

Section 5 - Stanzas 50 – 58

Narrative Episode: Cresseid's Leprosy

Re-read this section of the poem and answer the following questions. Make sure that your answers are written in such a way that you will be able to understand these at a later date when you come to use the notes for either a critical essay or as part of your revision for the exam.

Stanzas 50 - 53

1. Why is it important do you think that Cresseid looks at herself in the mirror? (Clue: Is there a 'symbolic' reason? What might this be?)
2. Is there a cruel irony in this? If so, what is the irony?
3. In you own words, describe Cresseid's reaction to her deformity.
4. Notice that the narrator is scarcely evident here. In what way does his absence add to the drama?

Stanzas 54 - 57

5. Read over Stanza 54. This stanza seems intensely sad. How does Henryson use the language to evoke great sympathy both for Calchas and Cresseid?

Stanza 58

6. In this stanza, there is a sense of 'mood' setting and of 'time endured'. How does Henryson convey this?

Critical Essay

Now you have worked on the first main section of the poem, work on the following critical essay. Remember to plan you response before you begin.

Rubric: It could be argued that Cresseid's blasphemy is at the centre of Henryson's poem. In what ways can Cresseid be considered responsible for her own fate?
In your answer you must refer closely to the text and include Word-choice, imagery, tone or any other appropriate feature.

Section 6 - Stanzas 59 - 66

The Complaint of Cresseid

Throughout this section there are short questions and activities. Make sure that your answers are written in such a way that you will be able to understand these at a later date when you come to use the notes for either a critical essay or as part of your revision for the exam.

Re-read this section of the poem.

This section deals with the Complaint of Cresseid. The Complaint is introduced in the previous sections by the line:

'And on this wyse, weiping, sho maid hir mone'
(Stanza 58)

This line signals the lament.

The first thing to notice here is that the pattern of the poem changes from the seven –line rhyming ababbcc ('rhyme royal' form) to a nine-line rhyming stanza form.

This is important, as it is a recognised medieval genre, with its own stylistic conventions. Look closely at Stanza 60. It begins:

'Quhair is thy chalmer wantounlie besene...'

The use of 'Quhair is...' follows, the *ubi sunt* (Lat. 'where are they?'), the tradition of Latin complaints. This is a common tradition in medieval lyric poetry where the poet grieves at the loss of pleasures and comforts, often dealing with the brief nature of life on earth or man's vulnerability to the rule of Fortune.

- ❖ After reading the stanza, which theme of the *ubi sunt convention* do you think best sums up Cressied's Complaint? Write a brief paragraph and remember to give a reason for your answer.

Here though, Cresseid's Complaint deals with the idea that she has been a victim and the lament is about her miserable condition. Henryson's audience would have immediately recognised this literary convention. The use of repetition is important to the medieval complaint poem. Look closely at Stanza 65:

'Nocht is your fairnes bot ane faiding flour'
Nocht is your famous laud and hie honour'

Repetition is also used in the final stanzas of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, so Henryson clearly takes his form from a standard medieval convention.

- ❖ Read Stanzas 59 to 65. The contrast between Cresseid former life and her present misery is clear. Copy the table below and complete it using your own words, giving the parallel points between her past and present fortune.

Past Quotation		Present

The Language of the Complaint

As you read the poem, you will notice that Henryson makes use of alliteration.

- ❖ Write down examples of the alliterative nature of the language used.
- ❖ Explain why Henryson might have used the language in this way and its effect on the reader.

Look at Stanza 64

Cresseid addresses the female audience:

*'O ladyis fair of Troy and Grece, attend
My miserie, quhilk nane may comprehend...'*

Here, she presents herself as an example and suggests that she has learned something from her experience. (Note: she does address the *'ladyis...of Troy and Grece...'* but Henryson is directing this to Scottish women)

- ❖ Looking at the dramatic structure of the whole poem, why do you think Henryson includes a lament from Cresseid at this point?
- ❖ Why do you think it is important that the Complaint is in Cresseid's own voice?
- ❖ What are we led to believe she has learned?
- ❖ At this stage in the poem, who does Cresseid think is to blame for her misery?
- ❖ Given your knowledge of the poem so far, is Cresseid's judgement correct? Give a reason for your answer.
- ❖ What modern day parallels can be drawn here?

Section 7 - Stanzas 66 - 76

Cresseid, the Lepers and Troilus

Throughout this section there are short questions and activities. Make sure that your answers are written in such a way that you will be able to understand these at a later date when you come to use the notes for either a critical essay or as part of your revision for the exam.

There are two things to notice about these sections; firstly, the rhyme pattern of stanza 66 reverts to the seven-line, rhyme royal and secondly, this is a narrative episode. In many ways, this can be considered the main dramatic action of the poem.

