

THE HUNDRED YEARS' WAR (1337-1453)

The Hundred Years' War was a series of separate conflicts between England and France that spanned five generations. The war resulted in a strong division and rivalry between England and France as well as the decline of feudalism in Western Europe.

CONFLICT OVER FLANDERS

The northeastern portion of France and parts of Belgium were once known as Flanders. Flanders was a major manufacturing center, particularly in cloth made from imported English wool. England depended on this trade for currency to buy other products, such as wine from southern and western France.

Traditionally, Flanders had been under the control (a vassal) of the French king. However, a new urban merchant middle-class had gained prominence in Flanders that sought independence from French dominance. England began to support this middle-class, while France supported the traditional Flemish landowners who were more supportive of France. Flanders, therefore,

became a major focus of conflict between England and France.



CONTROL OF FRANCE

Since the 11th Century, the English kings controlled much of France, particularly lands in the west and the south (These lands were part of what was once called England's *Angevin Empire*.) Most of these French lands came under English control when Eleanor of Aquitaine married King Henry II. The exact border between England and France thus became ill-defined and often led to tension and war.

The French were insecure, pinned between the English in the south and west

and an increasing hostile Flanders in the north and east. France responded by allying with Scotland, forcing the English to deal with a hostile enemy to the north.

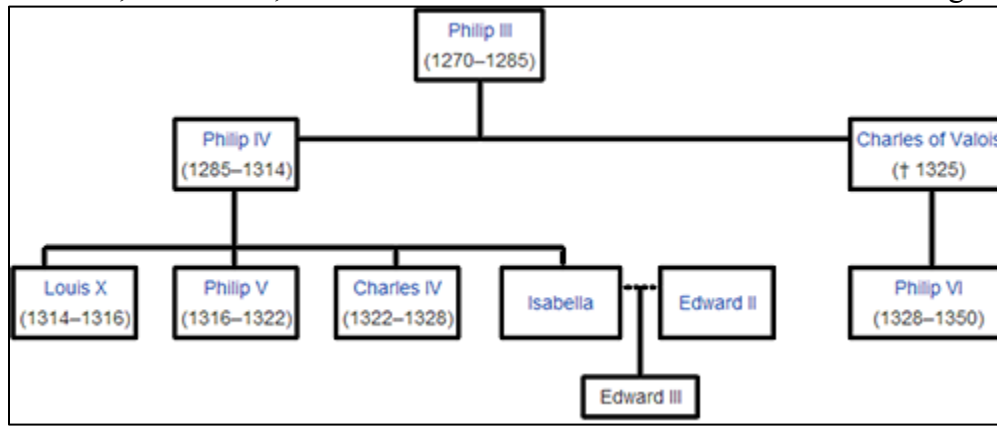
THE ENGLISH CHANNEL & NORTH SEA

England's economy was dependent upon trade that crisscrossed the North Sea and English Channel. France security was dependent upon having a credible fleet that could potentially invade England. In the 1300s, both sides authorized captains (who were basically pirates) that began to harass and attack the other side's trade ships and naval forces.

DYNASTIC CONFLICT

The French king Philip IV's (The Fair) youngest son Charles died without a son in 1328. This meant that the direct male line of the French Capetian royal family died out after nearly 350 years. Philip IV had one daughter, Isabelle, who had married the English king Edward II. (Note:

in times of peace the English & French royal family would intermarry.) Edward II and Isabelle had a son, Edward III, who now had a valid claim to both the throne of England and France.



The English and French royal families had intermarried with Edward II and Isabella

The French denied Edward's claim by promoting *Salic Law*, an old Frankish custom that denied inheritance through female relatives. The French promoted one of Philip IV's nephews, also named Philip, to be king Philip VI. Philip VI started the Valois (pronounced "Val-WAH") dynasty. It was now up to Edward III if he wanted to challenge Philip VI.

ENGLAND vs. FRANCE

Edward III saw himself as a warrior-king and was eager to lead a war into France. He was young (18 years old) and popular, and had a large group of trained veteran troops at his disposal. However, defeating France would not be easy. France was much bigger than had a population of 20 million while England had only 5 million people.

