

MARGARET MY NAME

DRAMATURGY PACKET

By Rachel Greene

Margaret My Name is made up of text taken from four of Shakespeare's history plays: *Henry VI pt 1*, *Henry VI pt 2*, *Henry VI pt 3*, and *Richard III*. These plays chronicle the historical **Wars of the Roses**, a fight for the English crown between the **Houses of Lancaster and York**. Over the span of these four plays we see the crown switch heads several times, powerful players change sides, a mutiny against the crown occur, sons, fathers, husbands, and lovers killed off, and so much more. While in Shakespeare's telling of this story the men take center stage, there is only one character who lives through it all and appears in all four plays: a woman, **Queen Margaret of Anjou**.

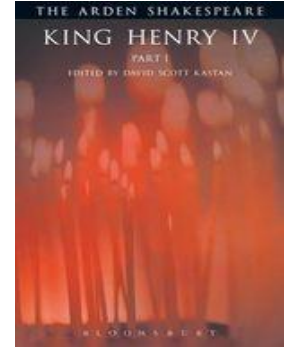


So who is Margaret? Margaret of Anjou was a real person, though Shakespeare certainly takes some artistic liberties with the details of her story, so I wouldn't get too bogged down in historical accounts of her life post-marriage. Following is a brief summary of each of the plays as they concern Margaret.

THE PLAYS:

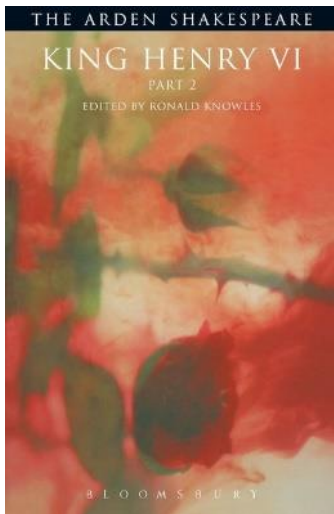
HENRY VI part I (just the final act)

She was the daughter of the king of France, and at around age 14 she gets caught running about on the battlefield by a English soldier named **William de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk**. Suffolk immediately appraises Margaret as a good match for the young **King Henry VI**, and he brings her back to England with him for an arranged marriage.



HENRY VI part II

Margaret marries Henry – though the rest of the peers at court are not at all pleased with the match – while also carrying on an affair with Suffolk.



Margaret quickly rises to political prominence and gains the respect of many of the peers, though she also becomes passionately hated by many others. Tensions begin to rise as **York** decides to make a claim for the crown – uprisings begin, political alliances form and change, men are murdered and relationships destroyed. When **Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester** is murdered on the command of Suffolk (with help from Margaret and several other men from the royal court), Henry banishes him and Suffolk and Margaret share a tearful goodbye. Suffolk is later murdered and his head sent to Margaret, who carries it around and grieves for him loudly in court. York finally storms the palace and kicks Margaret and Henry out.

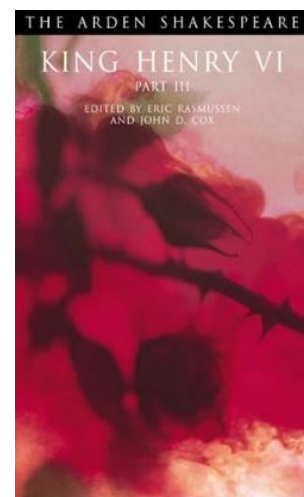
HENRY VI part III

In attempt to avoid further war, Henry makes a deal with York: if York stops trying to kill him and his family, Henry will pass the crown over to the House of York upon his natural death. Margaret, who now has a son with Henry,

Prince Edward, find out about this deal and is furious with Henry for disinheriting their only son. Margaret refuses to accept this, divorces Henry and takes his army and their son, and heads into the battlefield to find York.

On the way she kills York's youngest son, **Rutland**. Margaret eventually traps York, mocks him, and murders him. Avenging their father's death, York's remaining three sons (**Edward IV**, **Clarence**, and **Richard III**) capture Margaret and kill Prince Edward in front of her.

At this point Richard III has captured King Henry, imprisoned him in a tower, and killed him.