❖ Answer the following questions:

Look at Stanzas 66 and 67

1. In stanza 66, Henryson describes Cresseid's '*drerie destenye*'.
 - i) Give three phrases from the stanza which describe Cresseid's condition.
 - ii) What is the effect of the language used by Henryson in describing Cresseid's condition?
2. The '*lipper lady*' approaches Cresseid. She appears to give Cresseid good counsel. In your own words, write down what she tells Cresseid to do.

Look at Stanzas 68 to 76

3. Stanza 68 signals a change in focus to Troilus.
 - i) Look closely at the language used to describe Troilus in this section of the poem. In what way do the words/phrases used to describe Troilus present us with an indication of his moral standing?
 - ii) What might that moral standing be?
 - iii) Stanza 71 describes the way 'memory' works. Notice how in the previous stanzas the events are presented from Troilus' viewpoint. Why do you think Henryson includes this one-off stanza at this point in the section?

- iv) Look carefully at Stanza 72.
What is Troilus' reaction to seeing Cresseid?

- v) Stanza 73 sees Troilus' leaving Cresseid.
How does the line '*For knightlie pietie and memoriall*' fit in with your earlier ideas of Troilus' moral standards?

- vi) Troilus' actions are steered by powerful emotion.
 - a) What is the effect of the word '*swak*'?

 - b) In what way do his actions here seem contradictory with his emotion in the rest of this section?

- vii) When Cresseid finds out that the generous lord is Troilus, she is beside herself with grief.
Henryson again uses alliteration to describe Cresseid's reaction.
Give three examples and explain the effect of each.

Our Reading of the Character of Troilus

The actions of Troilus can be read on three levels:

1. Troilus' generosity is an indication of his loyalty to the memory of his love for Cresseid.
 2. He is a good man and is compassionate. He embodies the 'pietie' of stanza 73.
 3. He is used symbolically by Henryson as an illustration of the morals of the poem, that is, 'duty' and 'chivalric virtue'.
- ❖ Which of the above do you find the most convincing? Or can the character of Troilus be all of these?

Section 7 - Stanzas 77 - 86

Testament and Death of Cresseid

In this section, Cresseid now laments her lover, Troilus and how worthy he was of her faithful love. She realises her own unworthiness and warns other lovers of how rare true love actually is.

Henryson uses alliteration once again to open Cresseid's repentance and Testament, beginning in stanza 76. This is continued throughout this section and is used to intensify Cresseid's emotional last 'scene'. In stanzas 76, 77 and 78, Henryson also uses a refrain as a lament with the repetition of:

'O fals Cresseid and trew knicht Troylus!'

This increases the power of Cresseid's lament. Therefore, rather than changing the stanza form, Henryson cleverly uses another device to indicate a shift in tone.

- ❖ What other literary device does Henryson use here and what is its effect?
- ❖ Look back at Cresseid's Complaint (Stanzas 59 – 66) and your notes on the section.
 - 1) What are the similarities between the first Complaint and Cresseid's Testament (Stanzas 77 – 86)?
 - 2) What are the differences between the two?

In stanzas 81, 82 and 83, Cresseid dictates her Will, disposing of her few belongings.

- ❖ Look at these stanzas now and make a note of:
 - 1) the number of lines in her brief Testament,
 - 2) the bequests that she makes,
 - 3) the stage she has reached by the end of her life.
- ❖ Cresseid wants to leave her '*spreit...to Diane*' (stanza 82)
 - 1) As Diana is the goddess of chastity, what is the importance of this action?
 - 2) What is the symbolic statement that Henryson is making at this point?
- ❖ Note that Cresseid wants Troilus to have her ring (stanza 83)
 - 1) Why is this important to the story?
 - 2) This makes the conclusion ambiguous in respect of Troilus' part in the events. (Look at stanzas 84 and 85)
Why? Give a reason for your answer.

Section 7 - Stanzas 77 - 86

Testament and Death of Cresseid

Questions

Throughout this section there are short questions. Make sure that your answers are written in such a way that you will be able to understand these at a later date when you come to use the notes for either a critical essay or as part of your revision for the exam.

Look at Stanza 77

1. In this stanza, Cresseid speaks directly. Why do you think Henryson uses direct speech at this point in the poem?
2. a) How does Cresseid describe herself?
b) Write down three word or phrases as examples.
3. *'O fals Cresseid and trew knicht Troylus!'*

What is the effect of the refrain in Stanza 76,77 and 78?

Look at Stanzas 78 – 80

4. According to Cresseid, what is the difference between Troilus' conduct and her own?
5. In stanza 79 - 80, there is a change of focus in Cresseid's speech.
 - a) What is the change of focus and how is it signalled?
 - b) What is the tone of stanzas 79 – 80?
 - c) In your own words, give a brief summary of her account.
6. The last line of her Complaint in stanza 80 is important.
 - a) Who does Cresseid now accuse?
 - b) How does this differ from her previous accusations?
 - c) What is the brief '*moralitas*' (the moral conclusion) here?