

PLANTAGENET KINGS

1154 TO 1485 A.D.

HENRY II PLANTAGENET TO BATTLE OF BOSWORTH FIELD

ERA SUMMARY – PLANTAGENET KINGS

The rule of the Plantagenet dynasty was long and eventful. [Henry Plantagenet](#) (II) came to the throne in 1154, and the last Plantagenet, [Richard III](#), was killed at the *Battle of Bosworth* in 1485, over three hundred years later. During this time, great changes took place in England. In the early years of the Plantagenet dynasty, the barons revolted against [king John](#) and forced him to sign the Magna Carta, which guaranteed certain rights to the towns and nobles. Later, they forced the king to call a Parliament, or group of nobles to advise him in ruling the kingdom. The Plantagenets were involved in two long and ruinous wars. The first was the [Hundred Years War](#) with France, which went well for England at first but in the end proved disastrous. The second was the [War of the Roses](#), a frightful civil war between rival claimants to the throne that nearly wiped out the entire Plantagenet line.



THE MORNING OF AGINCOURT

Henry Plantagenet and Sons – Henry Plantagenet, the founder of the Plantagenet line, was the grandson of [Henry I of England](#), and the great-grandson of [William II of England](#). He inherited the throne through his mother, but had to fight to establish his claim. He married another very powerful monarch, [Eleanor of Aquitaine](#), heir to the duchy of Aquitaine, so between the two they eventually controlled much of France as well as all of England. Henry spent much of his reign in various wars, consolidating his power. He had four sons, two of whom became king. The elder son, [Richard I of England](#), is best known as a crusader. He spent almost his entire reign away from England, leaving the country in the hands of his devious brother [John Lackland](#). John was one of the worst kings that England ever had and managed to lose most of the land in France that he had inherited from his parents. Finally, [Archbishop Langton](#), and the barons forced him to sign the Magna Carta, limiting his power.

Edwards I, II, and III – John's son [Henry III of England](#) supposedly ruled for 56 years, but for much of that time his brother-in-law, [Simon de Montfort](#), governed in his place and orchestrated the Parliament. When Henry III's son [Edward I of England](#) came to the throne the

people rejoiced because they finally had a king who was half Saxon and spoke English instead of French, which had been the language of the ruling class since the Norman Conquest. He proved to be a competent king, and brought Wales, Ireland, and Scotland under his sway. His hold on Ireland was never strong though, and shortly after his death Scotland decisively won its independence from England at the *Battle of Bannockburn*. The Edward I's son was a no-account king with very unpopular favorites. He was deposed in favor of his young son [Edward III of England](#), who ruled for fifty years and got England involved in the [Hundred Years War](#) with France. There were several important battles in the hundred years war, the first two being *Crecy* and *Poitiers*. England won both battles against great odds, but never succeeded in establishing Edward III's claim to the French throne.

The Edward III's eldest son was [Edward the Black Prince](#), a great warrior who was very popular with the people, but who never became king because he died before the long-lived Edward III. The crown then passed to the Black Prince's son [Richard II of England](#), who was unpopular and was eventually deposed in favor of his cousin [Henry Bolingbroke](#) (IV). Unfortunately Henry IV was not the next in line for the throne, but his selection was not resisted because his father John of Gaunt had been regent during most of Richard II's reign. The issue was not pressed for two generations but later became the cause of a great civil war.

Lancasters and Yorks – Henry Bolingbroke's son was [Henry V of England](#), famous for his victory over the French at Agincourt. Henry V reopened the Hundred Years War and came close to gaining the French crown, but he died only a few years after his great victory. He left a young son, [Henry VI of England](#), who was a peace-loving and studious man, but a weak leader. During his reign the French rallied under [Joan of Arc](#) and reclaimed all of the land England had won, bringing an end to the hundred year war, and the king became extremely unpopular. Seeing his opportunity, his cousin, the [Duke of York](#), made a claim for the throne. He denied Henry Bolingbroke's claim three generations back, which led to the disastrous [War of the Roses](#), in which the Lancaster and the York lines vied for the throne. The plots turns and reverses of this war are difficult to follow, but the main contenders were not the monarchs themselves, but rather the [Earl of Warwick](#), cousin to the Duke of York, and [Margaret of Anjou](#), Henry VI's wife. The war proved bitter and deadly, and many great nobles lost their lives. It also greatly enhanced the power of the king, since the king was allowed to confiscate the estates of any noble that rose in rebellion to him; as the kingship passed back and forth between the Lancasters and Yorks, almost every house was at some point in alliance with a "rebel".

