

RICHARD III

or:

**“Just Who the
Heck Are All
These People?”**



In 1066 A.D., a French Duke named William defeated the last Anglo-Saxon King of England at The Battle of Hastings.

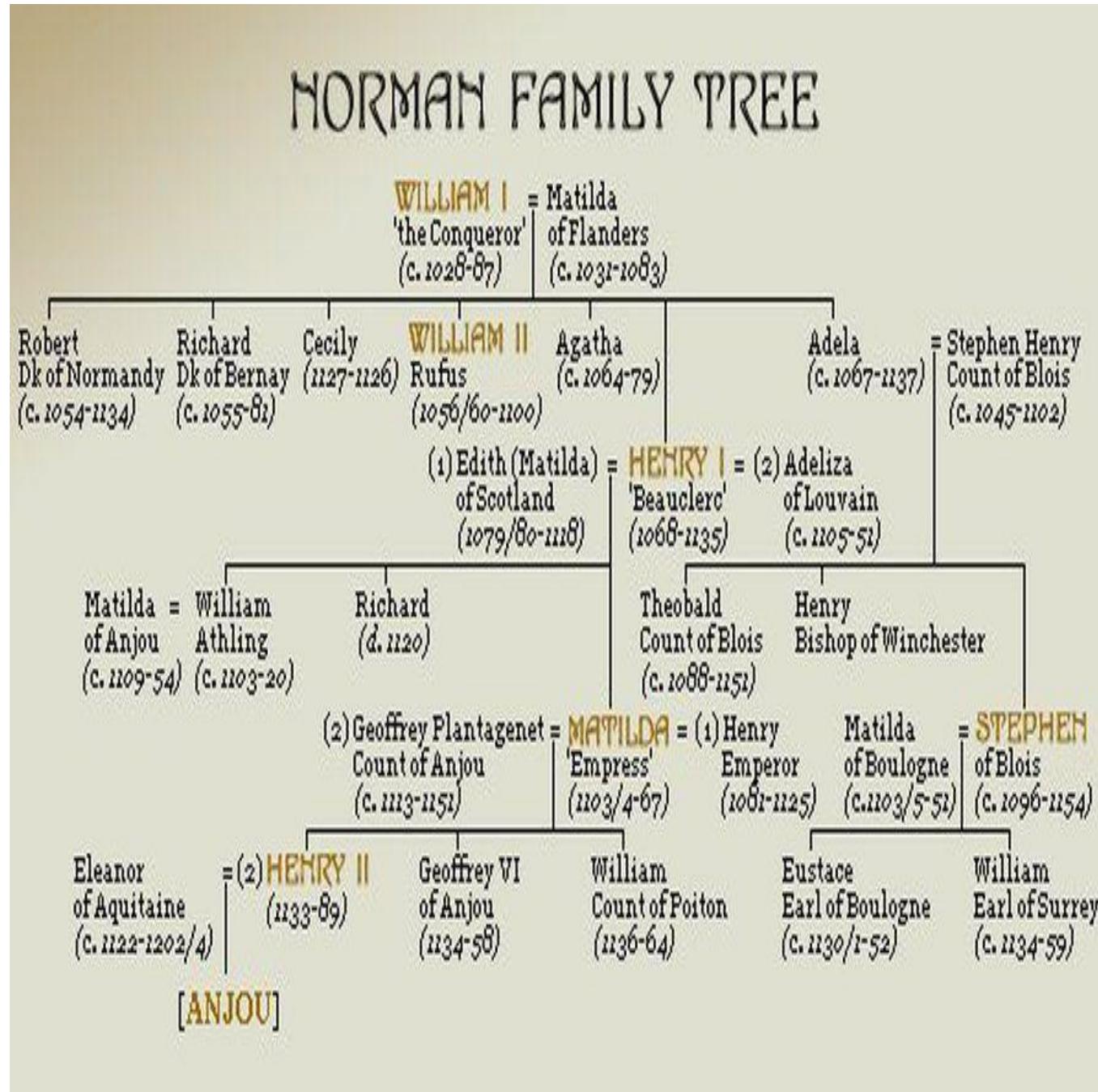


William “The Conqueror” thus became King William I of England.



**After the Norman
Conquest, all went
swimmingly. For a while.**

**The second husband of
William the Conqueror's
granddaughter Empress
Matilda was a guy named
Geoffrey Plantagenet.**



The name “Plantagenet” derives from the Planta Genista plant – what we call a “broom” plant.



