

# PacificMUN

Dare to Speak



JCC  
Backgrounder Guide



## The War of the Roses - JCC

PacificMUN



### Welcome Letter

Dear Delegates,

My name is Alan Zhuang, and it is my pleasure to serve as the Overlord of the Joint Crisis Committee (JCC) at PacificMUN this year. I am currently a senior student at Fraser Heights Secondary School. Since the very first time I raised my placard in 2015, I was instantly drawn into this exciting journey of debate and co-operation. Looking back at the conferences I have attended, the JCCs have no doubt left me with some of the most amazing delegating experiences in my MUN adventure. The thrill and excitement of a victorious battle against the enemy bloc, the rush of adrenaline of outpacing the continually evolving crisis, and the many surprises that will emerge along the way; these scenes are still vivid in my memory.

This year, the JCC will be set in 1455. England has just emerged defeated in the Hundred Years' War. The nation is in chaos, with an incompetent king in charge. From this, a massive civil war will erupt between the house of Lancaster and the house of York. Delegates will be required to utilise their tactical brilliance to defeat their enemies and claim the crown of England for themselves. Whichever side emerges victorious will shape the history of England.

Prior to the conference, delegates will receive a bloc specific backgrounder which will include the strategic circumstance of their bloc. In addition to this, each delegate will receive their personal agenda prior to the conference.

Due to the nature of this war, recorded history can be full of biased or inaccurate information. If at any point you have any questions about the topic, the positions, the background guide, or the committee in



general, feel free to reach out to your bloc directors or me. The entire JCC team and I are very excited to meet you, and we hope we can bring you an unforgettable experience!

Sincerely,

Alan Zhuang  
Overlord of JCC  
PacificMUN 2019

## Topic Overview

The War of the Roses refers to a civil war fought in England between 2 branches of the royal house. England in the 1450s was in a decrepit state. The still recent Hundred Years' War had drained massive amounts of economic and human resources, causing poverty and hunger to be commonplace. The king in charge at the time – Henry VI of the Royal House Lancaster – was incompetent and suffered periods of mental illness. Henry VI liked to surround himself with his favourite men, who were often as clueless in the running a nation as the common peasant. This weak government was ill-equipped to piece a devastated England back into prosperity. As a result, the nation was in a state of partial anarchy. Great barons and lords ruled the land, and many private armies stood at arms, ready to battle.

To the mere peasant, it is clear that the current monarch must be brought down. Yet the task of staging a coup against the highest authority in the land is no easy task and only accomplishable by a handful of elite individuals. One of these men is Richard of York, of house York. House York was a branch of the royal house. In fact, both the house of Lancaster and York were once sub-branches of the royal house of Plantagenet. The difference being that house Lancaster had seniority over York in royal succession, allowing the crown to be placed upon a Lancaster king. However, the house of York was one of most wealthy and respected houses within the land and the support for a rebellion against the current king was mounting. It would be a matter of time before a massive civil war would break out between the houses of Lancaster and York.

The outcome of this bitter civil war is poised to change English history forever. Every subsequent English monarch and their directions for the country will depend on which house stands victorious over their vanquished opponents. Unsurprisingly, this conflict has helped to inspire many modern-day epics; the most famous being George R.R. Martin's "Game of Thrones."

The committee will be placed just before the first battle of St. Albans, on the 20th of May, 1455. Any events that occurred pass this point will not be considered, and the confines of history will not bind the progression of the JCC.



## Timeline

**February 1st, 1327** - King Edward III is coronated, Succeeding his father Edward II as king of England.

**June 15th, 1330** - Edward, the Black Prince is born, becoming King Edward III's eldest son and heir apparent.

**May 24th, 1337** - The escalating tensions between England and France finally reach a breaking point, and the Hundred Years' War began.

**November 29th, 1338** - Lionel of Antwerp was born, becoming the second surviving male heir to King Edward III.

**March 6th, 1340** - King Edward III's third surviving son – John of Gaunt – was born, he would become the founder of the house of Lancaster.

