

8 Was Richard III defeated because of the disappearance of the Princes?

It was the fate of the Princes in the Tower that first got me interested in Wars of the Roses. Many years ago my eye was caught by a book cover showing a face that turned out to be Richard III. The book was Josephine *Tey's The Daughter of Time*, a 'whodunit' exploring whether the Princes were really murdered by Richard III. The sense of mystery is created because there are no trustworthy sources telling us directly what happened to the Princes. At best, writers imply what happened. Take Dominic Mancini, an Italian in London in 1485, who seems to have information from Edward V's doctor:

Edward V and his brother, Richard of York, were aged 12 and 9 in June 1483

... all the King's servants were barred from access to him. He and his brother were withdrawn into the inner rooms of the Tower and day by day began to be seen more rarely behind the windows and bars, until they ceased to be seen altogether. The physician, Argentine, the last of his attendants, reported that the young king, like a victim prepared for sacrifice, made daily confession and penance because he believed that death was facing him.

The inference is that the boys died in summer 1483 but there's no detail of how they died. In addition, Mancini spoke no English, so was dependent on what others told him, and he wrote several months later, when it was widely believed the boys were dead. Mancini may simply have been telling the story people expected to hear.

All the sources have similar problems, so there is no trustworthy document telling us what happened. However, a different kind of evidence exists in the actions of those who rebelled against Richard in autumn 1483. What's significant is the identity of those rebels. Richard in autumn 1483, been loyal followers of Edward IV, so this was a Yorkist rebellion aiming to put Edward V back on the throne. But then they changed their plan, deciding to support Henry, Earl of Richmond (Henry Tudor). This was a remarkable change. Hardly anyone knew Henry. He'd been in exile since 1471, had no training for kingship and only the remotest claim to the throne and that was through the Lancastrian line (see page 119). The only explanation for these loyal Yorkists backing the Lancastrian heir is that they believed Edward V and his brother were dead. They would not have turned to Henry if they'd believed the Princes were alive.

These men's actions provide the most compelling evidence that the Princes were dead. They clearly believed that Richard was responsible and this belief led them to rebel, then go into exile with Henry and finally to return to defeat Richard. However, was the disappearance of the Princes the sole reason for Richard's defeat or did other factors play an even greater part?

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Enquiry Focus: Was Richard III defeated because of the disappearance of the Princes?

This enquiry isn't just about the disappearance of the Princes. It explores other factors contributing to Richard's defeat, their significance and whether they were linked to the Princes' disappearance.

- As you read this enquiry, build up a causation diagram like the one below which shows the factors involved in Richard's defeat. After the discussion of each factor, annotate your diagram and make supporting notes using these questions as a guide:
 - Was the factor linked to the disappearance of the Princes? If so, how?
 - What links can you see to other factors?
 - How was the factor linked to his defeat?
 - How important was this factor in Richard's defeat?

'Buckingham's' rebellion of 1483

Henry's emergence as a rival

Richard's character

Richard's rivalries with northern lords

Richard's defeat

Richard's planting of his northern supporters in the south

Events at Bosworth

Dependence on a narrow group of supporters

The disappearance of the Princes

French support for Henry

- Before you begin, pencil in any links that you think are likely. What does the resulting pattern suggest about the significance of the disappearance of the Princes?

What do we call Henry Tudor?

This seems a daft question. The man who became Henry VII is usually called Henry Tudor before 1485 and Tudor is one of the most famous names in history. The trouble is Henry didn't use the name Tudor. He called himself by his title, Henry, Earl of Richmond. Richard III called him Tudor in public proclamations as an insult, to draw attention to Henry's descent from Owen Tudor, an obscure Welsh squire. Very unroyal! And, as the historian C.S.L. Davies has shown, people in the 1500s didn't use the name Tudor or write about 'the Tudors'. The kings and queens didn't call themselves Tudors. So, to be polite to Henry, this book mostly calls him Henry of Richmond!