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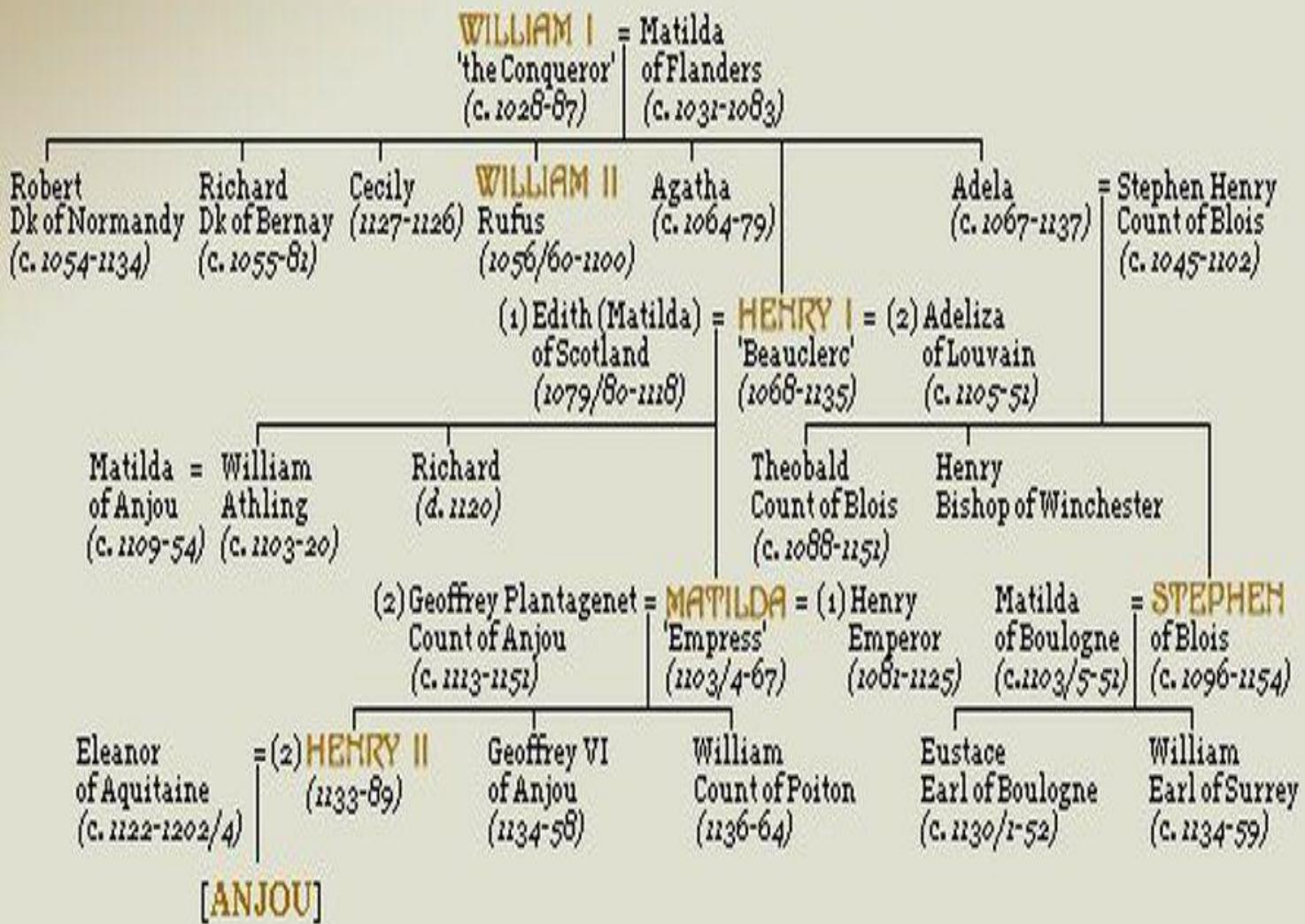
The Planta Genista was depicted on Geoffrey’s banners, and he wore a sprig of it in his tunic and on his armor.



**Empress Matilda and
Geoffrey Plantagenet's
eldest son Henry became
King Henry II of England.**

**Thus began the
Plantagenet line of Kings
which ruled England for
the next 331 years.**

NORMAN FAMILY TREE



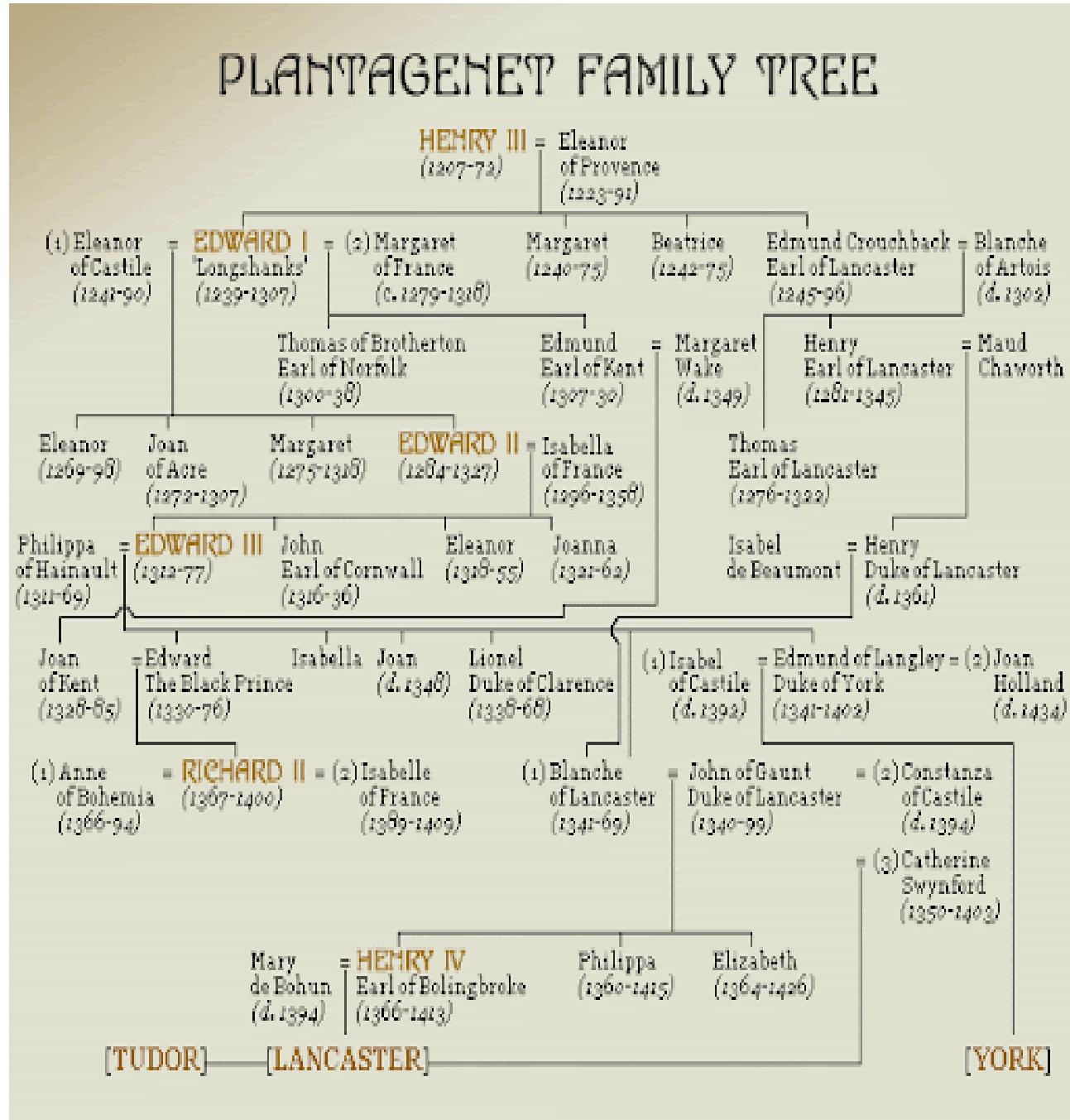
**Richard III was the
last Plantagenet
King of England.**



