

# **The Princes in the Tower Study Guide**

**The Princes in the Tower by Alison Weir (historian)**

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# Plot Summary

Alison Weir is an important popular historian who has written a number of historical books concerning 15th and 16th British monarchs and their associated families, heirs, rivals and court. Her books cover the lives of Henry VIII, Elizabeth I and Eleanor Aquitaine, along with the controversy surrounding the famed story of the Princes in the Tower.

The story begins with King Edward IV, the king of England from 1461 until his death in 1483, interrupted only by the Wars of the Roses, which was a series of conflicts between the House of York and the House Lancaster. Edward had his only rival, Henry VI, killed and maintained the throne until his death. However, Edward's family was full of factions that threatened to erupt after his own death. For one, Edward had married into a lower class family known as the Wydviles, who were eager to increase their power and who were widely despised. Edward also had two brothers, Clarence and Richard, who were potential competition. Clarence challenged Edward for the throne but lost and was executed. Richard ruled safely in the North until Edward's death.

When Edward died, the Wydviles and Richard warred over the throne. The next in line to be king was Edward IV's son, Edward V. Following him was his brother the Duke of York. The Wydville family intended to rise to power after Edward died but the Edward IV's final will provided that Richard would be Edward V's Lord Protector until his age of majority.

While the Wydviles tried to stop Richard from taking office as Lord Protector, Richard was ultimately successful, repelling the Wydviles and crushing his rivals. However, he quickly displayed his intention to become King despite Edward V and the Duke of York. He used his allies to neutralize all his rivals and imprison Edward V and Richard, the Duke of York. Richard then argued that Edward IV's marriage to Elizabeth Wydville was illegitimate and that he was therefore next in line for the throne. Through intimidation and threats, Richard forced parliament to comply, making him King Richard III.

Richard III had the Princes imprisoned in the London Tower, hoping to prevent their escape and a war of succession. There is a controversy over what happened next. Many believe that Richard had his servants murder the Princes in the Tower and hide their bodies. The rumor was widely believed at the time and led Richard to lose his allies. Consequently, Richard III was overthrown by Henry Tudor, establishing the Tudor line in England which would change the course of history. Weir's book is an extended and well-documented attempt to combat those who would challenge Richard III's guilt. Through her extensive use of historical sources, Weir forcefully argues that Richard III was almost certainly the killer. However, readers should be aware that Weir is a popular historian and that if one is looking for a careful academic history of the controversy surrounding the Princes in the Tower, they should look to other sources.



# Chapters 1-2, Richard III and the Chroniclers, The Sanctuary Child

## Chapters 1-2, Richard III and the Chroniclers, The Sanctuary Child Summary and Analysis

Those who write about the Princes in the Tower divide into two groups who either believe that Richard III committed the murder but refuse to commit and those who want Richard III canonized. Weir avers that there is now enough evidence to solve the mystery. The subject cannot be studied without discussing the reliability of the original sources.

The book discusses primarily the years from 1483 to 1485, between the rule of Edward V and Richard III. Most sources have a partisan bias and few royal letters survive. Some of the secondary sources are reliable and well-done. Weir reviews some of the sources and remarks on the details about their authors and the texts themselves. Biographers are reviewed, including Sir Thomas More, whose work Weir thinks is particularly reliable and impressive. Sir Francis Bacon also wrote a book on the subject and it too stands up well.

The succession to the English crown was not stable during the fifteenth century, as Edward III, who died in 1377, had a number of sons who then had sons, many of whom wanted to claim the throne. The 15th century saw several Henrys come to power, including IV, V and VI. Henry VI's court helped lead to the Wars of the Roses, which made the English crown vulnerable to treachery. Richard, the Duke of York, claimed the crown from Henry VI and made his son, Edward, king. Edward IV would create a strong English government. Trade and the arts flourish and his subjects would grow rich.

The Wars of the Roses had not much affected the English people and had hardly harmed the nobility as a whole. Architecture became less militaristic. English society was mostly rural and London contained 75,000 people. The English hated foreigners, especially the French. An investment in replacing Norman French with English had led to a 50% literacy rate. The middle classes increased in prominence and started to marry with the gentry, though most were impoverished.

Edward IV was popular. He was six foot, three and a half inches tall and well-built. He was an exhibitionist, courageous, intelligent, witty and accessible to his subjects, though he was given to avarice and promiscuity. Many families in Europe wanted to marry their princesses to him. Despite political machinations, Edward announced in 1464 that he would marry an English commoner named Elizabeth Wydville. While she was widely regarded as common, Elizabeth's family had been closely involved in royal affairs for some time and was relatively wealthy.



