

Explain why the winning side was victorious at Agincourt

(10 marks)

SYK paragraph

Henry V's victory at Agincourt was astonishing and brilliant. It was certainly unexpected. So how was Henry's exhausted, depleted and ill army of 6,000 able to defeat a larger French army?

SWYG paragraph

A number of factors contributed to Henry's victory and the French defeat. Leadership, tactics, weapons, mind set and the weather all played their part in the eventual outcome.

Paragraph 1

Henry's good leadership was very important. He kept his men's morale (spirits) high, despite tiredness, hunger and dysentery. Fighting on foot, he inspired his men against odds of five to one! Knowing that he was at a disadvantage, he positioned his men in the perfect defensive position in the narrow space between the woods. This would stop the French being able to surround his army. He used effective tactics. His archers drove in sharpened stakes. He put his archers in V shapes, so they used longbow crossfire and ensured that all his archers could be used at the same time. As well as being able to pick off the French at long distances with a shooting rate of 10 arrows a minute, the archers could attack struggling Frenchmen with sword and daggers. Advancing towards the French and ordering his archers to fire tempted the French to attack over the ploughed field playing into Henry's hands.

Paragraph 2

The French contributed greatly towards their own defeat. They were over confident and this was made worse by the fact that they had too many leaders and they argued as the Dukes disagreed with D'Albret's plan to starve the English. The French had too many men to control for the small battlefield. Further errors were made when they placed their archers and crossbows too far back so that they could not be used when the first line of knights charged. The second line of 14,000 men at arms attacked too soon and so got muddled with the first line.

Paragraph 3

As is often the case, weather played its part. The rain which had plagued the English during their march from Harfleur was now their friend. The heavy rain turned the ploughed field into a quagmire making it hard for the French cavalry to charge.

Conclusion/Summary

Although it is clear that several factors contributed to the English victory, the role played by Henry V was vital. He was a charismatic leader and against all the odds he led his army to an improbable victory.