**“Well, how did we
get here?”**



If you ignore a pronounced tendency toward psychopathy, the Plantagenets were mostly strong, if not necessarily “good” monarchs.



Plantagenet highlights start with Henry II. He's the King in The Lion in Winter, which Theatre Three is doing this season.

Henry's eldest son Richard “The Lionheart” was King for a while but spent very little time in England, preferring instead to slaughter Infidels in the Crusades before dying from an infected arrow wound he received from friendly fire.



After Richard's death, his younger brother John became king. John was a crummy King in every way imaginable. He walled up a mother and son and starved them to death. He lost the entirety of the treasury in a river. He was sadistic, ruthless, venal, corrupt, incompetent, and dishonest. A real butthead. Because of him, no other English King has been named John.

Of importance to us, John is largely the reason why the Lords of England have had such great power dating from a relatively early period in English history. William the Conqueror saw to it that the guys he brought with him got all the land. Because they had all the land, they had all the money. Because they had all the money, they had all the power. Which was fine, so long as they liked the King.



It was when they didn't like a little pipsqueak like John trying to push them around that things got bad. The Lords united against John and forced him to sign the Magna Carta, putting the kibosh on the whole notion of the divine right of Kings.

Ever since John, the English monarchs have had to mind their Ps and Qs with the Lords of the realm. As you'll see, that becomes a real problem by the time we get to Richard III.



John's son Henry III was the fourth longest reigning monarch in English history – 58 years. He wasn't a very good king, but he liked to build stuff, including renovations of Westminster Abbey and Windsor Castle. He looks better in retrospect – kind of like George W. Bush.

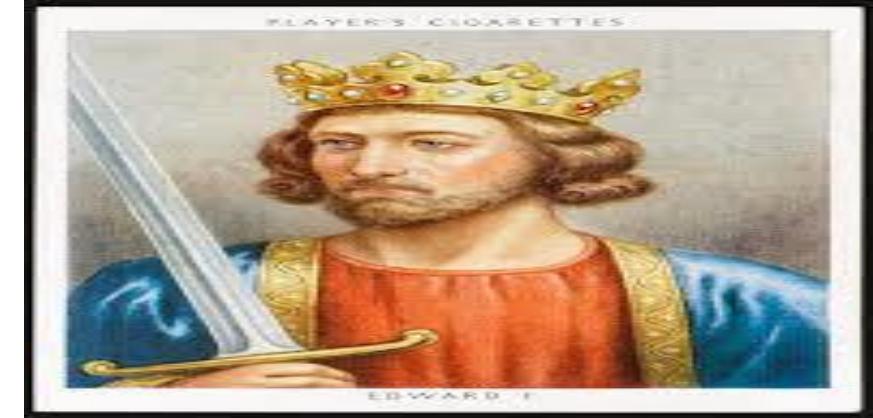


Next up were the three Edwards.

Edward I was pretty good.

Edward II was a train wreck. You may remember him from the movie Braveheart.

Edward III was one of the strongest kings England ever had. He was smart and he was a great warrior. He pretty much invented the idea of Chivalry and did much to perpetuate the legend of King Arthur.



Edward III's eldest son was named. . . Edward! (notice a pattern here?)

Known as Edward “the Black Prince” because of the black armor he wore in battle, he helped defeat the French at the Battle of Crecy.

By all accounts, Edward would have been a boffo King, but he died before his father; probably from cancer.



**Now we're going to get all
Shakespearean.**

**Edward the Black Prince had a son
named Richard, who became King
Richard II upon the death of his
grandfather, Edward III. There was a
play about Richard of which you
might have heard. It doesn't end
well.**

**AND THIS IS WHERE THINGS
GET WEIRD.**



Richard started out as a pretty good king. He was married twice. His first wife died at age 28 without bearing a child. His second wife was 11 years old when he died. Ew. Creepy. Therefore, Richard II didn't beget an heir to the throne.