It is unclear how Edward IV became interested in Elizabeth but most think the marriage was based on lust and blind affection, as Edward organized a secret marriage to cover up what would be regarded as a cultural and political mistake. The marriage was very unpopular and led to conflict within the royal family. The Wydvilles were very unpopular for behaving beyond their breeding. A rift developed between Edward and his main advisor Warwick. This split would ultimately lead to the end of his dynasty.

Elizabeth was crowned in 1465 and had three daughters: Elizabeth, Mary and Cecily. Over that time, Warwick's power declined as Edward promoted an alliance with France on his own. In 1468, Warwick began to plot against him and in 1469, Warwick became allies with Clarence, Edward's handsome, power hungry brother. Warwick wanted Edward overthrown and Clarence married to Warwick's daughters. In 1469, Clarence married Warwick's daughter Isabella. Warwick and Clarence then defeated Edward IV and had Elizabeth Wydville's father and brother beheaded. They then said that Edward IV was a bastard child.

In late 1469, problems with the Scots stole Warwick's focus and low resources forced the release of Edward. By 1470, Edward took back control and denounced Warwick and Clarence as traitors. Warwick and Clarence withdrew and started to plot with Louis XI to restore Henry VI. Then Warwick allied himself with Margaret of Anjou and they invaded England on September 13th, 1470. Queen Elizabeth was seven months pregnant with her fourth child. On October 1st, she heard that Edward had fled to the Low Countries and she left to the Westminster Sanctuary when Warwick and Clarence came to London four days later. Henry VI, feeble at the time, was made King again.

Elizabeth took her three daughters and mother to the Abbot, Thomas Millyng, who took care of them. On November 2nd, 1470, she gave birth to Edward V. The family stayed at the Sanctuary for five months until Edward IV invaded England. Edward and Clarence were reconciled. Henry VI was deposed and the Queen and her children returned. On April 14th, Edward won the Battle of Barnet and Warwick died in the midst of it. Prince Edward of Lancaster, then 17, died in a battle two weeks later. Margaret of Anjou was taken prisoner and died impoverished in France over a decade later.

On May 21st, Edward IV came into London triumphantly due to the presence of an heir. A period of stable government seemed to be ahead of England. Edward would make his son the Prince of Wales.



# Chapters 3-4, Richard of Gloucester, Clarence and the Wydviles

## Chapters 3-4, Richard of Gloucester, Clarence and the Wydviles Summary and Analysis

It is not wholly clear whether Edward had Henry VI murdered though the evidence suggests that he did. Richard of Gloucester had probably done the deed.

Richard, the Duke of Gloucester, was born in 1452. He was Edward's brother and seems to have been seriously deformed, barely surviving childhood. When Edward IV became king, Richard was made Duke of Gloucester and educated. Richard stayed loyal to Edward throughout his struggles and was then given many new titles, including that of Chief Constable of England. He was hardened to violence due to his time period. Richard was a typical magnate: hungry for money and power, brave, ruthless, energetic, and loyal. He also had some popularity and good qualities as well.

It is unclear what Richard looked like as an adult. Many thought he looked like his father and was dark-haired and short. He had a small body and many said he had a hunchback and unequal shoulders. However, many see the description of physical deformity as representing an evil character. Portraits of Richard do not tell one story. Weir thinks he had a slight deformity that some did not notice that grew exaggerated in description over time.

Richard and Clarence were reconciled in 1471 but not for long. Edward had not given all of Warwick's inheritance to Clarence and Clarence wanted all of it. If Richard were to marry Anne Neville, he would have claim to half of Warwick's inheritance and fights broke out between the brothers as a result. Edward eventually solved the dispute and Richard and Anne were married.

Little is known about the marriage of Richard and Anne. They had one child, Edward of Middleham. Richard and Clarence would later work together to manipulate Parliament into passing an act conferring the Warwick estates upon themselves.

Edward's Court was magnificent. Court etiquette was formal and much of the extravagance was expensive. Edward IV therefore took out many loans from London financiers and Italian merchants. The loans made Edward unpopular among some but the appearance of wealth allowed Edward to achieve political influence.

In June 1471, Edward's son, the new Prince of Wales, was given a prestigious council to watch over him until he was fourteen. These included the Queen, Clarence, Richard and several bishops. The Prince had a lavish childhood brought about by his loving father. Anthony Wydville, the Prince's uncle, was made the Prince's governor. Anthony, also known as Earl Rivers, was said to be a kind, serious, and deeply religious man. But



he was foremost a Wydville, loyal to his sister and her people. Edward V would grow up under Wydville control.