RICHARD III



This play chronicles Richard III's rise to (and fall from) power, as he essentially tries to kill off every member of his family and friends that stand between him and the throne. Margaret at this point has lost everything (her son, her husband, the man she loved, her armies, her position in government), and now lurks in Richard's court. She confronts Richard and curses him, detailing exactly why and how he will fail and be defeated. Richard ignores her, but as the play unfolds we see everything Margaret said would happen occurs. The last time we see Margaret she is approached by the new queen, **Queen Elizabeth**, who is one of the many recent subjects of Richard's cruelty. She begs Margaret to teach her how to curse her enemies.

SOME THEMES/RESEARCH:

So why do a whole thesis about Margaret? I am excited about so many aspects of her character, arc, and world, but I wanted to share a few key aspects of my research with you:

- **Cursing as a Female Legacy:**
 - Margaret is actually preceded by another cursing young Frenchwoman, **Joan of Arc** (in Henry VI pt I). Joan is a spitfire of a woman, but she is ultimately defeated by York at the end of her play. She doesn't go easily, however – she is dragged offstage cursing, the only grasp at power she has left, and in runs 14-year-old Margaret, as if to take her place.
 - Margaret tries on many avenues for maintaining agency throughout her life, but by the end all is stripped from her and she is left only with her voice and her curses.
 - She then passes this on to Elizabeth, and that's the last we see of Margaret.
 - I am excited to continue exploring how Margaret relates to her female foils and ultimately serves as a conduit for the power of female agency, in a story that is really much bigger than just her own.

- **What is the meaning of gender in this period, and today?**
 - Gender politics is deeply embedded in these texts. While Margaret bends and morphs within the framework of “femininity,” she is often attacked for her subversions of these standards.
 - Margaret cycles through all of the female archetypes in classical literature, and with each stage she finds new avenues through which to her maintain agency in a patriarchal space. Every time her power is stripped from her, she shifts into a new archetype.
 - Margaret's power is not always accepted by the men around her! Check out York's “She-wolf of France” speech from Henry VI pt 3.
 - The men also bend within the confines of male gender construction. Many are attacked by Margaret and others for not demonstrating masculine traits to their fullest extent, and sometimes for exhibiting them too much.

- **Female-forward Shakespeare:**
 - What does it look like to put a woman in the center of a narrative often told from the perspectives of men? While the men remain integral, essential players, how can we shift our perspectives to focus on the people (specifically the women) effected by their actions?

KEY CHARACTERS:

*These descriptions do not capture these characters in their entirety, so if you are interested in learning more I encourage checking out the full Henry VI and Richard III plays to see more of what they do!

**This list is color coded based on our current doubling

MARGARET: (see above)

SUFFOLK: William de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk (later First Duke of Suffolk). A soldier of King Henry VI, later a confidant, advisor, and lover to Queen Margaret. Eventually banished by Henry and beheaded by pirates.

KING HENRY VI: Married to Margaret. Was crowned king at 9 months old. Places great trust in his advisors (specifically Humphrey Duke of Gloucester) to tell him what to do and run the kingdom for him. A very religious man and a pacifist, would love nothing more than to end the wars with as little conflict as possible. Eventually murdered by Richard III.



HUMPHREY, DUKE OF GLOUCESTER: Uncle to King Henry VI and protector of the realm while Henry is young. Has strong opinions about politics, but does not wish to steal the crown from Henry. Eventually murdered on orders from Suffolk, with input from Queen Margaret and several other peers of England.

DUCHESS ELEANOR COBHAM: Second wife of Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester. Has grown accustomed to a certain way of life while essentially acting as queen as Humphrey runs the kingdom, and is not interested in being replaced by a new queen. After failing to urge her husband to aid her in displacing Henry and Margaret, she hires a witch to help her curse the royal family. She is found out for committing witchcraft and eventually exiled to the Isle of Man.

YORK: Originally one of the men in King Henry's court, York becomes dissatisfied and decides to begin a fight for the crown, officially inciting the Wars of the Roses. Once a friend of Margaret's, he eventually becomes her greatest enemy. He is succeeded by his four sons, Rutland (although Rutland is actually murdered before York's death), Clarence, Edward IV, and Richard III. York is eventually murdered by Margaret and her soldiers.