Eventually, the Plantagenet craziness got hold of Richard and his throne was usurped by Henry Bolingbroke – who you might know as Henry IV. There are a couple of plays about him.

In true medieval fashion, Henry had Richard bumped off.

It's true that Henry seized the throne, but was he a rightful successor? If not, then who should have succeeded Richard?

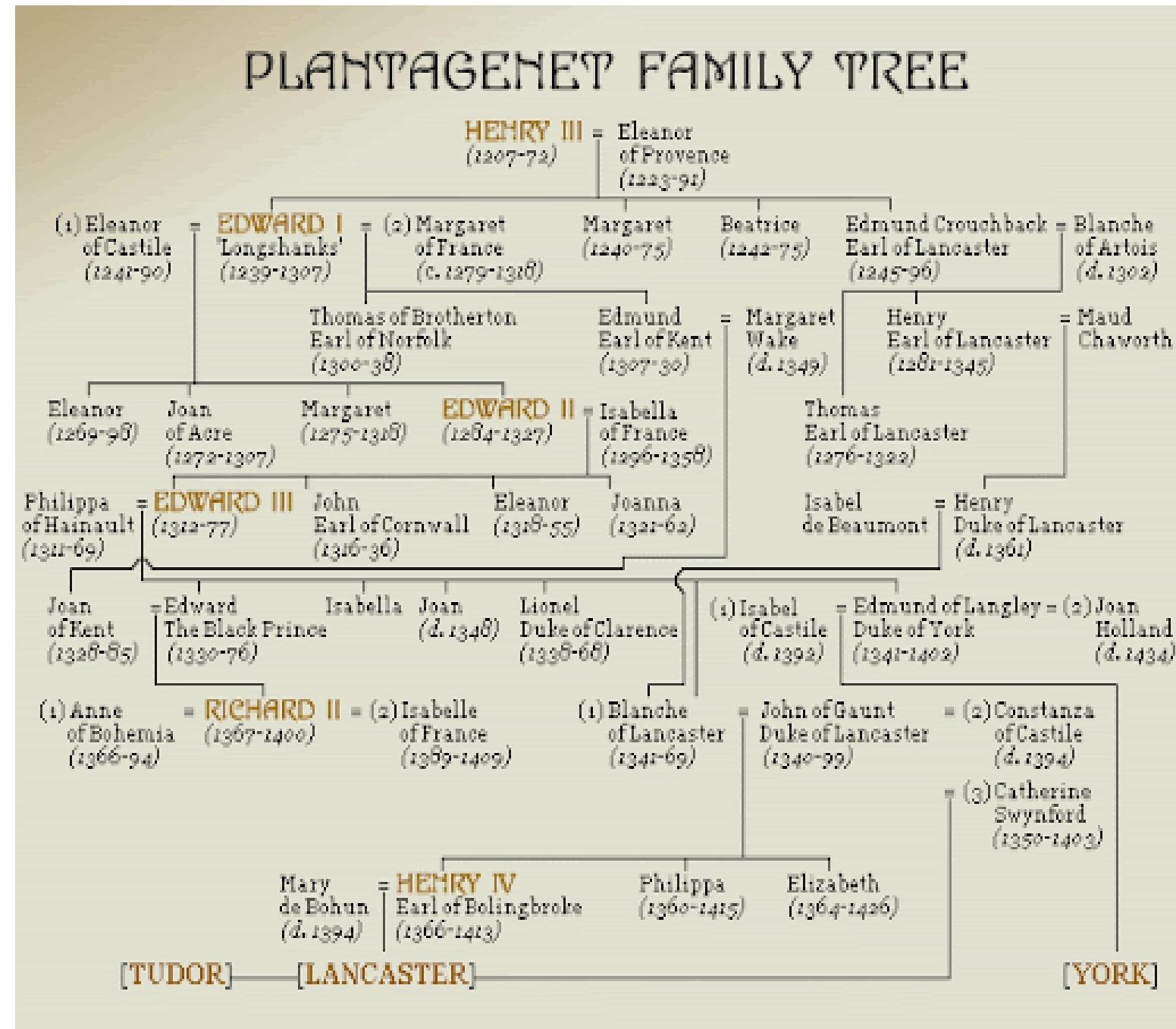


Let's go back to our family tree.

You can see that when Edward the Black Prince died, there were 3 surviving sons of Edward III – Lionel, Duke of Clarence was the eldest of the three.

**John of Gaunt, Duke of
LANCASTER (hint, hint) and
Edmund Langley, Duke of YORK
(hint, hint) were numbers 2 and 3.
Edward's surviving sisters wisely
stayed out of the mess that was
to come.**

But wait! There's more!



Henry IV's dad was John of Gaunt, Duke of LANCASTER (hint, hint) - Edward III's third son. At the time, John of Gaunt was the wealthiest guy in England, and his money gave him a lot of power.

John of Gaunt was married to Blanche of LANCASTER (hint, hint), Henry IV's mom, who was descended from Henry III through her great-grandfather Edmund Crouchback, Earl of LANCASTER (oh, the irony). Thus, the Lancasters (through Edmund Crouchback) are known as a “cadet” branch of the Plantagenets in both the maternal and paternal lines.



Edmund Langley, Duke of YORK (hint, hint), was Edward III's fourth son.