On August 17th, 1473, Elizabeth had another son named Richard who was made Duke of York in 1474. Three more girls would be born. The House of York would also see other children born, such as Clarence's children. Clarence's wife died after a dangerous birth in 1476 and in his grief he still resented Richard of Gloucester because of the inheritance. Clarence was also unhappy that the Wydviles had so much power and that he had less than he thought he deserved. Edward also blocked two proposed second marriages for Clarence.

Clarence would not take this lying down. So he seized and falsely accused one of Elizabeth's closest servants, Duchess Ankarette Twynho, of murder. The ensuing intrigue only led Clarence into more trouble. He started denouncing Edward as a bastard again. He was also involved in a minor rebellion and accused the Queen of murdering Clarence. Edward simply ignored him until Clarence denounced the King's justice, when Clarence arrested, tried for high treason and executed.

Richard of Gloucester thought the Wydviles had pushed Edward IV to condemn Clarence. Yet Richard would be next in line to the throne. A bill of attainder blocked Clarence's orphaned children from inheriting his fortune. Richard wanted to avenge his brother. However, he was aware of the Wydville's power and decided to avoid them by rarely coming to court.



# Chapters 5-6, Deadly Feuds and Factions, Those of the Queen's Blood

## Chapters 5-6, Deadly Feuds and Factions, Those of the Queen's Blood Summary and Analysis

By 1482, at age forty, Edward had grown fat due to his sensual immoderacy. His companions began to quarrel about him as well, particularly between his companions Lord Dorset and Hastings over women, especially Edward IV's mistresses who he shared with friends. Elizabeth Shore was the most prized of these women. The Queen was jealous of Elizabeth.

Richard of Gloucester kept his distance, building his good name with favors and gifts to others, governing England north of the River Trent. Richard was an effective governor, maintaining peace. The council of York was somewhat in awe of him yet many common citizens neither liked nor trusted him. Gloucester was a stranger in the South, where the Wydviles dominated. Their greed was rapacious. This plus their humble origins did not endear them to the magnates. They were at the center of royal corruption. Edward saw nothing dangerous in making Lord Rivers the guardian of the Prince of Wales.

There was thus a growing division of power between Richard and the Wydviles. If Edward died, the minor Edward V would ascend to the throne under the control of the Wydviles. This oversight would lead to the death of the Princes in the Tower. In November, 1482, Edward V turned twelve. He was naturally inclined to his mother's faction.

In March, Edward went fishing in the cold and contracted an illness he never recovered from, probably pneumonia. He then had a stroke. Before he died, Edward tried to resolve some tensions among his family members. Edward died on April 9th, 1483, a rich, powerful, and beloved king. However, he failed to unify the factions in his kingdom, leaving Richard and the Wydviles in opposition.

The Queen was to take absolute control according to Edward IV's will made prior to his death. On his deathbed, Edward drew up a new will that made Richard the Lord Protector of the Realm until Edward V came of age. Rivers was to no longer be governor and the Queen was deprived of power. Nonetheless, the Wdyviles entrenched themselves, determined to resist Richard. England was in danger, particularly since it had just declared war on France.

The Wydviles sought to crown Edward V immediately to stop Richard from becoming Protector. The Queen did not inform Richard of Edward's death, but Hastings told Richard and warned him about the Queen.





Hastings also sent word to Henry Stafford, the second Duke of Buckingham, among the most important English noblemen. He was descended from Edward III and had claim to the line of succession. At age eleven, he was forced to marry Katherine Wydville. He despised her and came to hate the Wydviles as a whole. Hastings had reason to think that Henry would be an ally.

When Richard heard of the Wydville plot, he not only feared an end to his power but of a Wydville dominated realm. His aim became to overthrow the Wydviles and take the reins of power. Richard planned carefully and quickly secured support. He led the Queen and the Council to believe he had honorable intentions, sending a letter to the Queen promising to offer submission to Edward V. While Edward IV had no legal right to make Richard Protector, the Council and the Parliament could make the decision for themselves. On April 20th, Richard took three hundred men to intercept Lord Rivers and the King, arriving at York on the 21st. When Buckingham heard of Richard's plans, he sent word that he would send one thousand men.

