



**Year 12**  
**Summer Transition Work**

**History**  
**Exam Board – AQA**

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## HISTORY A LEVEL: PREPARATION WORK.

The British part of the A level course covers The Tudors: 1485-1603. In Year 12 we study the years 1485-1547 which covers the reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII, while in Year 13 we examine Edward VI, Mary I and Elizabeth I (1547-1603).

The preparation work is designed to help you understand the context of the Tudors. Henry VII came to power during the Wars of the Roses so it is helpful to understand the tensions between the two sides – the Yorkists and the Lancastrians.

Read the attached information on the Wars of the Roses and complete the following chart:

<b>Lessons for Henry VII to learn from the Wars of the Roses</b>	<b>Supporting example or explanation</b>
Support is very fragile, even among the monarch's close family and advisers.	
The monarch's position is insecure.	
It is important that the monarch has a strong personality and is a strong ruler.	
It is important to establish a strong and legitimate claim to the throne.	
The king must create an effective working relationship with the nobility.	
Actions and decisions must be taken carefully because the political situation is tense, unpredictable and unstable.	
The feelings, anger and ambitions of both sides run very deep.	



# HISTORY A LEVEL: PREPARATION WORK

As you read the following text, make a note of any unfamiliar words and look them up.

## How did the Wars of the Roses begin?

Fourteenth-century politics was dominated by the long reign of Edward III (1327–77). He brought success and harmony to the country through his victories against the French in the Hundred Years War and through his policy of granting concessions to the nobility in order to win their support. This harmony, though, was bought at a price.

Edward's policy of conciliation towards the nobility was to result in problems for future monarchs. His successor, his grandson Richard II, tried to rule in a more autocratic fashion, but never succeeded in winning the trust of the nobility. Richard II was deposed by Henry, Duke of Lancaster, who became Henry IV.

Henry IV's son, Henry V, was successful because of his inspirational victories against the French. He returned as a hero after the overwhelming defeat that his archers inflicted on the French at Agincourt. But even he was not successful in restoring a balance of power that was more favourable to the Crown than to the nobility.

## ■ 2E The two sides

Lancastrians	Yorkists
HENRY VI	Richard, Duke of York
Margaret of Anjou (wife of Henry VI)	EDWARD IV (son of Richard of York)
Edward (son of Henry VI)	Richard, Duke of Gloucester (son of Richard of York; the future RICHARD III)
	George, Duke of Clarence (son of Richard of York)*
	The Earl of Salisbury
Lady Margaret Beaufort (mother of Henry VII)	The Earl of Warwick (son of Earl of Salisbury)*
HENRY VII (Earl of Richmond)	EDWARD V (son of Edward IV)
	Richard (son of Edward IV)

\*Changed sides.

The story of the Wars of the Roses themselves must start with the Lancastrians and Henry V's only son, Henry VI. He inherited the throne when he was only nine months old. The Government was well run by the regency council during the period of his minority rule. The real problems began when Henry took personal control in 1437. He was a weak and vacillating monarch, easily dominated by his advisers, by the nobility and by his strong-willed and formidable wife, Margaret of Anjou. Henry VI's failure to provide leadership at the centre of government left a power vacuum that members of the nobility at court attempted to fill. This instability was heightened by the fact that, until the birth of Edward in 1453, Henry had no heir.

This tense political situation finally reached breaking point with two events in 1453:

- The French defeated the English at Castillon in France, effectively bringing the Hundred Years War to a humiliating end.
- Henry began suffering from a mental illness, catatonic schizophrenia, and was unable to communicate with anyone.

Although Henry VI recovered physically in 1455, he was not able to establish control. The court was now dominated by Queen Margaret and she was locked in rivalry with Richard, Duke of York, the leader of the Yorkist family. This tension spilled over on 22 May 1455 with the battle of St Albans. This battle is



best seen as a murderous preliminary round in the conflict. But the war itself began when Richard of York was forced to flee abroad with the powerful Nevilles (the Earl of Salisbury (father) and the Earl of Warwick (son)).

It was into this political storm that Henry Tudor, the future Henry VII, was born in 1457.

### Stages of the war

The war can be divided into three stages.

