

# Invictus

**By William Ernest Henley**

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

In the fell clutch of circumstance  
    I have not winced nor cried aloud.  
Under the bludgeonings of chance  
    My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears  
    Looms but the Horror of the shade,  
And yet the menace of the years  
    Finds and shall find me unafraid.

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



Born in Gloucester, England, poet, editor, and critic William Ernest Henley was educated at Crypt Grammar School, where he studied with the poet T.E. Brown, and the University of St. Andrews. At age 12 Henley was diagnosed with tubercular arthritis that necessitated the amputation of one of his legs just below the knee; the other foot was saved only through a radical surgery performed by Joseph Lister. As he healed in the infirmary, Henley began to write poems, including "Invictus." Henley was a close friend of Robert Louis Stevenson, who reportedly based his Long John Silver character in *Treasure Island* in part on Henley.