

Summary of Richard III

Richard III's life was marked by the turbulence of the Wars of the Roses, his rise to power through political acumen and military prowess, and his controversial reign that ended in his death on the battlefield. His legacy has been shaped by both historical events and cultural portrayals, with his reputation undergoing significant re-evaluation in recent years.

Early Life & Family Background (1452–1461)

2 October 1452 **Birth of Richard** – Richard Plantagenet, later Richard III, is born at Fotheringhay Castle in Northamptonshire, England. He is the fourth and youngest surviving son of Richard Plantagenet, 3rd Duke of York, and Cecily Neville. His family, the House of York, has a claim to the English throne, leading to tensions with the ruling House of Lancaster.

1453 **King Henry VI's Mental Illness** – King Henry VI of England, from the House of Lancaster, suffers a mental breakdown. This event contributes to the political instability in England and intensifies the conflict between the Yorkists and Lancastrians.

1455 **The First Battle of St. Albans** – The Wars of the Roses, a series of civil wars for control of the English throne, begin. Richard's father, the Duke of York, leads the Yorkists to victory against the Lancastrians. Richard, although only three years old, grows up in an environment shaped by this conflict.

Early Life & Family Background (1452–1461) (cont)

1460 **Richard's Father Declared Heir to the Throne** – After the Yorkist victory at the Battle of Northampton, the Duke of York is declared heir to the throne through the Act of Accord, disinheriting Henry VI's son, Edward of Westminster. This heightens tensions and leads to further conflict.

30 December 1460 **Death of Richard's Father and Brother** – Richard's father, the Duke of York, and his elder brother, Edmund, Earl of Rutland, are killed at the Battle of Wakefield by Lancastrian forces. The deaths deeply impact Richard and his family.

Rise to Power (1461–1483)

4 March 1461 **Edward IV Becomes King** – Richard's elder brother, Edward, defeats the Lancastrians and is declared King Edward IV of England. Richard, now the Duke of Gloucester, becomes a key figure in the Yorkist regime, despite his young age.

1461-1464 **Richard's Early Military Experience** – Richard participates in several military campaigns during the Wars of the Roses, including the Battles of Towton (1461) and Hexham (1464). These experiences contribute to his reputation as a capable military leader.

Rise to Power (1461–1483) (cont)

1469-1471 **Rebellion and Exile** – Richard's brother, Edward IV, faces a rebellion led by their cousin, the Earl of Warwick, known as the "Kingmaker." Edward IV is briefly deposed in 1470 and flees to the Netherlands. Richard follows his brother into exile. They return in 1471 and defeat the Lancastrians at the Battles of Barnet and Tewkesbury, restoring Edward IV to the throne.

1471 **Richard's Loyalty to Edward IV** – Richard is rewarded for his loyalty to Edward IV with extensive lands and titles, including the position of Constable of England. He becomes one of the most powerful nobles in the kingdom.

1472 **Marriage to Anne Neville** – Richard marries Anne Neville, the widow of Edward of Westminster, Prince of Wales (son of Henry VI), and daughter of the Earl of Warwick. This marriage strengthens Richard's position and wealth, as Anne is a wealthy heiress.

1475 **Treaty of Picquigny** – Edward IV negotiates a truce with France, which includes a pension for Edward and a marriage alliance. Richard plays a minor role in these negotiations but remains loyal to his brother throughout.



Rise to Power (1461–1483) (cont)

1476 **Death of Richard's Son, Edward** – Richard and Anne's only child, Edward of Middleham, is born around 1473. However, Edward dies young, likely in 1476, a devastating loss for the couple.

Ascension to the Throne (1483)

9 April 1483 **Death of Edward IV** – Edward IV dies unexpectedly, leaving his 12-year-old son, Edward V, as his successor. Richard is named Lord Protector of the Realm during Edward V's minority.

April–June 1483 **The Controversial Seizure of Power** – Richard moves quickly to consolidate his power. He arrests and executes key members of the Woodville family (relatives of the young king's mother, Elizabeth Woodville), including Lord Rivers and Richard Grey, accusing them of plotting against him.

22 June 1483 **Preaching of Edward IV's Illegitimacy** – A sermon is preached in London, declaring that Edward IV's marriage to Elizabeth Woodville was invalid, making their children, including Edward V, illegitimate. This paves the way for Richard's claim to the throne.

25 June 1483 **Parliament Declares Edward V Illegitimate** – A group of lords and commoners petition Richard to take the throne, arguing that Edward V is illegitimate. Richard accepts, and Edward V is deposed.

Ascension to the Throne (1483) (cont)

6 July 1483 **Richard III Crowned King** – Richard is crowned King Richard III of England at Westminster Abbey. His ascension is met with some resistance, particularly from the supporters of the deposed Edward V and his brother, Richard, Duke of York (the Princes in the Tower).

Summer 1483 **The Disappearance of the Princes in the Tower** – Edward V and his younger brother, Richard, are lodged in the Tower of London. By the end of the summer, they disappear, and their fate remains one of history's great mysteries. Richard III is widely suspected of having them murdered to secure his position, though evidence is circumstantial.

Richard III's Reign (1483–1485)

October 1483 **Buckingham's Rebellion** – Richard faces his first major challenge as king when Henry Stafford, Duke of Buckingham, leads a rebellion against him. The rebellion is crushed, and Buckingham is executed. However, it reveals significant discontent with Richard's rule.

1484 **Acts of Parliament** – Richard III passes several acts to strengthen his rule and address grievances. These include reforms to the legal system, protection of property rights, and measures against corruption. Despite these efforts, Richard's popularity remains limited.

Richard III's Reign (1483–1485) (cont)

9 April 1484 **Death of Richard's Son and Heir** – Richard's only legitimate son, Edward of Middleham, dies, leaving Richard without a direct heir. The death deepens Richard's personal grief and further weakens his political position.

1485 **Betrothal of Elizabeth of York** – To solidify his claim and gain broader support, Richard III negotiates a possible marriage to his niece, Elizabeth of York (daughter of Edward IV), but this plan never comes to fruition.

The Downfall & Death of Richard III (1485)

7 August 1485 **Henry Tudor Invades England** – Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond (later Henry VII), lands in Wales with an army and begins his march towards England, seeking to claim the throne as a Lancastrian heir.

22 August 1485 **Battle of Bosworth Field** – Richard III faces Henry Tudor in the decisive Battle of Bosworth Field in Leicestershire. Despite initial success in battle, Richard is ultimately betrayed by some of his key allies, including the Stanley family.

Death of Richard III - Richard III is killed in battle, becoming the last English king to die in combat. His death marks the end of the Plantagenet dynasty and the Wars of the Roses. Henry Tudor is crowned King Henry VII, founding the Tudor dynasty.



Posthumous Legacy

- 1485 **Richard III's Body** – Richard's body is taken to Leicester and buried in a modest grave at Greyfriars Church. Over time, his grave is lost, and his reputation is tarnished by Tudor propaganda, most famously in William Shakespeare's play *Richard III*, which depicts him as a villainous, deformed usurper.
- 2012 **Rediscovery of Richard III's Remains** – In September 2012, an archaeological team from the University of Leicester uncovers Richard III's remains beneath a car park in Leicester, confirming his identity through DNA analysis.
- 26 March 2015 **Reburial of Richard III** – Richard III's remains are reburied with full honors in Leicester Cathedral, in a ceremony attended by royalty, historians, and the public, sparking renewed interest and debate about his legacy and reign.



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