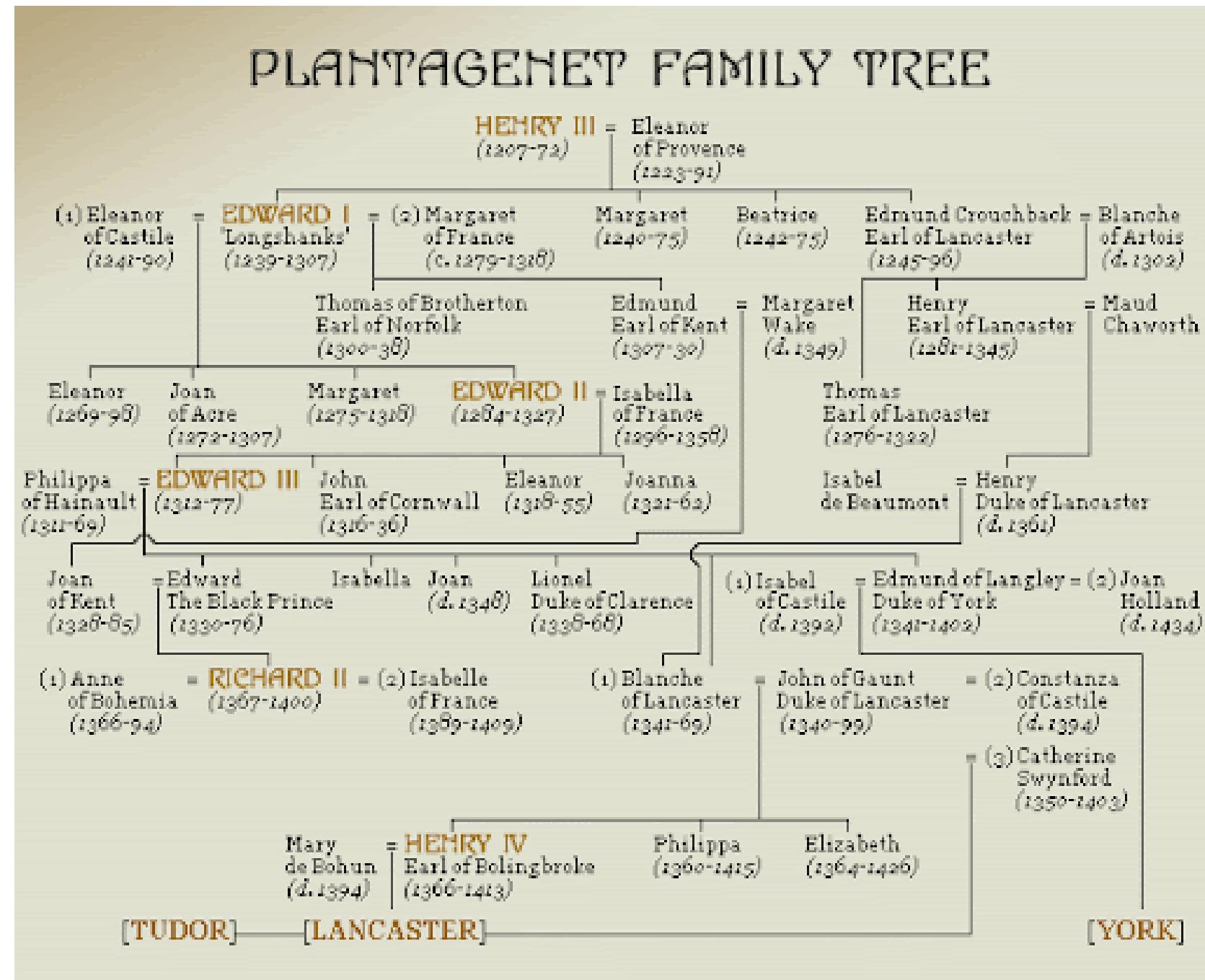
Richard, 3rd Duke of York (not ours, his father) was Edmund Langley's grandson. Richard's mother, Anne Mortimer (not Taylor), was the great-granddaughter of Edward III's second son, Lionel, Duke of Clarence – elder brother of John of Gaunt and Edmund Langley. Thus, Richard (not ours, his father) and his mother were cousins. Nowadays, there's probably a law against that kind of relationship, but forget it, Jake. It's medieval England.

The Yorks were therefore also a cadet branch of the Plantagenets, through both the maternal and paternal lines.



Bottom line: The Lancasters (Henry IV) had a claim to the throne through the maternal line via Edmund Crouchback and through the paternal line via John of Gaunt.

The Yorks had a claim to the throne through the maternal and paternal York lines via Edmund Langley and Lionel, Duke of Clarence.



Whose claim was stronger?

The Yorks had the stronger hereditary claim through Lionel, Duke of Clarence because he was Edward III's second son vs. the Lancasters through John of Gaunt, Edward III's third son.

Therefore, the best claim to the throne was that of Richard, Duke of York (not ours, his father) through his grandfather Edmund Langley (paternal line) and his great great grandfather Lionel, Duke of Clarence (maternal line)

But, if you're a medieval dude with the throne of England at stake, you're going to fight for it. And, eventually, fight they did.



The Yorks and the Lancasters didn't get too amped up during the reign of Henry IV. Instead, in true English fashion, they kept a stiff upper lip, repressed their feelings, and let their anger simmer.