A Council met to decide how Edward V's coronation should proceed. Some wanted to wait for Richard, the new King's uncle. They started to fight over the government during the royal minority. The Wydviles did not have a strong enough majority to persuade the councilors. While the Council debated, Richard's letters arrived. Afterwards, those who supported the Duke quietly began to speak openly. But the Council still voted to fix the 4th of May for the coronation, flouting Edward IV's wishes. However, it had actually acted with wisdom, according both sides some power. On the 23rd of April, Edward V, Rivers and two thousand men left to claim the crown.

Richard and Henry of Buckingham quickly united and wrote to Edward V to ask how he was arriving so they could join him. Edward V's party went out of their way to join them. Richard was in touch with Hastings the entire time.



# Chapters 7-8, An Innocent Lamb in the Hands of Wolves, The Lord Protector

## Chapters 7-8, An Innocent Lamb in the Hands of Wolves, The Lord Protector Summary and Analysis

When Richard of Gloucester, Buckingham and their escorts arrived, Edward V was gone. Rivers had removed him so that Richard could not get to him. Richard expressed no anger. The men then had a dinner in which Rivers explained to Richard that power would be denied to him. After a convivial evening, Richard planned to start the coup the next day nonetheless. He had Rivers locked in his inn. When Richard and Buckingham tracked down Edward V, they saluted him as King. Richard informed Edward V of his father's wishes and the Wydville's plot. Edward was unconvinced but Richard and Buckingham arrested his advisors for betraying the realm. Edward V then surrendered himself to his uncle. Richard ordered that Edward's men be dispersed and to avoid approaching near the King.

Richard and Buckingham returned in triumph with King and prisoners to Northampton. Richard then informed the Council of what he happened. Richard claimed for himself the governance of the King and broke the Wydville's power without spilling a drop of blood. The coup alienated the King from Richard.

Richard sought to acquire the good will of the people to see his move as legitimate. The Queen was stunned and horrified that after two decades her family's power had ended. She feared what Richard would do to her in revenge for having his brother killed. She may have feared for her life and started collecting an army to free the King. Quickly the Queen withdrew her possessions and family to Westminster.

The Queen was not the only one collecting forces, for Hastings prepared an army as well. Hastings was fully on Richard's side. Richard's actions were illegal since the Council had not confirmed him. And many saw the arrest of Rivers and Edward V's other escorts as acts of tyranny, which they arguably were.

On May 4th, Richard, Buckingham and the King traveled to London. Richard and Buckingham swiftly tried to convince the people to hate the Queen's family, telling them that the Queen intended to kill Richard. But many knew the claims were false, which raised suspicion and anger. The Queen was also absent, which was worse. On May 10th, the council decided that Edward V would be housed in the Tower of London. The Council, in what was a formality, made Richard the Lord Protector of the King. Many actually supported Richard as they thought England needed a solid, experienced King during a time of war.

Edward V would have his coronation on June 24th. Everyone looked forward to the return of peace. Richard increased his power though the Council would not give him

everything. They had some sympathy with Elizabeth Wydville. Richard could not wholly insulate himself from the Wydvilles as a result. Richard knew that his safety would be in danger once Edward V attained his majority. Edward would not help him and the Queen would not be merciful. Richard also deeply desired power. Richard therefore set his eyes on the throne.

Richard was not foolish to think he could become King as the Londerons liked him and he had a large following in the North. He decided to take power and remove the navy from Edward Wydville's control. Richard also rewarded his supporters to ensure their future loyalty. Buckingham in particular was lavishly rewarded. And while Hastings was advanced, he was not given all the benefits to which he thought himself entitled. The Council realized by May's end that its power was diminishing. They were suspicious of Richard but were afraid of him due to his treatment of the Wydvilles. Richard sought to win their confidence.



# Chapters 9-10, The Fall of Hastings, This Act of Usurpation

## Chapters 9-10, The Fall of Hastings, This Act of Usurpation Summary and Analysis

To increase his power, Richard steadily turned the Council members against one another. Hastings was still on Richard's side but others were becoming suspicious. Richard had to act fast, securing the throne before the coronation. He ran the idea of his becoming king by Hastings but Hastings rejected the idea and became frightened when he realized what Richard was thinking. Hastings confided in several people, including Edward V whom he encouraged to have Richard removed.

Richard eventually learned of Hastings's countermoves and decided to treat him as a conspirator. The Wydviles were neutralized and Hastings had little help against Richard's accusations. However, Hastings had his own power and could not be easily overthrown.

Richard quickly summoned troops to intimidate those who would stop him seizing the throne. He invented the idea of a Wydville conspiracy and then presented himself as the people's champion.