**June 5th, 1341** - Edmund of Langley was born. He is the fourth surviving son of King Edward III and founder of House York.

**June 8th, 1376** - Edward the Black Prince, heir apparent of Edward III tragically dies of dysentery. The royal line of succession becomes uncertain.

**June 22nd, 1377** - Richard II (the son of Edward the Black Prince) succeeds Edward III as the king of England. His rule was ineffective and weak.

**September 30th, 1399** - Henry IV, son of John of Gloucester, forces Richard II to abdicate the throne and becomes the next king of England. The crown transfers into the Lancaster lineage.

**September 21st, 1411** - Richard of York was born. He would later become the leader of the Yorks in the War of the Roses.

**March 21st, 1413** - Henry V succeeds Henry IV. Under his rule, England achieved great success in the Hundred Years' War, making him a popular king among the people.

**August 31st, 1422** - Henry VI succeeds Henry V as King. Henry VI was plagued by mental disease and exhibited terrible leadership. Under his rule, most of the territorial gains in the Hundred Years' War from previous monarchs was lost. His people despised him.



**April 23rd, 1445** - Margaret of Anjou is married to King Henry VI and becomes Queen of England. She had an enormous influence over the King, and later became the leader of the Lancasters.

**July 30th, 1447** - Because of his objections to the leadership of the king's council, Richard of York is forcibly appointed as Lieutenant of Ireland, effectively outcasting him from positions of power in England.

**September 7th, 1450** - Richard of York returns to England and proceeds to London to meet with Henry VI to call for a reform and better government. The people widely supported him.

**July 17, 1453** - The last battle of the Hundred Years' War was fought at the Battle of Castillon, resulting in an English defeat. The war-ravaged the English economy, food shortages and poverty were widespread. Both the common people and nobles of the land are angry towards the king for his terrible leadership.

**August, 1453** - After receiving news of the English defeat in the Hundred Years' War, King Henry VI had a mental breakdown and became completely unresponsive. The incapacitation of the king gave Richard of York a chance to seize power.

**March 27th, 1454** - With the help of Richard Neville, Richard of York was appointed as Protector of the Realm to govern in Henry VI's place, effectively seizing power. Richard of York used his power to oust political opponents and secured power for his allies.

**December 25th, 1455** - King Henry VI suddenly recovered from his mental illness and all of Richard of York's actions were negated. Richard of York was removed as Protector of the Realm and lost his office.

**May 20, 1455** - Fearing prosecution for their actions, Richard of York and his allies called their men to arms, preparing for battle. Here begins the current JCC committee.

## Historical Analysis

England, 1327: A golden collar, carrying the weight of an entire empire, was crowned upon the neck of a juvenile 14-year-old boy. This child was Edward III of the royal house Plantagenet, who inherited the monarchy after his father - King Edward II- was forcibly removed as a result of a coup. Initially, Edward III acted as a mere puppet to his mother, Isabella of France, who staged the coup against Edward II. However, as Edward III matured and gained independence, he would become the fulcrum that initiated some of the most significant chapters of English history; one of these chapters is the War of the Roses.



During his fifty-year reign, Edward III would produce five legitimate heirs. At the time, it seemed certain that Edward, The Black Prince, eldest son of Edward III was going to succeed his father as the next king of England. The Black Prince is a prominent military commander in the Hundred Years War, and few question his tactical brilliance. However, while commanding his troops in France, The Black Prince contracted dysentery and succumbed to his illness. His death sent ripples throughout England. With that, the order of royal succession was thrown into ambiguity.

With the death of The Black Prince, it was determined that his son – Richard of Bordeaux (becoming King Richard II) – would be next in line to become king. However, the process which established Richard's claim to the throne was arbitrary at best, resulting from a convoluted set of rules that was built up from previous sovereign decrees and inheritance rules. The process put Richard of Bordeaux over other sons of Edward III such as John of Gaunt, Lionel of Antwerp, and Edmund of Langley. Although Richard II sits upon the throne, the other heirs of Edward III held almost all of the political power and gazed upon the throne with eyes of determination.