PRINCE EDWARD: Son of Margaret and Henry. Ultimately disinherited by a deal between Henry and York and murdered by York's sons.

CLIFFORD: a loyal soldier of Queen Margaret.

KING EDWARD IV: Son of York, becomes the king after his father's death. Married to Queen Elizabeth. Eventually dies of grief after hearing news of the death of his brother Clarence (who was murdered by orders from his other brother Richard III)

RICHARD III: The villain of the play named after him, he works to kill off his siblings and everyone else who stands between him and the crown. Is eventually murdered by Henry VII, ending the Wars of the Roses. His death and the death of his supporters are foretold in Margaret's curses.



QUEEN ELIZABETH: Wife of King Edward IV. Fights against Richard III in his court and plays a significant role in ending the Wars of the Roses.



Some Key Terms:

- **WARS OF THE ROSES** – Series of battles to determine who has the strongest claim to the crown in England between the **HOUSE OF YORK** (York, Richard III, others), and the **HOUSE OF LANCASTER** (King Henry VI, Queen Margaret, others)
- **PRIMOGENITURE** – Order of claim to the crown based on first-born sons
- **HOUSE OF PLANTAGENET** – Royal house which splits into **HOUSE OF YORK** and **HOUSE OF LANCASTER**
- **DIADEM** – crown
- **REGENCY GOVERNMENT** – Due to Henry's appointment to the throne at such a young age, his uncle Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester is appointed **LORD PROTECTOR** to run the kingdom until Henry is of age to rule
- **RED ROSE** – House of Lancaster
- **WHITE ROSE** – House of York



*The **Wars of the Roses** is a big, complicated, series of battles, alliances, deals, and claims. If you want the full story (as Shakespeare tells it), I would recommend reading all four plays. But I will also include some summaries and a family tree to give you a general idea:

WARS OF THE ROSES OVER THREE PLAYS

* SLIDES TAKEN FROM POWERPOINT MADE BY ADAM SANDERS FOR COMMONWEALTH SHAKESPEARE COMPANY, 2018 *



HENRY VI

PART I

- Regency led by Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester and Cardinal Henry Beaufort
- French resistance led by Joan of Arc and Charles VII
- England divided: those for French war (Gloucester) and those advocating withdraw (Beaufort)
- England loses French territories, much of its wealth and civil content



HENRY VI

PART II

- Henry comes of age and relieves his uncle Gloucester of his protectorship
- Henry marries Margaret of Anjou, princess of Naples
- The marriage is heavily criticized: Naples, a poor country
- Henry battles with insanity and Margaret leads House Lancaster
- Margaret openly contends with Richard, Duke of York, Protector of the Realm