'Buckingham's' Rebellion and the emergence of Henry of Richmond

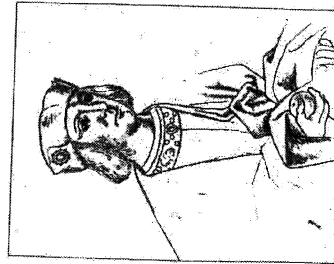
Opposition began in the first weeks of Richard's reign. There was a plot to rescue Edward IV's daughters from sanctuary and an attempt to rescue the Princes under cover of outbreaks of fires around London. The involvement of John Cheney, Edward IV's Master of the Horse and standard bearer, was a clear sign that Edward IV's household men were recovering from the shock of the execution of their leader, Hastings. Richard had hoped these men would be the core of his support, demonstrating continuity from his brother's reign, but they regarded him as a usurper and were prepared to fight to restore Edward V.

household men
Henry members of
Edward IV's household,
his closest servants,
Hastings, as Chamberlain,
had been head of the
household

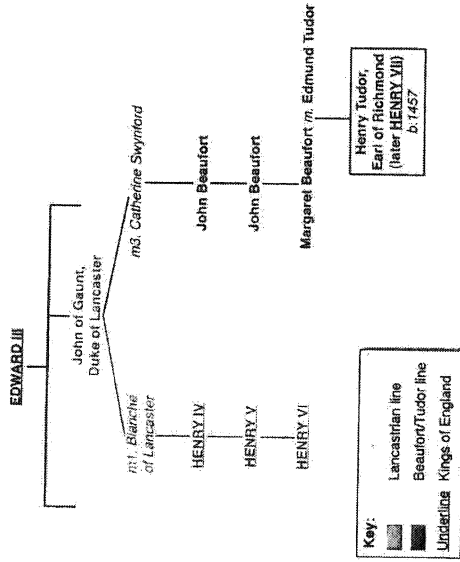
By August a larger rebellion was being planned but the rebels soon changed their aim of restoring Edward V. Believing the Princes to be dead, the rebels sought an alternative candidate for the crown. They might have preferred one of Edward IV's nephews but, for a variety of reasons (too young; under Richard's control), they were unsuitable. Their choice, the inexperienced Henry of Richmond, was second best but he did have a connection to the crown through the Lancastrian line. However, don't be deceived into thinking this was a Lancastrian rebellion because of Tudor's Lancastrian links. It wasn't. This was fundamentally a Yorkist rebellion, with Henry the new Yorkist candidate for the crown. For Henry's claim to the crown, see the family tree opposite.

By October 1483 rebellion had spread right across the south. How many were involved we don't know, but what made the rebellion a threat was the status of the rebels: leading gentry in nearly every county from Cornwall in the west to Kent in the east. Their motives varied. A few had been out of political favour for years and saw the chance to ingratiate themselves with a new ruler (Henry). The Woodvilles and their relatives were involved, unsurprisingly given their loss of power, land and the executions and disappearances they'd suffered. However, the majority of rebels had not suffered demotions or loss of land or authority under Richard. They were motivated by outrage at the deposition and disappearance of Edward V and his brother. Contrary to what people today often assume, the murder of children was seen as just as great a crime in the 1400s as it is now. Kings had been deposed before but never a child-king and never an adult king who hadn't caused serious problems for many years. These rebels had a great deal to lose – lives, families, wealth – yet they risked rebellion in a moral protest against Richard's behaviour, persuading others to rebel through family links or friendship.

◁ A sketch of Henry of Richmond (Tudor) as a young man. (See page 139 for his upbringing before 1471.) In 1471, when Edward IV returned, Henry had been taken to live in Brittany by his uncle, Jasper Tudor. Henry's ambition had been to return to England to take his place amongst the nobility. Instead, the disappearance of the Princes turned him into a candidate to be king. As the autumn rebellion unfolded, it's likely that Henry's mother, Margaret Beaufort, and John Morton, Bishop of Ely, made contact with Elizabeth Woodville and others, pushing Henry into the minds of the Yorkist rebels as a possible leader.



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◁ A simplified family tree showing Henry of Richmond's claim to the crown through his mother, Margaret Beaufort, and his link back to Edward III. See also the family tree on page 38

Yet the rebellion failed miserably. One reason was the extreme difficulty of co-ordinating a rising across the whole of the south. Some rebels took no decisive action, waiting for others to join them. Second, Richard was well prepared, warned by his spies of what was happening. Third, some potential rebels didn't join in, which brings us to the role of Buckingham whose name is often misleadingly given to the rebellion even though he did not join until very late on.