A few days later Richard summoned his allies on the Council to ostensibly talk about the coronation. When he had them all in the room, he accused Hastings of being in cahoots with the Queen to overthrow him. Richard then accused the men of having brought arms into the chamber. The armed guards heard this and rushed into the room. Hastings and others were arrested and Hastings was executed without judgment within minutes of his arrest. This was a blatantly tyrannical act. Richard quickly sent his men into the streets yelling 'Treason!' The people were saddened by Hastings's death. The Londoners were convinced that Richard was plotting to seize the throne.

Hastings's 'crimes' were later publicly announced but unlike Richard's other enemies, he was never accused of treason. The moderates on the Council no longer had a leader however and could not oppose Richard.

When Hastings was killed, Edward V's attendants were removed from him. Richard isolated his nephews. Edward must have been horrified at Hastings's death and his virtual imprisonment.

On Monday the 16th of June, a nervous Council convened. The coronation was a week away. Edward V's brother and family were nowhere to be found and Richard argued that he could not be crowned without him. The council agreed to Richard's demands. Edward V's brother, Richard of York, was taken from the Queen despite her protestations. She was told that York would be returned after the coronation.



Both male heirs of Edward IV were in Richard's control. Then Richard openly revealed his plans. The boys were hidden behind bars and windows. The Princes were probably seen publicly in the Tower, which was a public place. It is not clear where in the Tower they were held. Richard also had the eight-year-old Earl of Warwick imprisoned, as he had no legal guardian.

But the King and the Wydviles were permanently alienated from him. Buckingham and Richard could expect the worst when Edward V attained his majority. Richard had to act quickly. His plan was to declare Edward V and Richard of York unfit to receive the throne and Warwick was barred from succession for other reasons. Thus Richard was next in line and would be made rightful king. He had to succeed before June 22nd.

Richard cancelled Parliament and postponed coronation indefinitely on unknown grounds. He also summoned six thousand troops. Richard corrupted the preachers, impelling them to promote Richard's cause. They revived the rumor of Edward IV's bastardy, though it was not to be believed. Richard then revived the claim that Edward IV's marriage to Elizabeth Wydville was invalid because he was contracted to another woman. Weir assesses and rejects the claim. However, this claim was much more publicly plausible, though no contemporary writer believed it.

Buckingham appealed to the people to support Richard's ascension to the throne. Few believed the claim that Edward IV had a precontract with Eleanor Butler and less that Richard should be King. They voiced approval out of fear of Richard. Next Richard had Edward V's attendants, Rivers, Grey, Vaughan and Haute publicly beheaded. It is clear they committed no crime. When the nation's nobles arrived for the coronation, they were informed by Buckingham as to what occurred. The accusation of illegitimacy was ultimately dropped.

An assembly was convened on June 25th which was arguably constitutional. It declared Edward IV's marriage to Elizabeth Wydville invalid and their children illegitimate. The proceedings were constitutionally accurate. Buckingham presented a petition, begging Richard to accept the crown to prevent the country from suffering from a minority king rule. Richard feigned reluctance and then accepted. Thus Richard III became King on June 26th, 1483. However, the usurpation would lead to another War of the Roses and the destruction of his house.



# Chapters 11-12, Richard III, Conspiracies

## Chapters 11-12, Richard III, Conspiracies Summary and Analysis

The path towards Richard's kingship revealed much about his character. His loyalty to Edward IV was only skin deep. He seems to have always been dishonest and deceitful. Apparently he was excellent at hiding his real faults and that he was cruel and envious. Richard III's propaganda machine was impressive. Evidence also shows that Richard III's private morals were wanting though he did seem to have a real spiritual piety. Richard III benefited the Church and patronized education and the arts. He also lived in great luxury. Scholars sought his patronage.

However, Richard was highly unpopular. The South hated the way he came to power and thought it unlawful. Richard hoped that his good governance would win new loyalties. The English South regarded northerners as brutish and even as another race. Richard was sometimes seen as one of them.

On June 27th, Richard began to reward his supporters and ignored laws that got in his way. His coronation was set for July 6th and he had six thousand soldiers to protect him. It was among the most splendid and well attended of all medieval coronations.

Following the coronation, the Princes in the Tower were not again seen living. Many of the commentators indicate that suspicions arose at this time that they had been murdered. But more credible sources show that they were not yet dead. Instead, they were imprisoned and Edward was in a deep depression. The Princes had only a few attendants. One of them was Sir Robert Brackenbury, who was in charge of protecting the Princes.