### ***John of Gaunt***

John of Gaunt was the third surviving son of Edward III and gained considerable favour with his father later in the reign of Edward III. John married Blanche of Lancaster, who was the daughter and Heiress of Henry of Grosmont, 1st Duke of Lancaster. Henry of Grosmont is one of the wealthiest and influential men in England at the time. Henry lacked a male heir, and since dukedoms only transfer to legitimate male heirs, the Duchy of Lancaster became extinct with Henry's death. However, through the marriage between John of Gaunt and Blanche of Lancaster, John received the Duchy of Lancaster and all of its lands, gaining immense wealth. The Duchy of Lancaster under John was considered different from that of under Henry. As such, John of Gaunt is deemed to be the founder of the second iteration of the house of Lancaster, which carries into the War of the Roses.

### ***The Rule of Richard II***

As previously mentioned, although Richard of Bordeaux was able to succeed Edward III (his grandfather) as king of England in 1377, he holds very little influence over the political scene. From Edward III, he took control of a kingdom that was plagued by the black death, facing economic issues, fighting over borders with Scotland, and involved in an increasingly disadvantageous war against France. Facing these struggles, Richard II proved to be an incompetent king. He surrounded himself with people whom he liked, often replacing capable nobles with incapable men. Unsurprisingly, this made his government ineffective and weak. Also, under his rule, Richard II increased taxes and became an increasing tyrannical leader. Such actions made him extremely unpopular amongst both the ordinary people and the great lords of the land.



Eventually, Richard II was forced to abdicate by Henry Bolingbroke, who was the son of John of Gaunt. As such, Henry Bolingbroke became King Henry IV, and the throne passed into Lancastrian hands.

### ***Henry VI***

From Henry IV, the throne passed without issue to his son Henry V. Then, Henry V passed the crown to his son, Henry VI. Henry VI was not only wholly inept to lead an empire, but also suffered from mental diseases which rendered him entirely unresponsive for weeks on end.

When Henry VI ascended to the throne in 1422, he was merely nine months old. During his rule, the government was increasing in control of powerful nobles, creating vast chasms along the English government, and cultivating a general environment of political instability. At the same time, the Hundred Years War rages on, and under Henry VI, the territory gain in France by his numerous predecessors were eroding away.

In an attempt to halt the deteriorating situation in France, Henry VI married Margaret of Anjou, who was a niece to King Charles VII. This move was unpopular amongst nobles and ultimately failed to facilitate peace. Moreover, Margaret of Anjou proved to be a dominant queen to the weak-minded Henry VI and increasingly affected his judgement.

The English society was also breaking down. The economic strain incurred on England as a result of the Hundred Years war caused widespread poverty and food shortages. "Great magnates with private armies dominated the countryside," eroding the authority of the government, and bringing England to a state of "near anarchy." A combination of dissatisfaction amongst both the nobles and the common people created a situation that was ripe for a coup.

### ***The Fight for Power***

Under the weak-willed Henry VI, nobles who gained the most favour with the king in court would have a tremendous influence on his decisions. For the most part of the 1440s, the king's favour fell on William de la Pole, 1st Duke of Suffolk. The Duke of Suffolk and his party advocated a policy of peace in handling the Hundred Years' War, willing to relinquish large portions of English territory in France to negotiate a peace treaty. Suffolk's policies played a large part in the egregious loss of English territory in France and many were dissatisfied with Suffolk's influence on the King, believing that he was leading the empire in the wrong direction.

