

Richard III background:

Date:

1592 - 3

Sources:

The *Anglica Historia* of Polydore Vergil (Henry VII's official historian), and Sir Thomas More's *History of King Richard III*, both of which were in print by 1543. Edward Hall's *Union of the Two Illustre Families of Lancastre and Yorke*
Holinshed's *Chronicles*
Mirroure for Magistrates

As the final play in the 1st tetralogy, I might also list the three *Henry VI* plays here, too.

The First Part of Henry the Sixth was first published in the first folio, although it was written 1589 - 90

the play the first folio calls *The Second Part of Henry the Sixth* was originally printed and performed under the title *The First Part of the Contention Between the Houses of York and Lancaster*

the play entitled *The Third Part of Henry the Sixth* in the first folio was originally entitled *Richard Duke of York*

Current criticism most relevant to us: See website.

Style:

Predominantly iambic pentameter.

Themes or topics of interest:

The legitimacy of the King, through

The Tudor myth

from: <http://ise.uvic.ca/Library/SLT/history/tudormyth.html>

The instability of the English crown did not immediately end upon the accession of Henry VII; the myth that he encouraged indicates the tenuousness of his claim and the unease with which he first sat upon his throne.

The Tudor myth ran roughly as follows: Henry IV's usurpation of Richard II (an anointed king ruling by divine right) spawned almost a century of disorder culminating in the Wars of the Roses and Richard III, the embodiment of evil; harmony was then finally restored by Henry Tudor, the last Lancastrian and God's own white knight, who cast down Richard III and, by marrying the heiress of the House of York, united the two rival dynasties. (Click for more on the sources* of this myth.)

The English people could thus rest assured the new king was once again appointed by God, while being encouraged to regard any enemy of Tudor rule as a threat to society's so recently healed wounds.

War of the Roses -

"Divided York and Lancaster" (V.5)

Background to the Wars of the Roses: synopsis of events, popular misconceptions. Text by Peter Hammond.

Illustrations: "Wheel of Fortune," "Choosing the Red and White Roses," Henry A. Payne; Battle of Stoke: 1987 poster.

The Wars of the Roses

The Wars of the Roses were, in essence, a long drawn out dynastic quarrel. In its course many hundreds of men were killed, including a large part of the nobility of England.

The quarrel was caused, in a sense, by the usurpation of Henry IV, of the House of Lancaster, since by deposing Richard II he displaced the main Plantagenet line with his own junior branch. The senior heirs, the House of Mortimer, subsequently the House of York, acquiesced in this for some 40 or so years. The incapacity of Henry VI (grandson of Henry IV) and the resulting breakdown in law and order then gave the Duke of York an opportunity to present himself as the rightful king and the one man who could bring peace and justice to the country.

There were in a way two such wars, between York and Lancaster 1459-1471, with a five-year peaceful period from 1464-1469, and between York and Tudor 1483-1487. They were not unique in Europe. In a period when kingly authority was low, stability depended on the personal capacity of kings. An inefficient monarch or a disputed succession could cause upheaval.

In the period between 1459 and 1487 the series of battles, skirmishes and sieges between the Yorkists and their allies and the Lancastrians (and Tudors) and their supporters are what we know as the Wars of the Roses.

The actual name 'Wars of the Roses' was probably not used until the nineteenth century but by 1487 contemporaries certainly had the idea of the warring red and white roses.

The life of Richard of Gloucester, Richard III, (1452-1485) almost exactly spanned the period of the 'Wars' but they did not end with his death.

In 1487 the Earl of Lincoln, heir of Richard III, supported an uprising by Lambert Simnel, calling himself Edward Earl of Warwick (son of George Duke of Clarence). Lincoln landed in Ireland with an army in May, and Simnel was crowned in the cathedral at

Dublin as Edward VI.

Simmel and his forces landed in Lancashire in June, and marched to Stoke, near Newark. Henry advanced against them and defeated them later in the same month. The Earl of Lincoln and most of the leaders were killed and Simmel was taken prisoner.

Stoke (not Bosworth) was the last battle of the Wars of the Roses.

Evil

Entertainment

The establishment of the House of Lancaster on the throne

History