The most likely reason for Buckingham's joining the rebellion is that he expected Richard to be overthrown and so deserted what he thought was Richard's sinking ship. But rats can drown! His arrival weakened the rebellion. Until then, the rebels had hoped for support from the powerful Talbot and Stanley families. When Buckingham joined the rebellion, it seems that these families, rivals of Buckingham in north Wales and the Welsh border, decided to stay out. For them, one of the attractions of the rebellion was taking Buckingham's land, so they weren't going to fight on his side! By the time Henry's ships neared the coast, the rebellion had failed. Buckingham was executed. Henry sailed back to Brittany where he was joined by around 400 rebels. Others returned to their homes with no option but to make their peace with Richard. But the rebellion, despite its failure, did affect Richard's chances of keeping the crown:

- It established Henry as a rival for the crown. At Christmas 1483 he promised to marry Edward IV's eldest daughter, Elizabeth of York, another clear sign that he was the Yorkist candidate for the crown.
- The flight of rebels to Brittany gave Henry a core group of supporters, men who'd been leaders in their counties, such as John Cheney and Giles Daubeney. Many of those who stayed in England would follow these men if they returned at the head of an invasion.

How strongly was the rebellion linked to the disappearance of the Princes?
How did the rebellion weaken Richard?
What impact did Henry of Richmond's emergence as leader have on Richard's position?
Complete your diagram for these factors.

The planting of northerners in the south

Richard had defeated the rebellion but it left him with a major problem. A significant number of rebels had fled abroad. They were the men who made local government work in their counties, by acting as judges in county courts, as sheriffs, as members of commissions into major crime or treason or by raising defence forces when needed. Now there were gaps in this network in almost every southern county. In addition, could Richard trust the gentry still in England, the friends and neighbours of the rebels?

Richard had to fill these gaps. His solution was to use men from his own affinity (mostly northerners with whom he'd built up a close relationship since the 1470s). At first he chose to fill the gaps with men who already had connections in the south. For example, in Kent his first choice was Ralph Ashton from Lancashire who had married a Kentishwoman, Elizabeth Kyriel, earlier in 1483 and so had land in Kent. Ashton was given significant rewards of land, responsibility for investigating rebels' possessions, and other posts. However, there were not enough such northerners with links with Kent, so Richard had to import complete outsiders: who were given local authority and lands. Kent became the new base for Robert Brackenbury from Durham, Ralph Bygot, Marmaduke Constable and William Mauleverer, all from Yorkshire, and several other northern gentry.

This pattern was repeated in many southern counties. The result was pockets of northern newcomers in every county. Their presence aroused great hostility, as voiced by the author of the *Crowland Chronicle*:

[Richard] distributed all these [lands] amongst his northerners whom he had planted in every part of his dominions, to the shame of all the southern people who ... longed more each day for the return of their old lords in place of the tyranny of the present ones.

'Tyranny' is a harsh word to use. Was the arrival of the northerners really so terrible? Although there is no evidence of physical intimidation by the newcomers, their arrival was deeply shocking to the local gentry. The gentry in each county made up a close-knit community, intermarried with long-standing friendships, used to working together. Now they had two, three or more outsiders in their county, men they saw as Richard's spies and resented for taking over the lands of local friends or relatives. These outsiders had been imposed on the locals without any regard for their reactions, hence the sense of tyranny.

So Richard's 'planting' of northerners created great resentment in the south. This was a long way from the continuity in government that he'd hoped for when he intended to use Edward IV's household as his core supporters. The planting demonstrates that Richard was not in control of events. The violence used in taking the crown and the disappearance of the Princes had led to rebellion and then rebellion had led to the planting of northerners and this, in turn, increased the chances of more rebellion. Richard was having to react, to make second-best choices, hoping they wouldn't make his situation worse. This was not a recipe for success.

To which other factors is the planting linked?
Was there a link back from the planting to the disappearance of the Princes?
Complete your diagram for this factor.



The effigy of Edward Redmayn and his wife Elizabeth, above, dating from c.1510, can be seen in the church at Harewood in West Yorkshire. Edward Redmayn was one of the northerners whose lives changed dramatically in 1483. Edward, a lawyer, played the same roles as other gentry in Richard's affinity in the 1470s and early 1480s. For example, in 1483 he sat on the Commissions of the Peace in the West Riding and Westmoreland (where his family had lands) and on commissions to assess taxes. So far, so ordinary.

