

Name _____ Date _____ Core _____

The Hundred Years' War

When a king was a vassal to another king, there was sure to be trouble. When they were the kings of France and England, and each was determined to hold on to what was his, it added up to 116 years of trouble. The Hundred Years' War, as it was called, was not continuous by any means; there were long lulls in the fighting and many distractions; revolts, political disputes, and the plague years.

There had been bad blood between English and French rulers since the Norman invasion. Each tried to stir up trouble for the other. The English had allies in France opposed to the French king. The French helped the Scots fight the English and stirred up the people of Aquitaine against English rule. In 1337, nine years after Philip VI was crowned the French king, Edward III of England claimed the throne was rightfully his, and the war was officially on. Still, little happened until 1346 when both armies met at Crecy.

The French army was made up of 15,000 Genoese mercenaries (soldiers from Genoa paid to fight). When the battle started, they were tired from an 18-mile march in heavy armor, and adding to their troubles, a heavy rainstorm left their bowstrings wet and nearly useless. The English archers were rested and had kept their strings dry. This battle was especially notable because the English brought three or four small cannons with them. The French troops had never heard the boom of a cannon before and thought that "God thundered." The Genoese survived that, but not the volley of white arrows that hit them like a "snowstorm." Crecy was a great victory for England.

John the Good, who followed Philip to the throne, was determined to stop the raids of the Black Prince (son of Edward III) and get revenge for the defeat at Crecy. With 60,000 men, John faced an English army of only 10,000 men at Poitiers, but the English position was so strong they defeated the French and captured John. French peasants were required to pay a high tax to ransom the king, and that led to the Jacquerie revolt.

The English also had their troubles. For a time, England seemed to pull together, and national pride ran strong. Then taxes went up, hitting the poor the hardest. Wat Tyler's Rebellion (1381) protested the head tax

imposed on everyone over 15. Rioting also occurred in London where the Lord Chancellor, collector of the tax, was beheaded. The Black Death also visited both countries and took people's minds off of war.

Later, Henry V decided that war would bring the nation together again and picked a quarrel with the French. In 1415, at Agincourt, a French army of 50,000 met Henry's army of 7,000 to 8,000 men. Again, circumstances favored the English. A heavy rainstorm made the land over which the French crossed so wet that their horsemen sank deep in it. Henry's men put sharpened stakes in the ground to stop the French cavalry. The bewildered French faced a barrage of arrows and once again suffered a humiliating defeat.

After nearly 100 years of fighting, however, a French teenage peasant girl, Joan of Arc, rallied the French troops. Although the English eventually captured and killed Joan, it was too late. The French drove the English from their country in 1453.