19. Discuss the transformation of the title character in Jean Anouilh's *Becket*. To what extent is the change in Becket's character after he becomes Archbishop of Canterbury credible? Does the playwright give the reader or viewer adequate insight into the motivations of Becket to justify the change in our minds? Why or why not? Use specific quotations to support your conclusion.
20. One of the central conflicts in Jean Anouilh's *Becket* is over the right of royal courts to try clergy who have been accused of criminal acts. Becket's refusal to yield this aspect of judicial oversight ultimately led to his death. Why was this such a controversial matter that it could lead to murder between best friends? Draw from the text of the play indications of the seriousness of the issue and why it was so divisive in the twelfth century. You may also incorporate your knowledge of church-state relations during the Middle Ages into your answer.
21. Thomas à Becket was canonized by the Catholic Church in 1173, three years after his death. Based on the portrayal of Becket in Jean Anouilh's *Becket*, do you believe that he was a saint? Why or why not? Support your conclusion with specifics from the play.
22. In Jean Anouilh's *Becket*, which of the two central characters do you consider the more sympathetic? Why? Support your conclusion with specifics from the play.
23. Evaluate the portrayal of the medieval Catholic Church in Jean Anouilh's *Becket*. Consider not only the character of Becket himself, but also the bishops who interact periodically with the main figures. To what extent is this an accurate portrayal of the Middle Ages, and to what extent is Anouilh expressing his view of the church in the middle of the twentieth century? Support your conclusion with historical information as well as details from the play.
24. Jean Anouilh, though he usually avoided political issues, was much affected by the Nazi occupation of France during World War II. The play that is usually considered his best, *Antigone*, was written in 1944 and specifically addresses the issue of collaboration with the enemy in allegorical terms. To what extent is the issue also addressed in *Becket*, written in 1959? Discuss dialogue in the play that reflects on the playwright's memories of the horrors of the Second World War.

25. Jean Anouilh's *Becket* is essentially a two-man play with forty bit parts. Consider especially the roles of the women in the story. Which of the female characters comes across to the audience as the most authentic? Choose three women from the play and explain why the one you have chosen deserves the distinction of the most authentic, while also indicating why the others are not deserving of such an accolade.
26. In Jean Anouilh's *Becket*, the title character clearly undergoes a significant change over the course of the play, but does the king? Discuss the extent to which Henry II is presented as a static character. Does he change at all? If so, does the change represent growth or deterioration? Support your conclusion with specifics from the play.