THE COURSE OF THE WAR

The fighting began in June, 1340. Seeking to conquer Flanders, the French had built a great fleet of 200 ships to invade Flanders from the North Sea. However, an English fleet attacked and won a great victory at Sluys in which the entire French fleet and 20,000 men were lost. France had lost Flanders and the ability to invade England ensuring the land battles would be in France.

Edward III launched an invasion of northern France in 1345 with 9,000 soldiers. A much larger French army of 30,000 approached and the first major land battle was at Crecy (pronounced "Cressie") in 1346. Despite superior numbers, the French used outdated tactics and their cavalry charges were punished by the English army which used armor-piercing longbows and cannons.



The Black Death struck France and England in 1348 and 1349 causing both sides to regroup after losing 1/3 of their population, yet the war did not end. Hostilities resumed in 1356 when Edward III led a new invasion of France. At the battle of Poitiers (pronounced PWAH-tee-ay) in September, 1356 the English, led by the king's son, Edward (called "The Black Prince"), won a resounding victory. France's king John II was captured as

well as his son, Philip, and over 100 of the greatest lords and knights of France (John II died in captivity in 1364.) In the Treaty of Calais (pronounced “Cal-Lay”) in 1360, Edward III agreed to renounce his claim to the French throne, in exchange for lands in western and northern France.

It was often the peasants that suffered the most during the war. Soldiers would often maraud across the countryside seizing food and property. The peasants also endured harsh taxes as both sides tried to raise new and expensive armies. Peasants broke into open revolt against their own governments in France in 1358 and in England in 1381.

English fortunes began to fade as their great generation of soldiers died in the 1370s and 1380s. France began to slowly recapture their lost territories. King Richard II of England was reluctant to continue the war in France leading to his overthrow in 1399. It was not until 1415 that England launched a new invasion of France under King Henry V.



Henry V after the Battle of Agincourt

Henry V invaded France and won a dramatic victory at Agincourt (pronounced “Ah-zhin-core”) in October in which an English army of 6,000 used longbowmen to decimate a larger French force. France, under the insane king Charles VI, was forced into a negotiated surrender. In the treaty of Troyes (1420), Charles VI and Queen Isabel agreed to disown their own son in favor of Henry V, who would become king of France upon

the death of Charles VI. However, Henry V died of dysentery one month before Charles VI in 1422, leading to a renewed disputed succession to the French throne.

JOAN OF ARC

The French were eventually united by an unlikely hero. Joan of Arc, a teenage peasant girl, inspired a national resistance to the English invaders at the Battle of Orleans in 1431. This victory led to the coronation of King Charles VII. Joan believed her actions were guided by God through voices and visions of angels. She was later captured by the English, brought to trial on charges of heresy, and burned at the stake as a witch. However, despite the loss of Joan, the French were now invigorated and began to drive the English out.



Joan of Arc

The war dragged on for a couple more decades. The last major battle was at Castillon in 1453. This French victory resulted in the expulsion of the English from all of France save the city of Calais. The war, fought off and on for one hundred and sixteen years, was finally over.



The Battle of Castillon

THE RESULTS

The results of the Hundred Years' War were far-reaching. The whole structure of feudalism suffered a mortal blow. The military power of the feudal knight was broken as the old class of chivalrous warriors expended themselves in battles and civil wars. Soldiers would increasingly wield firearms rather than swords, making the once dominant armored knight a relic of the past. Many of the greatest lords died in this conflict, leading many serfs to seek greater opportunities in newly-built towns that owed no feudal allegiance.

Following the Hundred Years' War, kings sought to build a modern nation state with an economy to support a national professional military that defended national borders and interests. England ceased all attempts to control France and after a civil war (called the Wars of the Roses) instead focused on its naval power which eventually led to an incredible global empire. France gave tremendous powers to their kings, leading to an absolute monarchy that would not be toppled until the blood of the French Revolution in the 1790s.

Answer the following in complete sentences on a separate sheet:

1. Why were both England and France concerned with Flanders?
2. Why did Edward III believe he had a claim to the French throne?
3. What advantage did each side have at the beginning of the conflict?
4. What happened at Sluys, Crecy and Poitiers?
5. How did peasants suffer during the war?
6. Who was Henry V? What happened at Agincourt?
7. What effect did Joan of Arc have on the war?
8. What were three important results of the Hundred Years' War?