#### Stage 1: 1459–61

The Yorkists returned to England and marched successfully to London, where Richard of York claimed the Crown. A quick series of fierce battles followed. During the battle of Wakefield, Richard, Duke of York, was killed and his son, after winning the battle of Mortimer Cross, seized the initiative and marched on London. He took the throne to become Edward IV.

After this Henry Tudor was separated from his mother and put under the guardianship of a Yorkist, William Herbert.



#### Stage 2: 1469–71

Edward IV established himself on the throne and successfully resisted the early challenges to his Crown. However, a powerful and very unlikely coalition of Lancastrians and former Yorkists (Margaret of Anjou, the Earl of Warwick and George, Duke of Clarence) unseated him in 1470. The pathetic Henry VI was reinstated as the figurehead monarch.

Edward IV returned in 1471 and the royal Lancastrian line was extinguished when the seventeen-year-old Lancastrian Prince Edward was murdered on the battlefield at Tewkesbury and his father, Henry VI, was stabbed to death in the Tower of London.

The only remaining Lancastrian candidate was the relatively insignificant Earl of Richmond, Henry Tudor. He had to flee to Brittany with his uncle, Jasper Tudor.



#### Stage 3: 1483–87

Edward IV's reign from his restoration in 1471 was one of achievement and consolidation. His position was strong for a number of reasons:

- His acquisition of the lands of the duchies of York and Lancaster and the confiscated lands of the Earl of Warwick made him the pre-eminent landowner in the country, so he had nothing to fear from other mighty nobles.
- An heir, Edward, was born in 1470.
- Lady Margaret Beaufort and her son, Henry Tudor (later Henry VII), were the only 'Lancastrians', but Edward had no reason to regard them as a serious threat because of the weakness of their claim.
- He provided law and order, and effective, authoritative government.
- He was sufficiently wealthy to have the means to 'live of his own', and so he was able to avoid introducing unpopular, heavy taxation.
- He governed through a council of his own choosing and stamped his personality upon the Government.
- He was a man of great stature (6 ft 4 in) and had an imposing presence. He had two sons and five daughters, and so there seemed to be no threat to his inheritance.

By 1483 Henry Tudor had been in Brittany for twelve years. As he looked across the Channel, what hope could he have had of deposing the formidable Edward IV?

Suddenly, though, in March 1483 Edward IV fell ill with pneumonia (a French chronicler at the time attributed his illness to the consumption of too much fruit at the Lenten dinner). He died from a massive stroke on 9 April, aged only 40. His young son, Edward V, succeeded him, but within three months Richard III had become king.



## So why did Richard become king?

Edward IV's death should not have threatened the stability of the Yorkist inheritance. He had an heir (his son, Edward V, who was twelve years old) and a reliable regent (his brother, Richard, Duke of Gloucester, who had proved himself to be a loyal and effective servant for Edward IV in the north).

The explanation of why the Wars of the Roses flared up again in 1483 must lie with Richard. No one predicted Richard's next moves. In a devastating three-month period he:

- took the young Edward V into custody
- executed Lord Hastings (a loyal servant of Edward IV and the strongest supporter of Edward V)
- gained possession of Richard, Duke of York (the nine-year-old brother of Edward V)
- made Parliament proclaim him King Richard III
- probably ordered the murder of the two princes (Edward V and his brother, Richard) in the Tower of London.

The usurpation and, in particular, the widely held belief that he had murdered the princes took him beyond what was seen as acceptable political behaviour. Contemporaries were horrified by what he had done and he made many enemies, lost crucial friends and brought plans for rebellion into being. This made it harder for him to survive and throughout his reign he was waiting for the challenges that he knew would come.

One important conclusion that can be drawn from the reign of Richard III is that Henry's triumph in 1485 had as much to do with the lack of support for Richard as it had to do with the appeal and strengths of the would-be usurper.

## Lessons for Henry

Henry VII did not just follow the Wars of the Roses and have to deal with their aftermath; the early years of his reign were *part* of the civil war. Henry Tudor used his Lancastrian credentials to help to stake his claim to the throne and through his usurpation he reopened the Wars of the Roses. Henry knew that the dynastic instability that he had helped to perpetuate might haunt him in his reign. It is therefore vital that we establish the lessons Henry had to learn from the Wars of the Roses if he were to govern successfully.



## ■ A king's responsibilities