Richard went on a trip in July where he continued to show gifts on his supporters and claimed the duty of taking care of the families of those he had executed. He knew his position was insecure. Many in the South and West wanted to free Edward and York from imprisonment. A plot formed among disaffected Yorkists, Lancastrian dissidents and the Wydville faction. Few details of the plot are known. Richard could not simply kill the Princes as Edward IV's daughters were abroad and could challenge Richard's title.

However, the King had spies who discovered the plot in late July. He also learned from Buckingham that they had tried to recruit him. While the Princes lived, Richard knew he could not be secure. The Wydvilles would not stop plotting against him. The conspirators, unfortunately, seemed to be forcing Richard's hand.



# Chapters 13-14, The Princes in the Tower, The Wicked Uncle

## Chapters 13-14, The Princes in the Tower, The Wicked Uncle Summary and Analysis

Richard knew by July 29th that he had to kill the Princes. He was away from the city and perhaps beyond suspicion. Richard sent a trusted servant, John Green, to Sir Robert Brackenbury to tell him that the two children should be killed. However, Brackenbury refused, claiming that he would rather die. Richard thought the Princes were killed by August 2nd. At this time, Buckingham left him and somehow they were alienated, though it is not clear why. It may have been about money and it may have been about the plot to kill the Princes.

Some hold that Buckingham killed the Princes but the theory is easily refuted. Richard continued to hear about the conspiracies around August 8th. John Green returned and told Richard that Brackenbury would not commit the deed. Thus Richard turned to his servant Sir James Tyrell. Tyrell wanted to be advanced and could thus be made to do the King's bidding; he did not find the request to kill objectionable or unusual.

Buckingham came to hate Richard's evil and Buckingham's friend Morton warned him that Buckingham would suffer when the King was inevitably overthrown. Thus Morton convinced him to rebel against the King. Weir discusses some of the other conspirators.

Richard continued to traverse the English countryside, reaching York on August 30th. He was regally received and kept promoting his public image. At this time, Tyrell was on his way to London. He took Brackenbury a letter ordering him to give the Tower keys to John Dighton, a bailiff, so that Dighton could kill them.

Yet the Princes seemed to still be alive after the coronation and investiture of Prince Edward as Prince of Wales took place on September 8th. Weir argues, in contrast, that they had to have been killed earlier. Brackenbury gave the keys to Tyrell and Sir James prepared the next night to kill the Princes. They had the Princes' other attendants removed. One of Tyrell's aides, Miles Forrest, helped Tyrell and Sir James to smother the Princes. Other writers give other accounts of how the Princes died but Weir finds smothering most credible.

After the murder, Tyrell gave the Tower keys to Brackenbury and rode to York to tell the King. Richard rewarded him handsomely. Forrest and Green also received rewards, as did Brackenbury. Richard had the Princes buried in a stately manner, though this required having them reburied after the murderers had buried them the first time. The people had to know that they Princes were dead in part to quiet their rebelliousness and in part to put the conspiracies to rest. The rumors Richard had spread only said that they died.



Many claim that there was no proof that Richard III murdered the Princes. Weir thinks that the relevant facts constitute vast circumstantial evidence that rules out alternative theories. Historians should not be bound by the same rules as juries.

What was the evidence? First, the Princes disappeared forever under Richard's protection and he gave no explanation. No third party could have done the deed without Richard's knowledge. Richard's rule was insecure. There were historical precedents for what Richard did and the House of York had used violence for political ends for decades. Richard's murders of Hastings and Rivers showed him to be ruthless. Thomas More reports that he never slept well again. Weir reviews some of the manuscript fragment evidence, which she admits is circumstantial. Weir again sides with Sir Thomas More's account, though some historians doubt it.

Some claim that Buckingham or Norfolk committed the murders but Norfolk would have lost his dukedom if Edward V became King. Buckingham will be addressed in the next chapter. Weir also dismisses theories that Richard hid the boys and sent them overseas. Other stories of their survival are similarly dismissed. Still other historians suggested that the Princes died naturally but eyewitnesses did not confirm illnesses.





# Chapters 15-16, Rebellion, An Especial Good Lord

## Chapters 15-16, Rebellion, An Especial Good Lord Summary and Analysis

When the Princes were killed, Buckingham was already considering treason. Margaret Beaufort and Morton had been working to enlist him. They wanted him to support Henry Tudor. After a month, he decided to support rebellion probably because he heard that the Princes were dead.