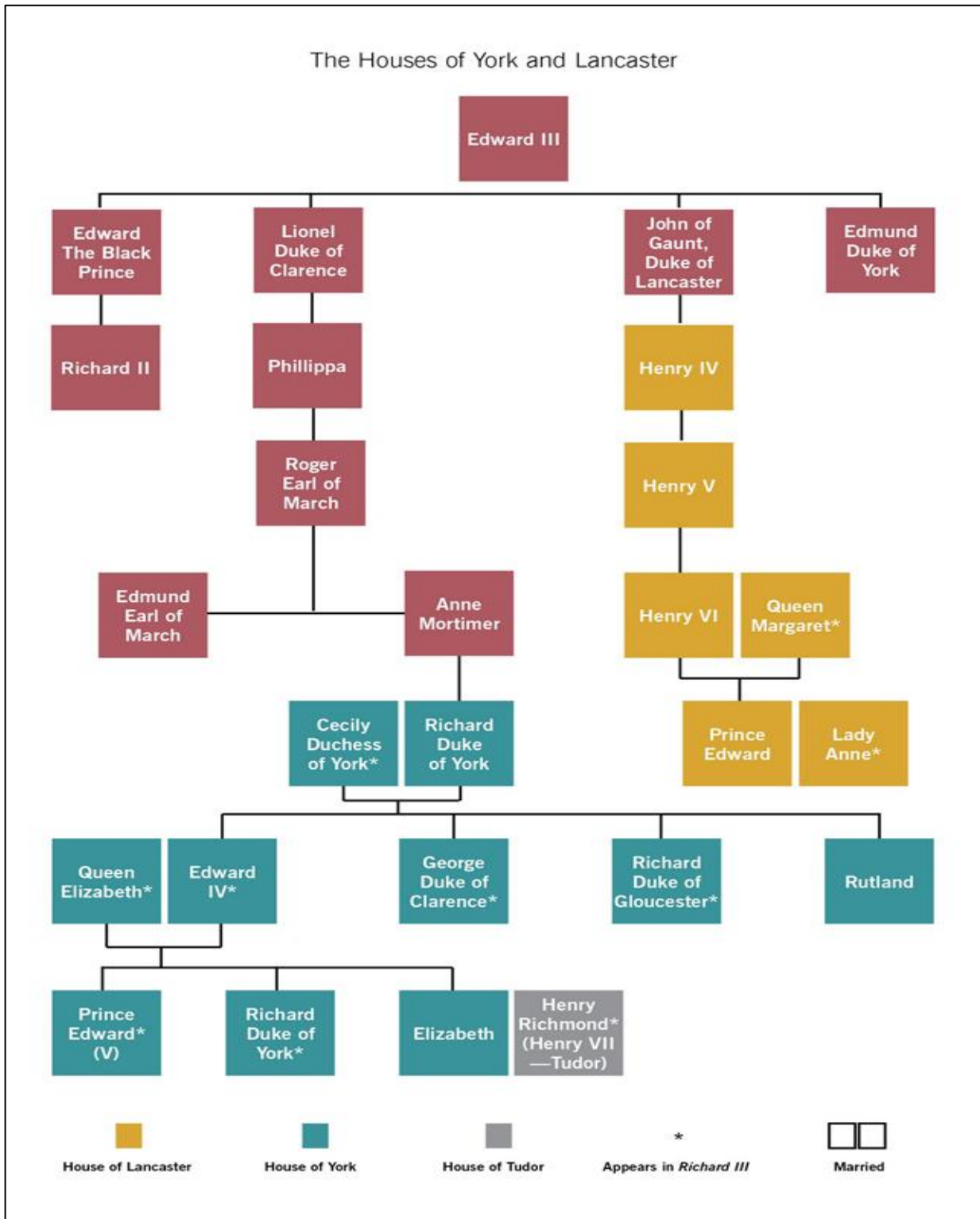


HENRY VI

PART III

- Richard, Duke of York killed by Lancasters
- Claim to throne passed to his son Edward
- Edward leads York rebellion against Lancaster, led by Margaret
- Margaret is captured, Henry and Edward both killed
- Edward, Duke of York made King Edward IV

WARS OF THE ROSES FAMILY TREE:



SOME RESOURCES TO CHECK OUT:

- The plays/stories themselves:
 - Full text of the plays:
 - Henry VI pt 1: <http://shakespeare.mit.edu/1henryvi/full.html>
 - Henry VI pt 2: <http://shakespeare.mit.edu/2henryvi/full.html>
 - Henry VI pt 3: <http://shakespeare.mit.edu/3henryvi/full.html>
 - Richard III: <http://shakespeare.mit.edu/richardiii/full.html>
 - Some complicated webs of how all of these characters connect:
 - Henry VI pt 1: <https://shakespeareswords.com/Public/Circles.aspx?WorkId=25>
 - Henry VI pt 2: <https://shakespeareswords.com/Public/Circles.aspx?WorkId=34>
 - Henry VI pt 3: <https://shakespeareswords.com/Public/Circles.aspx?WorkId=31>
 - Richard III: <https://shakespeareswords.com/Public/Circles.aspx?WorkId=6>
- BBC's *The Hollow Crown* TV Series on the Wars of the Roses
 - Available on Amazon Prime
 - These films definitely take some artistic liberties and make many cuts to the stories, but they are useful to get familiar with the world and the stories!