The Yorks were finally victorious, but they came to a bad end. Edward IV ruled for 22 years, but when he died, his brother [Richard III](#) plotted to usurp the throne by killing his Edward's young sons. This accomplished, he found he had made many enemies, and when [Henry Tudor](#) (VII), a distant relative on the Lancaster side brought an army against him, several of his generals deserted him. Richard III, the last of the Plantagenet kings was killed on the battlefield of *Bosworth*, bringing the noble line that had ruled England for three centuries to an inglorious end.

CHARACTERS – EARLY PLANTAGENETS

HENRY II AND SONS

Henry II	1133–1189	Reclaimed kingdoms in England and Normandy after chaotic reign of Stephen. Founded Plantagenet dynasty.
Eleanor of Aquitaine	1122–1204	Wife of Henry II, queen of Aquitaine. Led dramatic, adventurous life.
Saint Thomas a Becket	1118–1170	Appointed Archbishop by Henry II, but strove for an independent church. Martyred.
Richard I	1157–1199	Son of Henry II. Spent almost his entire reign crusading and fighting in France.
Robin Hood	~ 1200	Leader of a legendary band of benevolent bandits who stole from rich and gave to the poor.
John I	1167–1216	Wicked king who murdered his nephew and usurped throne. Forced to sign the Magna Carta.
Archbishop Langton	1150–1228	Archbishop who rallied opposition to king John and forced him to sign Magna Carta.
Richard de Wyche	1197–1253	Appointed by the Pope against the wishes of Henry III. Faithful servant of the poor.
Henry III	1207–1272	Blundering king whose government lay largely in the hands of Simon de Montfort throughout his reign.
Simon de Montfort	1208–1265	French nobleman who led resistance to Henry III and laid foundations of English Parliament.

EDWARD I, II, III AND RICHARD II

Edward I	1239–1307	Competent and decisive king of England. Reformed government; pacified Wales and Scotland. Ruled 35 years.
Edward II	1284–1327	Weak and profligate son of Edward I. Lost all his father's holdings in Scotland.
William Wallace	1272–1305	Commoner who led resistance to Edward I's conquest of Scotland.
Robert the Bruce	1274–1329	Scottish nobleman who claimed the crown and led resistance to England at Bannockburn.
Sir James Douglas	1286–1330	Associate of Robert the Bruce. Fought in wars of Scottish Independence.
Philippa of Hainault	1313–1369	Wife of Edward III and mother of 13. Intervened at siege of Calais in favor of citizens.
The Black Prince	1330–1376	Excellent general and leader who ruled alongside his father, Edward III. Victor at the <i>Battle of Poitiers</i> .
Edward III	1312–1377	Reigned for nearly 50 years. Invaded France, and won the <i>Battles of Crecy</i> and <i>Calais</i> .
Wat Tyler	d. 1381	Leader of a peasant rebellion during reign of Richard II. He was killed during talks.
John Wycliffe	1335–1384	Early proponent of reform in the Catholic Church. Favored power of state over church.
Geoffrey Chaucer	1340–1400	Wrote the first widely read epic poem in the English language, <i>Canterbury Tales</i> .
Richard II	1367–1400	Son of the Black Prince. Reigned after Edward III. Deposed by Henry Bolingbroke.

HENRY IV, V, AND VI (LANCASTERS)

Henry IV	1367–1413	Son of John of Gaunt. Assumed the throne after Richard II was deposed.
Owen Glendower	1359–1416	Last Welshman to be crowned Prince of Wales. He led an unsuccessful Welsh revolt.
Henry V	1387–1422	Led a victorious army of longbow men against France at Agincourt.
Jack Cade	d. 1450	Led a rebellion against Henry VI's government. Rebels looted London and many were killed.

EDWARD IV AND RICHARD III (YORKS)

Duke of York	1411–1460	Aspirant to the throne in the early years of War of the Roses. Killed in action with eldest son.
Earl of Warwick	1428–1471	Primary figure in war of the Roses. Changed sides from York to Lancaster. Killed at Barnet.
Margaret of Anjou	1429–1482	Ruled instead of her weak husband, Henry VI. Led armies against Yorks. Deposed after the York victory at Hexham.
Edward IV	1442–1483	Son of the Duke of York. Became king of England when other aspirants were dead or deposed.
Richard III	1432–1485	On death of his brother Edward IV, he killed his nephews and usurped the throne.
Margaret Beaufort	1441–1509	Mother of Henry Tudor. Benefactor of Cambridge University.