With the Princes dead, Elizabeth Wydville was in effect Queen of England. Margaret Beaufort pushed a marriage between her and Henry Tudor, which would resolve differences between their factions and validate the Tudor claim to the throne. Elizabeth Wydville was devastated by the news of her sons' deaths. She was consumed with the desire for revenge and quickly agreed to marry Henry Tudor. And so the Wydvilles joined Buckingham. By the first week of September, the people of London and Southern countries were ready to stop Richard.

However, rumors spread that Buckingham was responsible for the Princes' death, though the rumors quickly collapsed. In the 15th century, it was a tragedy when a man or woman died, but it was normal. But nothing could be worse than a murdered child. The Princes were more dangerous in death than they were in life. Five separate uprisings were planned. On September 24th, Buckingham wrote to Henry Tudor, inviting him to invade England on October 18th on the condition that he swear to marry Elizabeth.

Henry Tudor wasted no time, using his uncle Jasper to persuade Duke Francis of Brittany to loan him ten thousand crowns to hire five thousand mercenaries. The rebels knew, however, that Richard would have great support. On October 3rd, 1483, Tudor's fleet tried to sail but a storm drove them back. From there, things went poorly for the conspirators. On October 11th, Richard learned that Buckingham abandoned him. His spies quickly helped him put together the details of the plot. Richard put together troops to trap Buckingham. On October 18th, an unaware Buckingham took his forces to link with the conspirators in the South and West but the King put a one thousand pound bounty for Buckingham's capture, and lesser rewards for other traitors like Morton.

On the 24th, Richard took an army to intercept Buckingham before they could meet up with the other forces. However, weather accomplished Richard's task for him. Buckingham's troops deserted him. On November 1st, Buckingham was captured and the rebellion collapsed. Henry Tudor returned to Brittany with some of the conspirators. Buckingham was tried and executed on a Sunday, along with other conspirators. But this caused many to defect to Henry Tudor.



Richard did not move against the Wydvilles and they stayed in Brittany. On November 25th, Richard returned triumphantly to London. He seemed invincible but he had in reality lost many supporters. Richard knew this and knew that the Wydvilles and Henry Tudor could still threaten him. Henry had established a court in exile and hoped to get a European power hostile to Richard on his side. On Christmas Day, 1483, Henry swore to marry Elizabeth of York and his supporters swore to support him as King.

On the 23rd of January, 1484, Richard III's only Parliament passed the Act of Settlement making him legally King. This helped Richard's image and many saw him as a good law maker there afterward, in part due to some popular measures. Richard III was an energetic and efficient ruler. He was hard-working and lenient; his need for legitimacy forced him to rule well. But the public was against him.

Richard sought to neutralize Elizabeth Wydville by possessing her and marrying her to someone other than Henry Tudor. Elizabeth was in sanctuary but Richard made it increasingly clear that he would use force to remove her. Elizabeth was forced to give up her daughters to him but not before she made Richard swear to protect and care for her daughters. His popularity was therefore tied to keeping his oath. He also offered her a pension.

Eventually Elizabeth left sanctuary once her daughters were gone though it is unclear where she went. In April, Richard was satisfied that Elizabeth was neutralized. But in April, 1484, Richard's son, Edward Prince of Wales, died. Richard lost his only heir and undermined his position. He was personally devastated and may have seen his son's death as God's justice upon him. His subjects certainly saw it this way. The rumors solidified the view that Richard had killed the Princes. People of all classes increasingly crossed to Tudor's side.

In June of 1484, the Duke of Brittany was temporarily mentally ill. Richard was able to persuade the Treasurer of Brittany to extradite Henry Tudor. But Henry was warned in time to flee to France, where he was happily received. Richard then strengthened England's defenses and issued proclamations branding Henry Tudor a traitor. The French wanted Henry to invade before Elizabeth of York was married off, destroying Henry's cause.

The young Earl of Warwick was next in the line of succession but he was only nine. Warwick seems to have been either mentally retarded or intellectually feeble. Instead, Richard's nephew, the Earl of Lincoln, John de la Pole, was made the heir of the throne.



# Chapters 17-18, An Incestuous Passion, A Dark Prince

## Chapters 17-18, An Incestuous Passion, A Dark Prince Summary and Analysis

In 1484, Elizabeth of York turned eighteen. She had a great reputation for beauty and intelligence. Richard III's wife Anne was on her deathbed and Elizabeth Wydville thought to marry Elizabeth of York to Richard in the absence of Henry Tudor. While Anne was sick, Richard and his niece quickly developed a passionate connection. Richard also perceived the benefits of marrying Elizabeth in order to neutralize the threat of Henry Tudor.