Then came the rebellion in October 1483. Edward was summoned south with other northerners to arrest rebels in Devon and Cornwall. Over the next 18 months he was given considerable authority in the south west, sitting on commissions to array defence forces in Dorset and Wiltshire, to deal with crime in Wiltshire, and to investigate treasons in Devon. He was appointed Sheriff of Somerset and Devon in 1484. His rewards included lands forfeited by local rebels. Thus, the man in the photograph was one of the northerners whom the *Crowland Chronicle*

said were so hated. One thing we can't know is what this experience was like for men such as Edward, knowing his presence in the south was resented by the locals.

Another question is 'what did Edward think of Richard III?' Many people regarded Richard as a usurper who had stolen his nephew's crown. Yet there were as many, especially in the north, who were deeply loyal to Richard (see also page 126).

This loyalty seems to have been based on far more than self-interest. Many probably thought Richard would be a genuinely good king, a man whose qualities and character had won their loyalty. Edward was probably one of them though we cannot know.

After Bosworth, Edward returned north. He lost the lands in the south but was pardoned by Henry VII and eventually restored to authority in the north, becoming Sheriff of Cumberland in 1492. He was back to the life of an ordinary northern gentleman, carrying out routine tasks alongside others who had briefly been catapulted south by Richard III's need for loyal supporters.

Richard's rivalries with northern lords

Richard had dominated the north since the early 1470s, building up a loyal affinity. However, two leading families felt threatened by Richard's dominance. The first was the Stanley family, headed by brothers Lord Thomas and Sir William, whose lands were mostly in Lancashire and Cheshire. They had clashed with Richard since 1469, especially over the Stanleys' fight with the Harrington family for possession of Hornby Castle. Richard's support for the Harringtons, who were members of his affinity, infuriated the Stanleys, although Edward IV intervened to end any chances of fighting. Once King however, Richard was eager to settle the argument in the Harringtons' favour, giving the Stanleys a reason to fight against Richard. In addition, Thomas Stanley's wife was Margaret Beaufort, mother of Henry of Richmond!

At first this factor doesn't seem to have any links to the Princes, but does it? Complete your diagram for this factor.

Why should I support Richard when he gives Lincoln my place in the north?

Why should we support Richard when he favours the Harringtons?

We would gain more when your step-son, Henry, is King.

Northumberland

Lord Thomas Stanley

Sir William Stanley

The second northerner was Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland, another who had reluctantly taken second place to Richard's dominance. Once Richard became king, Northumberland hoped to be the leading power in the north, only to find that Richard promoted his nephew, the Earl of Lincoln, an outsider to the region, a clear sign that Richard would maintain his close involvement in the north. If Henry of Richmond invaded, could Richard depend on Northumberland's loyalty?

Dependence on a narrow group of supporters

Richard had good intentions as king. He was particularly interested in the legal system and his only Parliament (in 1484) made reforms to ensure everyone had access to justice, especially those who could not afford lawyers. He worked hard at public order and royal finances, helped by the fact that the government bureaucracy kept running smoothly. However, efficiency could not counter-balance Richard's failure to provide stability, the most important element of kingship. Threats of rebellion never went away, leading him to ever greater dependence on a small core of supporters.

We have seen several times that the accusation of ruling through a small, unrepresentative group of 'favourites' was very damaging. In 1450 this was a major accusation against Suffolk. In 1469 Warwick criticised Edward IV for allowing the Woodvilles too much influence and in 1483 Richard himself claimed he was saving England from dominance by a Woodville clique. But by 1484 Richard had been forced into the same trap, summarised by William Collingbourne's rhyme:

The Cat, the Rat and Lovell our Dog,
Rule all England under a Hog.

Collingbourne was executed in 1484, not for terrible poetry but for treason: plotting against Richard

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The Hog was Richard, after his badge, the white boar. The advisers in the first line were William Catesby, Richard Ratcliffe and Francis, Lord Lovell. Other members of Richard's inner circle were Robert Brackenbury, James Tyrrell and John Howard, who was made Duke of Norfolk by Richard. All were highly rewarded. Ratcliffe, for example, received a rich haul of lands in Devon but such rewards only created another problem. If any rebels wanted to return from Brittany, Richard had no lands to give them or else he had to take them back from his supporters.