TIMELINE – EARLY PLANTAGENETS

- 1151 [Henry Plantagenet](#) marries [Eleanor of Aquitaine](#), heir in France.
- 1154 [Henry Plantagenet](#) assumes the throne on the death of Stephen.
- 1170 [Saint Thomas a Becket](#) is murdered after he defies Henry II.
- 1172 [Henry II](#) **conquers Ireland**.
- 1190 [Richard Coeur de Leon](#) goes on **Third Crusade**.
- 1215 [John Lackland](#) signs Magna Carta.
- 1265 Meeting of first Parliament arranged by [Simon de Montfort](#) .
- 1284 [Edward I](#) conquers Wales.
- 1291 Edward I **conquers Scotland**.
- 1314 Scots, under [Robert the Bruce](#) **win their Independence** at the *Battle of Bannockburn*.
- 1348-1349 Black Plague devastates all of Europe.
- 1337-1453 **Hundred Years War**: England vs. France.
- 1346 [Edward III](#), **victor at the *Battle of Crecy***.
- 1356 [The Black Prince](#) victor at the *Battle of Poitiers*.
- 1415 [Henry V](#), victor at the *Battle of Agincourt*.
- 1428 [Joan of Arc](#), victor at the *Siege of Orleans*.
- 1362 English becomes official legal language, displacing French.
- 1381 The government of Richard II puts down **Wat Tyler's Rebellion**.
- 1399 [Richard II](#) deposed by [Henry Bolingbroke](#).
- 1400 Death of [Geoffrey Chaucer](#), author of *The Canterbury Tales*
- 1403 Henry IV **puts down a rebellion** at the *Battle of Shrewsbury*.
- 1415-1453 [Henry V](#) invades France and re-opens the **Hundred Years War**.
- 1415 [Henry V](#), victor at the *Battle of Agincourt*.
- 1428 [Joan of Arc](#), victor at the *Siege of Orleans*. Tide turns in favor of France.
- 1455-1485 **War of the Roses**
- 1461 Yorkists prevail at *Battle of Towton*; Lancastrians exiled.
- 1469 Lancastrians regain throne thanks to the machinations of [Earl of Warwick](#).
- 1471 Yorkists again prevail at *Battle of Barnet*.
- 1483 [Richard III](#) usurps throne at death of [Edward IV](#).
- 1484 [Henry Tudor](#) defeats Richard III at *Battle of Bosworth Field*.
- 1476 [William Caxton](#) brings a printing press to England. Publishes first book.

RECOMMENDED READING – EARLY PLANTAGENETS

CORE READING ASSIGNMENTS *

Cambridge Press - <u>Cambridge Historical Reader</u>	<u>Richard the Lion-Heart</u> to <u>Little Princes in the Tower</u> (10)
Guerber - <u>The Story of the English</u>	<u>Story of Fair Rosamond</u> to <u>Richard's Punishment</u> (34)
Marshall - <u>Our Island Story</u>	<u>Henry II—Gilbert and Rohesia</u> to <u>Two Princes in the Tower</u> (30)

SUPPLEMENTAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Haaren - <u>Famous Men of the Middle Ages</u>	<u>Henry the Second and His Sons</u> to <u>Warwick the Kingmaker</u> (5)
Skae - <u>Stories from English History</u>	<u>Boy Who Would be a King</u> to <u>The Black Prince</u> (2)
Lindsay - <u>Ivanhoe Told to the Children</u>	entire book
Marshall - <u>Stories of Robin Hood</u>	entire book
Marshall - <u>Stories of Guy of Warwick</u>	entire book
Harding - <u>The Story of England</u>	<u>Henry II, First Plantagenet King</u> to <u>The War of the Roses</u> (10)
Pyle - <u>Men of Iron</u>	entire book
Tappan - <u>The Chaucer Story Book</u>	entire book
Morris - <u>Historical Tales - English</u>	<u>Captivity of Richard I</u> to <u>Jubilees of Queen Victoria</u> (7)
Abbott - <u>Margaret of Anjou</u>	entire book
Abbott - <u>Richard I</u>	entire book

ALSO RECOMMENDED

Church - <u>English History Stories - I</u>	<u>Thomas Becket, The Chancellor</u> to <u>The Great Battle of Poitiers</u> (12)
Church - <u>English History Stories - II</u>	<u>Wat Tyler</u> to <u>Bosworth Field</u> (11)
Synge - <u>Great Englishmen</u>	<u>Thomas a Becket</u> to <u>William Caxton</u> (6)
Synge - <u>Great Englishwomen</u>	<u>Eleanor of Aquitaine</u> to <u>Margaret of Anjou</u> (3)
Tappan - <u>European Hero Stories</u>	<u>The Magna Carta</u> to <u>The Black Prince</u> (4)
Wood - <u>Boy's Book of Battles</u>	<u>Damme</u> to <u>Agincourt</u> (3)
Abbott - <u>Richard II</u>	entire book
Abbott - <u>Richard III</u>	entire book
Church - <u>The Chantry Priest of Barnet</u>	entire book
Marshall - <u>English Literature</u>	<u>About some Song Stories</u> to <u>The Story of Everyman</u> (17)

* Level I and II Study Questions are based on **Core Reading Assignments**.