Henry IV was a crummy king, but at least he was a strong, if not always just, ruler. His son was Henry V, of whom you've probably heard. He was a great king. He whupped the French at the Battle of Agincourt, married the Princess of France, and was a national hero. But he died prematurely of dysentery.



Henry V's son Henry (couldn't these people have come up with some different names?) became Henry VI at age eight months when Henry V pooped his last.

Poor Henry VI. He was probably a couple of bricks shy of a load. He was certainly timid and probably bipolar. In short, he was a mess.

To further add insult to injury, England suffered a string of military defeats in France during Henry VI's long reign, nullifying the spectacular victories of Henry V and resulting in a French victory in the Hundred Years War as England lost virtually all of its French territory (Calais excepted).

Henry VI's mental breakdown in 1453 triggered a power struggle between Richard, 3rd Duke of York (not ours, his father), Henry VI's wife Queen Margaret of Anjou (Vickie) and Richard Neville (Taylor's dad). Richard (not ours, his father) became Protector of the Realm and Queen Margaret (Vickie) fled to Scotland with her son Edward, the heir to the throne (again with the same names!) Why? Because her son was a Lancaster and she didn't want a York "protecting" him. Probably a smart move.



To further complicate matters, Henry V's widow married Owen Tudor (yes, those Tudors) a Welsh courtier. Owen didn't have a claim to the throne, but his sons Edmund and Jasper did, weak though those claims were.

Since Edmund's and Jasper's mom was also the mom of Henry VI, they were half-brothers of the King, making them Lancasters by default based on an accident of birth rather than by blood or heredity.



Edmund died of the plague, leaving behind his wife Margaret Beaufort and their son Henry Tudor, Earl of RICHMOND (hint, hint). Thus, Henry Tudor (Christian) had a claim to the throne through his father, up to Henry VI.

Margaret was the original helicopter mom who would stop at nothing until her sonny boy was King. She prevailed upon Jasper to help her, er um uh, Henry attain the throne.



Meanwhile, back at the realm, Edward, then Duke of York (Adriana) won the Battle of Hereford in 1461, where he captured and executed Owen Tudor. This annoyed the Lancasters since Owen had been their leader.

A month later, Edward deposed Henry VI and became King Edward IV. For a while.

Edward's brothers were George, Duke of Clarence (Robert) and Richard, Duke of Gloucester (Malcolm).

It was a mistake for Edward to let Henry VI live because his overthrow kindled the long simmering animosity between the Yorks and the Lancasters that erupted in a civil war.



The Wars of the Roses



The Wars of the Roses or “The Cousins Wars” were essentially a 32-year Civil War for control of the English throne between the houses of Lancaster (symbolized by a red rose) and York (a white rose), culminating in Richard III’s defeat at the Battle of Bosworth Field in 1485 and the end of the Plantagenet line.

The appropriate rose symbol would be displayed on banners and on armor so the combatants could differentiate between ally and enemy.



In 1470, George, Duke of Clarence (Robert) and Richard Neville (Taylor's dad) formed a secret alliance with Margaret of Anjou (Vickie) by switching sides from York to Lancaster. Part of the deal was to have Anne Neville (Taylor) marry Margaret's and Henry VI's son Prince Edward – the Lancaster heir to the throne – even though a York, Edward IV (Adriana), currently sat on the throne (I did tell you Edward shouldn't have let Henry VI live). As a result of this alliance, Richard Neville (Taylor's dad) drove Edward IV (Adriana) into exile and restored Henry VI to the throne. For six months.

In 1471, Edward IV (Adriana) reconciled with Clarence (Robert) and they fought side by side at the Battle of Tewksbury, killing Prince Edward (Taylor's husband).

Man, that Clarence. Seems like he had nine lives, doesn't it?

And what of that pesky Henry VI?



Three weeks after the Battle of Tewksbury, Edward IV (Adriana) put Henry VI in the Tower of London where Henry died of “melancholia” shortly thereafter. Yeah, right. It’s widely accepted that Edward ordered Henry’s death – like he should have done in the first place. Having mercy in 15th century England really didn’t get one very far.

With Henry VI’s death, The War of the Roses was effectively over, and the Yorks were the winners.

Or were they?



After the Battle of Tewksbury and the collapse of the Lancasters, Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond (Christian) fled with his uncle Jasper Tudor to Brittany. Essentially, they were renegades as they were Lancaster supporters. That made them dangerous. Their problem, however, was that Edward IV was a pretty good King.

During Edward's reign, England prospered and was at peace - a welcome relief after 32 years of Civil War. Edward had a couple of sons (Kaz and Nadine) to secure the York line to the throne, plus he forgave his brother Clarence (Robert) for betraying him during the Wars of the Roses.

Edward's problem was that his youngest brother Richard, Duke of Gloucester (Malcolm) held a grudge.



Basically, Richard was a greedy and ungrateful little snot. Moreover, he seems to have inherited the Plantagenet psychopathy trait. He was mean-spirited and ruthless. Good traits to have if you're an aspiring despot.