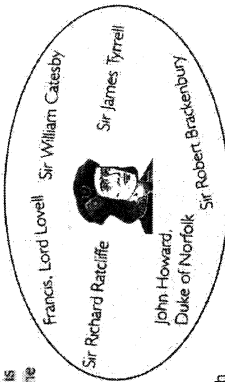
Richard had not intended to be dependent on this small group but the events of May-June 1483 and the autumn rebellion had forced this situation on him. Richard did try to deal with the problem. When a trickle of rebels returned to England in 1484, they were pardoned. Most dramatically, Richard persuaded Elizabeth Woodville to come out of sanctuary and take her place at court with her daughters. This was great propaganda for Richard, sending the message, 'if Elizabeth Woodville is at Richard's court then she can't think Henry has much chance of success'. This is also one of the most intriguing moments of this period. Why did Elizabeth appear at court if Richard had murdered her sons? The most likely solution is that she was playing both sides for the good of her surviving family. If Henry's threat waned, she had to make peace with Richard at some point but her eldest daughter, Elizabeth of York, was still promised in marriage to Henry.

Then, in March 1485, came the news that Richard's wife, Anne Neville, had died, followed by the rumour that Richard now intended to marry Elizabeth of York, his niece. Other rumours said that Richard had poisoned Anne so that he could marry Elizabeth, thus stopping her marrying Henry and so diminishing his claim to be Edward IV's natural successor. These rumours were so strong and unpopular that, according to the *Cronicle*, Richard's closest advisers, Ratcliffe and Catesby, 'told the King to his face that if he did not deny [this rumour] the northerners ... would all rise up against him'.

Richard did make public denials, a humiliating thing for a king to do, but these rumours tell us several things:

- Richard's reputation was so bad after the disappearance of the princes that people could believe he would poison his wife.
- He was so heavily dependent on his northern support (which he'd first gained through his marriage to Anne Neville; see page 96) that they could threaten to abandon him.
- Tudor threat that marriage to his niece was even considered.

Richard's only son died in 1484 and his wife in 1485. Without an heir there was now no continuity and, though Richard was young, it would be at least 15 years before a new-born son would be adult. Could this have made men wonder if Richard was worth supporting? Should these deaths be a factor on your causation diagram?



To which other factors is Richard's dependence on a small number of supporters linked? Can you trace a link between this factor and the disappearance of the Princes? Complete your diagram for this factor.

French support for Henry of Richmond

Foreign policy was another area where Richard was forced to react rather than pursue the policies he'd have chosen if free from rebellion. He saw himself as a warrior-king. Ideally waging war against Scotland and France. However, instead of invading Scotland he was forced to reach a truce in 1484, because of the death of his only son at Easter and because it was an expense he couldn't afford owing to the need to be ready to combat an invasion.

That invasion looked increasingly threatening by 1485 because of events in France and Brittany. Brittany was an independent dukedom and the Duke wanted English aid for his fight to retain independence from France. This had led to a marriage arrangement between Edward V and Anne of Brittany, the Duke's daughter. The Duke must have been alarmed at the disappearance of Edward V but he still began negotiations with Richard for English help. What could Brittany offer Richard in return? Brittany could hand over Henry of Richmond.

At this point both French and Breton politics became complicated by internal rivalries but the result was that Henry fled from Brittany to France to avoid being handed over to Richard.

The news that France was supporting Henry encouraged a number of defections from Richard to Henry late in 1484. The English garrison of Hames Castle, near Calais, defected to Henry, taking with them one of the few remaining Lancastrian nobles, the Earl of Oxford. Even more importantly, France provided Henry with practical military help: a fleet of ships to transport around 4000 soldiers, including over 2000 French soldiers and 1000 Scots from the King of France's guard. These numbers are estimates but show the importance of French aid.

Events at Bosworth, 22 August 1485

What Richard needed, the only thing that might provide stability, was complete victory over Henry and the exiled Yorkists. Thus, when Richard heard that Henry had landed in Pembroke on 7 August, 'he rejoiced, according to the *Growthland Chronicle*, 'saying the day he had longed for had arrived'.