Unlike Suffolk's party, there were those in the English courts that sought a more aggressive and authoritative approach in the Hundred Years' War. One of these men is Richard of York, 3rd Duke of York. During the 1440s, the Duke of York was appointed as Lieutenant of France to lead the English in the Hundred Years' War. While in France, the Duke of York witnessed first-hand the disastrous effects of the



policies implemented by Suffolk. Financial and manpower shortages plagued the war effort in France, and unless the crown adopted a more aggressive strategy, it was clear that the situation would only deteriorate.

In 1445, the Duke of York's appointment to France ended, and he returned to England. While in England, he embroiled himself in the fractured political scene and pushed for a more aggressive stance towards France. He and his allies never gained much influence with the king. However, his aggressive stance did put him against the king's council (mostly comprised of individuals who shared the king's position of conciliatory actions), and the Duke of York was appointed as Lieutenant of Ireland on July 30th, 1447. The duke's appointment to Ireland was less prestigious than his previous appointment to France and was an attempt by the king's council to punish him and erode his political power in England. Replacing the Duke of York as Lieutenant of France would be Edmund Beaufort, 2nd Duke of Somerset.

The Duke of Somerset would have considerable political power. One of Somerset's allies would be Queen Margaret of Anjou. Despite his political power, Somerset's performance as Lieutenant of France was abysmal. Under his command, the Hundred Years' War was lost entirely in France at the battle of Castillon on July 17th, 1453. Despite this, the Duke of Somerset would return to England and become a commander of the Lancastrian forces in the War of the Roses.

### ***The Return of York***

As the political and socio-economic climate continued to disintegrate back in England, Richard of York saw an opportunity to gain power in the political scene once again. York's bid for power would come in 1452, where he called upon his supporters to march to London to call for reform of the government. In addition, York had also tried to get himself recognised as heir to the throne as Henry VI had yet to produce a male heir at the time. The march did not end well for York. Upon arrival at London, York found a massive army (commanded by Henry VI) which blocked his advance. Outnumbered and outgunned, York had no choice but to yield to the superior force. For the York's behaviour, he was subjected to two weeks of house arrest and forced to swear loyalty to the King. It seemed that York's bid for power was over.

As the saying goes, when God shuts a door, he opens a window. York's window would open in 1453, when news of the defeat in France would send Henry VI tumbling into a mental breakdown. Henry VI would become completely unable to run the nation. Initially, this was fine since Henry VI did nothing to govern his empire regardless and Cardinal John Kemp, high chancellor of England, continued to govern in the King's name. However, John Kemp would die on March 22nd, 1454. This would allow York an opportunity to seize power.



Richard of York had power allies amongst the government of England. The most important of these allies is Richard Neville, 16th Earl of Warwick, who possessed wealth and land that surpassed even those of York's. With the help of Richard Neville and his political influence, York was nominated to the position of Lord Protector of the Realm to govern the country in the absence of Henry VI. Richard of York had now become the most powerful man in England.

With newfound power, York quickly disposed of his political opponents. The Duke of Somerset, a man whom York had long despised, was thrown in jail. In the meantime, most of York's allies were put in high positions. York's actions greatly angered Queen Margaret of Anjou, who had lost all her power. For now, it seems that York had secured power for himself.

### ***Return of the King and Rebellion***

December 25th, 1454, a Christmas miracle was in the works. King Henry VI had begun recovering from his illness, and by January of 1455, Henry VI would completely recover. With this, Richard of York's power had disappeared almost as suddenly as he gained it. Now, Queen Margaret of Anjou – who had been diminished by York – once again had the ear of the King. The changes made under York were quickly reversed, and for his borderline treasonous actions, York had no choice but to flee with his allies.

March 1455: Fearing their demise, York and his Allies had no other option but to amass their armies (which were significant) and attempt to protect themselves through war. Here begins the JCC.

### ***House York's Claim to the Throne***

As mentioned Previously, King Edward III had five legitimate sons; The fourth son is Edmund of Langley. Edmund achieved little during his lifetime. However, Edmund of Langley became the founder of house York. At the time, house York was third in line for the throne and had little claim over the throne. In fact, as long as a single Lancastrian heir was alive, they would preside over the throne. Yet, history always comes with its surprising twists.