Let's Review:

- **Malcolm hates Vickie because she was married to a Lancaster King (Henry VI).**
- **Malcolm hates Madyson because she was married to Lancaster supporter Lord Grey (not Spencer, his father). She only married Edward IV (Adriana) after Lord Grey was killed. To further complicate matters, after Edward IV died, she set up a council of Regency for her son Prince Edward (Kaz), naming her brother Rivers (Adrian) as head. This change contradicted Edward's previous appointment of Richard as Regent of the realm and Kaz's protector. To Richard, this upset signaled Madyson's and Adrian's intent to rule England themselves, excluding him from power and the throne.**



Let's Review Some More:

- **Malcolm hates Jamison and Spencer because they are Madyson's sons by her first marriage to Lord Grey - a Lancaster supporter who was killed in battle by the Yorks.**
- **Malcolm hates Adrian because he is Madyson's brother and their father was a Lancaster supporter - and because Elizabeth (Madyson) appointed Adrian as head of a council of Regency for Kaz.**
- **Malcolm hates Taylor because she was married to a Lancastrian heir to the throne (Edward – son of Vickie and Henry VI), because her uncle switched sides from York to Lancaster in the battle at which Richard's father was killed, and because her father switched sides in the rebellion that resulted in Henry VI's restoration to the throne.**



Let's review some more more:

- **Malcolm hates Nadine and Kaz because they're half Lancasters (Madison is their mother) and they are his rivals for the throne.**
- **Malcolm betrays his brother Clarence (Robert) because Clarence (Robert) had earlier betrayed Edward IV (Adriana) during the Wars of the Roses by siding with Taylor's dad when he was a Lancaster supporter.**

That wacky Clarence.



Whew!

That's a lot of hate!

**Good thing there aren't
any current world
leaders who have that
kind of hatred.**



I'm sure all of you followed all of that since it's as clear as mud, right?

Don't worry. For now, just understand that our play is about multi-generational grievances and inter-family grudges.



**For us, the main thing NOW
is that Richard's winter of
discontent is made glorious
summer!**

**NOW it's Richard's chance
to make things right!**

**Richard is NOW the
retribution!**

**NOW Richard will MAKE
ENGLAND GREAT !!**





**Like Michael Corleone,
Richard doesn't want
to wipe out everybody.
Only his enemies.
That's why he only
bumps off 43% of the
characters in the play.**



RICHARD'S GREATEST HITS



R. ANDREW AGUILAR

**In 1486, one year after Richard died,
Henry VII (Christian) married Elizabeth of
York – Edward IV's daughter, and the
sister of Kaz and Nadine. Yay!**

**At last, the Lancasters and the Yorks were
reconciled, and all was well in the garden.
Yay!**

**What did that reconciliation lead to?
Christian's son Henry VIII and his
granddaughter Elizabeth I – Shakespeare's
boss. Yay!**



**In short, the Battle of Bosworth
Field made England Great Again!!**

Yay!

**And I'm sure no one had any
more bad feelings or ill will. Yay!
Uh...**



England

Hopefully, the foregoing demonstrates the truism “plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.”

Richard III didn't just think up all the stuff he does in the play on his own. The 15th century (1400s) was the bloodiest century in English history. It was a savage time, populated by savage people.

As the youngest brother in a ruthless family, Richard was well-trained by example, and the Plantagenet mean streak was given free rein during his brief, but deadly reign.



The moral of the story?

**If Richard II hadn't
married an 11-year-old,
things might have turned
out differently.**



And what about Big Bill?

No one knows when Richard III was written. Best guess is around 1592. But it wasn't performed until 1633 – 17 years after Shakespeare died.



Historical Inaccuracies not addressed in Richard III

- After Richard's dad was killed, Richard and Clarence lived in Anne's father's house for 7 years.
- Richard and Anne were married for 13 years and had a son – Richard (duh) who died at age 5. What do you think would have happened if young Richard had lived?
- Anne died of tuberculosis. Richard didn't have her killed.
- Richard didn't have Clarence killed either. Edward IV did because Clarence betrayed him one time too many in a scheme involving the King of France. That wacky Clarence.



More historical inaccuracies:

- **Buckingham's wife was Queen Elizabeth's sister. Hence, Buckingham's hesitancy to kill the Little Princes? Jasper Tudor married the sister after Bosworth Field.**
- **Richmond married Princess Elizabeth – Kaz and Nadine's sister – to reunite the Houses of Lancaster and York. Why didn't Richard have her killed?**
- **Elizabeth and her family didn't have Hastings locked up. Richard had Hastings executed on a trumped-up charge of treason because Hastings was a loyal supporter of Edward IV and supported Kaz as the rightful heir to the throne.**



Bert's Conclusions:

It is my belief that Richard III was written as a prolonged propaganda piece to indoctrinate people who didn't know the real history to support the Tudors. Kind of like Project 2025.

The Tudors didn't want a repeat of the War of the Roses, so Shakespeare, either deliberately or unwittingly, wrote Richard III (if he really did) to justify the Tudors' claim to the throne, tenuous though it was (Remember Jasper Tudor? Half-brother to Henry VI through his mother? No Lancaster blood at all).

To a society that was mostly illiterate, the lesson of Richard III was easy to comprehend – Lancasters (and therefore Tudors) are good, Yorks (or any other claimants to the throne) are bad. Sound familiar?



Since Owen Tudor's great-great granddaughter was the Queen of England and Shakespeare's boss, it paid to make the Tudors look good. That's why Richmond (Owen's grandson) is given the hero's treatment in Richard III, even though the historical Henry VII was a lousy King.

By the time Richard III was first performed, the Tudors were kaput, and the Stuarts were on the throne.

The Stuarts, like the Tudors, had a weak claim to the throne. Therefore, it is my belief that Richard III was first performed to remind England of the legitimacy of the Stuarts' reign; a reign that ended a mere eight years later when England erupted in another Civil War. Cromwell, don't you know. Plus ça change...