Henry's invasion force can best be described as an anti-Richard alliance of former members of Edward IV's household, French and Scots soldiers, and a handful of former Lancastrians, notably the Earl of Oxford. As he

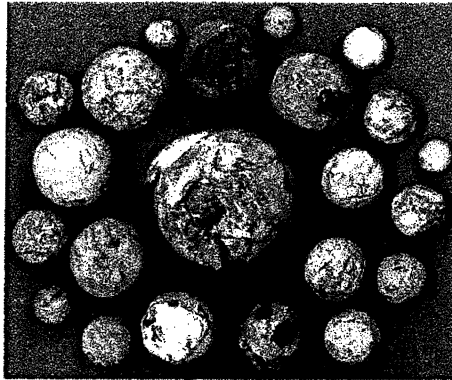
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☞ To which factors do the events at Bosworth link back? Was Richard's defeat certain before the battle?

marched into England his force grew, increased by men such as Walter Hungerford and Thomas Bouchier, who'd rebelled in 1483 and now saw a second chance to defeat Richard. Summoned to fight for Richard, they slipped away to join Henry.

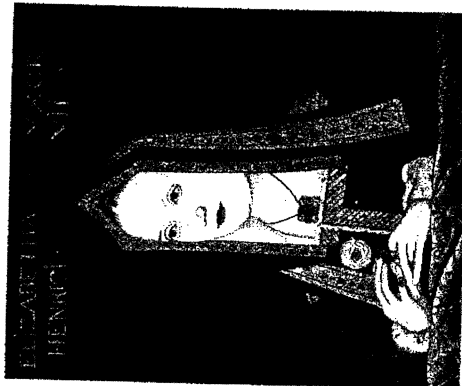
Despite the increase in Henry's army, Richard had the larger force when the two armies met near Bosworth in Leicestershire on 22 August (see page 4). The Stanley forces were near by. Richard had tried to ensure they didn't join Henry by taking Lord Stanley's son as a hostage. As with other battles, it's hard to reconstruct what happened that morning. Henry's vanguard, led by Oxford, may have had the advantage in early fighting but knights brought him close enough to the head of his household Sir William Stanley's force intervened and Richard was killed. One puzzling feature is the failure of the Earl of Northumberland's men to join the battle on Richard's side (or Henry's). Did he deliberately betray Richard, angry at Richard's failure to give him control in the north or did he simply have no opportunity because Richard charged much sooner than expected, leaving Northumberland to watch events unfold?

Richard was killed. So too were most of his closest supporters, including Norfolk, Ratcliffe and Brackenbury. Even Polydore Vergil, writing later for Henry, praised Richard's bravery, saying he was killed 'fighting manfully in the thickest press of his enemies'; Henry of Richmond (Henry Tudor), who'd had no expectations of the crown three years earlier, was now King Henry VII.



▷ Other finds from the battlefield include this silver-gilt bear, Richard III's badge, probably a prized possession of a member of his affinity who died at Bosworth.

◁ Historians have argued for many years over the exact location of the battlefield of Bosworth. Archaeological surveys finally led to the identification in 2010 of the core of the battlefield, marked by finds of cannonballs (such as those shown here).



△ Elizabeth of York, eldest daughter of Edward IV and Elizabeth Woodville. She was aged 17 at Christmas 1483 when it was agreed that she would marry Henry of Richmond, cementing the anti-Richard alliance. She married Henry after Bosworth and went on to be the mother of Henry VIII.

☞ Henry failed in 1483 but succeeded in 1485. To what extent can this difference be explained by French aid? Complete your diagram for this factor.

The character of Richard III

Occasionally, amidst the politics, we can catch a glimpse of the man, not the king. When Richard's only legitimate son, Edward, died in April 1484, the *Crowland Chronicle* provides a poignant description of the King and Queen 'almost out of their minds for a long time when faced with this sudden grief.'