Although John of Gaunt's heirs had a higher claim to the throne than Edmund of Langley's heirs, there were other sons of Edward III who held seniority over John of Gaunt such as Lionel of Antwerp, the second son of Edmund. In the line of royal succession, the family of Lionel of Antwerp would have presided over any Lancastrian. However, while the royal courts were deciding the next king in line after Edward III, Lionel of Antwerp had already died and left behind his only daughter – Phillipa of Clarence.

Phillipa of Clarence was married off to the Mortimer family in 1368, entering one of the most powerful houses in the land. Eventually, Phillipa of Clarence would have a granddaughter named Anne de Mortimer, who would marry Richard, Earl of Cambridge, who happened to be the second son of Edmund of Langley. With this marriage, the lineage of Lionel of Antwerp had joined with the house of York. Anne



de Mortimer and Richard, Earl of Cambridge, gave birth to Richard of York in 1411, who will come to lead the Yorkists against Henry VI during the war of the roses.

Therefore, it can be seen that the Yorkists claim to the throne was not actually from the male heirs of York, but instead through the female line of Lionel of Antwerp. This lineage gives Richard of York a considerable claim to the throne. However, during the 14th and 15th century, the idea of a female monarch or a monarchy transcending through a female lineage was widely dismissed. As a result, even though Richard of York's claims were considerable when seen through the modern lens, its credibility during the War of the Roses was minimal.

## **Current Situation**

A detailed situation report will be provided in the bloc backgrounders specific to either house. The special rules of procedure of JCC will also be included in the bloc backgrounders.

## **Bloc Position**

Each Delegate will be emailed their specific positions and agendas prior to the conference.



## Works Cited

Carpenter, Christine. *The Wars of the Roses: Politics and the Constitution in England, c. 1437–1509*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

McFarlane, Kenneth B. "The Wars of the Roses." In *England in the Fifteenth Century*, 231–268. London: Hambledon Press, 1981.

Royle, Trevor. *The Road to Bosworth Field: A New History of the Wars of the Roses*. London: Little, Brown, 2009.

Hicks, Michael. *The Wars of the Roses*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010.

"House of Lancaster." Britannica, accessed February 1, 2019,  
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/house-of-Lancaster>

"House of Tudor." Britannica, accessed February 1, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/House-of-Tudor>

"House of York." Britannica, accessed February 1, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/house-of-York>

Johnson, Ben. "The War of the Roses." Historic UK, accessed February 1, 2019 <https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofEngland/The-Wars-of-the-Roses/>

Lutkin, Jessica. *The Wars of the Roses, 1450–1499*. A /AS Level History for AQA Student Book. Cambridge University Press,  
[https://www.cambridge.org/us/files/5214/5495/2036/A\\_Level\\_History\\_for\\_AQA\\_The\\_Wars\\_of\\_the\\_Roses\\_1450\\_-\\_1499\\_Student\\_Book\\_-\\_Sample\\_Chapter\\_2.pdf](https://www.cambridge.org/us/files/5214/5495/2036/A_Level_History_for_AQA_The_Wars_of_the_Roses_1450_-_1499_Student_Book_-_Sample_Chapter_2.pdf)

"May 22, 1455: The War of the Roses." Research History, May 22, 2011,  
<http://www.researchhistory.org/2011/05/22/may-22-1455the-war-of-the-roses/>

Pollard, Anthony J. *Late Medieval England 1399–1509*. Harlow, UK: Longman, 2000.

Pollard, Anthony J. *The Wars of the Roses*. 2d ed. Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan, 2001.

"War of the Roses." Events, Britannica, accessed February 1, 2019,



<https://www.britannica.com/event/Wars-of-the-Roses>

"War of the Roses." *British History*, history.com, accessed February 1, 2019,  
<https://www.history.com/topics/british-history/wars-of-the-roses>