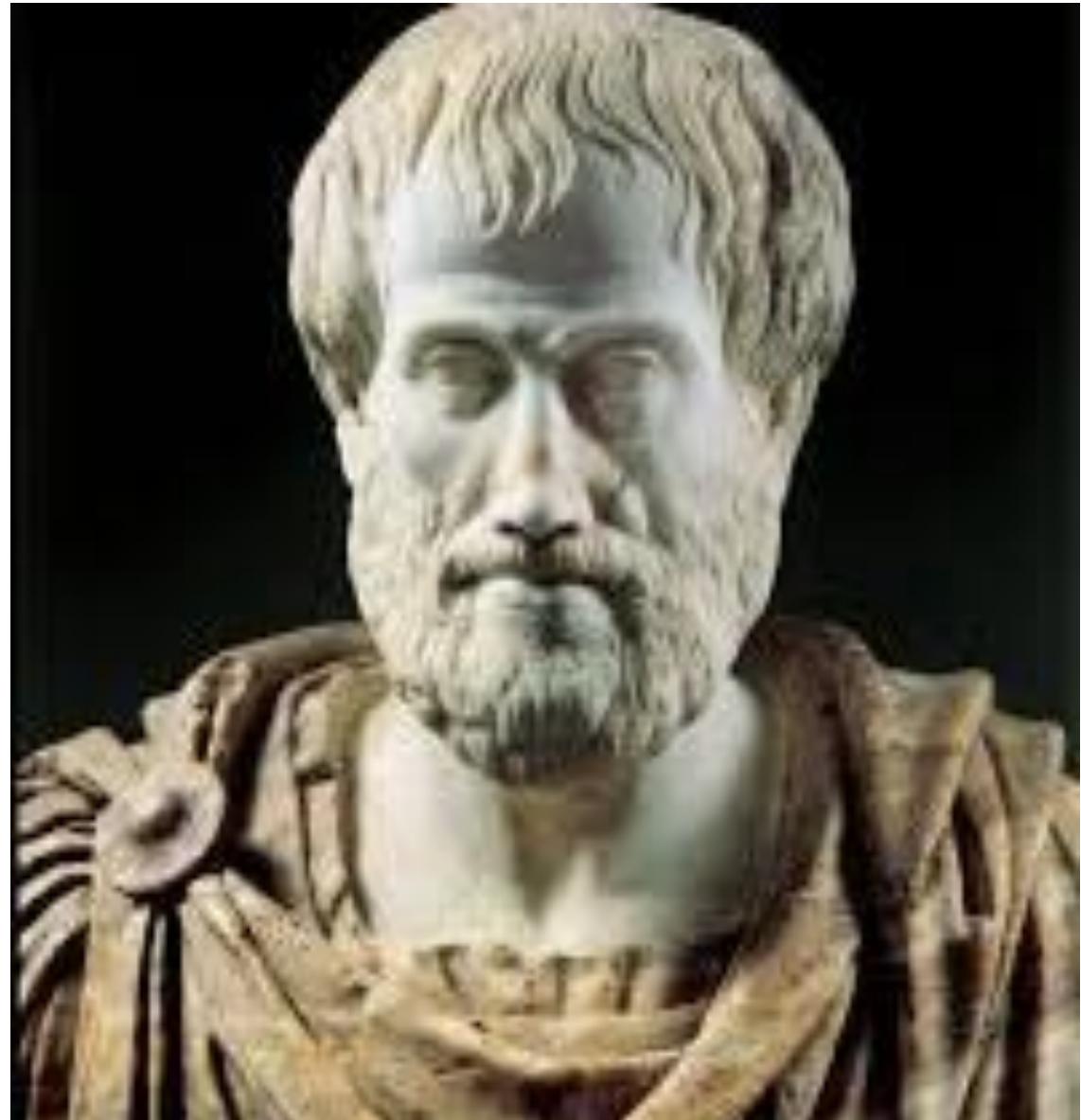


That all said, things actually worked out OK in the end. For England, the end of the psycho Plantagenets allowed it to flourish under the reign of Elizabeth I - one of the better monarchs England has had.



**So, is Richard a tragic hero?
What would our old pal Aristotle
say?**

Richard fits the bill in most respects – noble status, fatal flaw, reversal of fortune, self realization (Act V, Scene 5), downfall and catharsis. However, according to the Aristotelian definition of the tragic hero, Shakespeare's Richard lacks the necessary sympathetic traits to evoke the audience's empathy. Therefore, we can't classify Shakespeare's Richard III as a tragedy. But what about Anne....?



Hopefully, this presentation underscores how confusing the relationships in this play can be. The fact that Richard III is historically inaccurate doesn't affect your jobs. We have to deal with the script we're given.

Part of your job as actors is to help the audience understand the relationships between your characters and why they do what they do. The underlying history may or may not.

You need to know who your characters are so that the intentions in your performances will be clear to the audience. That's why we went through all of this.



One last thing: this is OUR Richard III. We will create it, and we will own it. Forget Olivier, McKellan, Cumberbatch, Pacino, Spacey, et al. Those performances are irrelevant to us. Those performances are their Richard IIIs. This one is OUR Richard III. If you make it your own, we will blow them away.

I envy you. Richard III never came up for me as an actor. I encourage you to take advantage of this opportunity to make it something you and the audience will always remember.



**“Art is not a mirror
held up to reality
but a hammer with
which to shape it.”**
– Bertolt Brecht