Other glimpses can be found in people's behaviour. One northerner, William Mautleaver, proudly left in his will 'a little ring with a diamond that King Richard gave me'. This suggests, along with other evidence, Richard's ability to inspire great loyalty amongst his affinity. Richard is the only king of England to have a strong connection with the north. While his 'northern-ness' can be exaggerated, since he was always a national political figure, he spent much time in the 1470s at his castle of Middleham in North Yorkshire. He planned to build a chantry in York for 100 priests, which suggests he wished to be buried in York, the strongest evidence of his affection for the north. That affection was returned, at least by some. When news of Richard's death reached the city of York its ruling council recorded, 'King Richard, late mercifully reigning over us ... was piteously slain and murdered to the great heaviness [sorrow] of this city'. It is deeply puzzling how one man could inspire such loyalty in some and yet such hostility in others.

The great variety of reactions to Richard helps make his character hard to define. Yet again we have to be cautious, but perhaps one character trait relevant to his defeat was impulsiveness. At key moments in his reign Richard seems to have acted with great suddenness and perhaps without enough thought, creating problems for himself which only grew greater with time. The arrest of Rivers was the first, then the execution of Hastings and the seizure of the crown and finally his last charge at Bosworth. All perhaps had arguments in their favour, arguments which seemed good at the time, but they turned out to be mistakes. If it had not been for Richard's impulsiveness in 1483, England would have been spared over two years of uncertainty, a rebellion and an invasion, and the Wars of the Roses would have ended in 1471.

Can you trace a link between this factor and the disappearance of the princes?
Complete your diagram for this factor.

Was Richard III defeated because of the disappearance of the Princes?

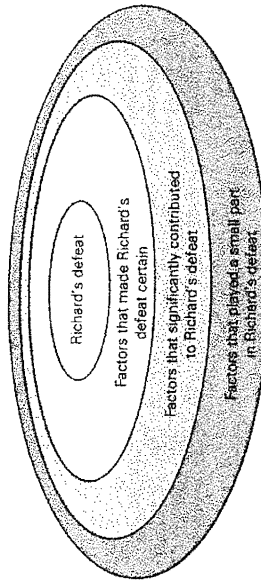
So, was Richard doomed by the disappearance of the Princes? Not quite! If the disappearance of the Princes had been the key to defeat then perhaps Richard would have been toppled by the 1483 rebellion. Secondly, in 1485 if events within France had gone differently, France might not have supported Henry, leaving Henry stranded without support for an invasion. Thirdly, Richard could have won at Bosworth if William Stanley's charge had been delayed by another minute or two then Richard might have killed Henry and ended the battle in victory. Success at Bosworth would then have given him the chance to establish himself, plus the ability to claim God's approval for his victory. In that case Richard, over time, might have emerged as a very capable king (he was only 32 when he died).

But Richard lost at Bosworth and, though French support for Henry was a very significant factor, Henry would never have become his rival but for the way Richard took the crown and the widespread belief that he was responsible for the deaths of the Princes. So great was the opposition to Richard that Professor Christine Carpenter has suggested that, even if Henry had been killed at Bosworth, members of Edward IV's former household would have found another candidate to oppose Richard, perhaps one of the de la Pole family, sons of a sister of Edward IV and Richard III.

Concluding your enquiry

- 1 Revise your causation diagram, identifying links between factors
- 2 Place each factor on your own version of the diagram below in order to identify the relative significance of the factors in Richard's defeat. Use your completed causation diagram to help you.
- 3 Write an answer to the enquiry question. Which of these phrases most sums up your conclusion?

'To a great extent Richard was defeated because of the disappearance ...'
'This was only one factor amongst several ...'
'The disappearance of the Princes played a part but was less important than ...'
'The disappearance of the Princes was insignificant compared with ...'
'This factor was the most important because it led to other events that ...'



Was Richard III defeated because of the disappearance of the Princes? Some points to think about

Richard made success very difficult for himself. Having become Protector, claiming to represent continuity from his brother, he then destroyed that continuity with his deposition of Edward V. His hopes that his brother's household would become the heart of his support then disappeared when they rebelled after the disappearance of the Princes. The rebellion then led him to plant his own supporters in the south, creating further opposition. His dependence on a narrow group of supporters, dominated by his own northern affinity, was just the kind of narrowly based government he'd claimed to oppose in 1483 when he took action against the Woodvilles. The disappearance of the Princes even fuelled the French belief that Richard was an aggressive king who planned an invasion of France, and there's no doubt that French support played a major part in Henry of Richmond's success.