Richard, however, was to be invaded within the year, which made the desirability of marriage more urgent. Elizabeth of York responded positively; it is not known how she did so given the murder of her brothers. The people were disgusted by the idea. At the time the church permitted an uncle and niece to marry with a dispensation. Still, the people condemned the marriage as incestuous.

Anne's illness worsened and she was neglected by her husband. Anne knew that Richard wanted her to die so he could marry again. Letters show that Elizabeth was a willing partner to the bond. Elizabeth would then enter into an adulterous relationship with her uncle. Anne died March 16th, 1485. London was full of rumors that Anne was poisoned in order to permit Richard to marry Elizabeth. Afterwards, the King's mind was never secure. His subjects hated him more than ever before.

Elizabeth and Richard III were never married. The rumors made the marriage impossible. Richard's Council strongly opposed the marriage. Weir discusses some of the reasons that Council members did so. Elizabeth was furious and dishonored and committed to place herself in the arms of Henry Tudor. Elizabeth Wydville contacted Henry, promising her Elizabeth of York's hand if he took the crown. At some point, Richard III discovered the threat. Henry's arrival was at hand in the summer and many in England supported him.

On August 1st, Henry Tudor sailed and landed six days later. He was not opposed throughout much of the invasion. On August 22nd, the Battle of Bosworth took place. It was savage, lasting only two hours. Not all of Richard's forces joined in, as they were waiting to see who would gain the upper hand. At that point, Richard and his remaining forces rushed for Tudor but Richard was dealt mortal blows by his former allies and died yelling 'Treason!'

Everyone in England quickly submitted to the rule of Henry Tudor, leading him to be crowned King Henry VII, the first of the Tudors. London celebrated. Few mourned the king, though his corpse was not honored, which many thought disgusting.



Richard brought his Plantagenet dynasty to an end after 331 years of rule, all due to his murder of the Princes. Richard's contemporaries saw that God had judged Richard for his crimes. The tale of the Princes in the Tower was an event that changed history.

Henry VII's rule began with his attempts to reconcile the Lancastrians and Yorkists. He also wed Elizabeth of York. He quickly imprisoned all of Richard III's allies. Henry VII was twenty-eight, tall, lean, and fair. He had great ability and was very intelligent. He was greedy but not violent and had great qualities of leadership. He also curbed the power of the nobility. His rule laid the foundations for the nation of Great Britain. Henry VII was crowned on October 30th, 1485. The first parliament was held on November 11th.

Some however were suspicious of Henry VII such as Sir Francis Bacon who called him 'a dark prince' because he repressed all others who had honors in order to promote himself. The Tudors went out of their way to suppress the Plantagenets. Parliament re-recognized the validity of the marriage of Elizabeth Wydville and Edward IV and consequently that Edward V was the rightful King of England. Henry VII also had Richard posthumously accused of many crimes. However, because the Princes' bodies were never found, Henry could not accuse Richard of murder, for if the boys turned up they could become King. There is no evidence, as some have suggested, that Henry was behind the murder.

In late 1485, Henry rewarded his supporters. In January 1486, the papal legate in England told Henry that his marriage could go ahead. The red and white roses were married on January 18th at Westminster Abbey. All the Yorkists supported him. Henry and Elizabeth's marriage did not seem to be particularly close. But they were good parents, having eight children, four boys and four girls. Three lived to be adults: the future Henry VIII, Margaret, Queen of Scots, and Mary, who became Queen of France. Elizabeth's powers and freedoms were limited by Henry, however. While she aimed to be queen, it is not clear if she was able to enjoy it.



# Chapters 19-21, Pretenders, Tyrell's Confession, The Skeletons in the Tower

## Chapters 19-21, Pretenders, Tyrell's Confession, The Skeletons in the Tower Summary and Analysis

Chapter 19 discusses Henry VII's encounters with pretenders to the throne, which were dangers due to Henry's inability to display the bodies of the Princes. Many tried to impersonate Edward V and the Duke of York, such as Lambert Simnel. Elizabeth Wydville may have been involved in one of the attempts in order to secure financial and political gain. She was eventually deprived of her estates as a result and moved into an Abbey.

Later disaffected Yorkists started another rumor that the Princes were alive; in 1491, Perkin Warbeck pretended to be the Earl of Warwick and the Irish rallied behind him. Warbeck was caught and initially dealt with kindly. But the trouble did not cease and he was executed in 1499. Weir dismisses arguments that Warbeck had Yorkist blood. After Warbeck, the pretending ended, for in 1502 Henry found out the truth about the Princes.

Sir James Tyrell was in France when Richard III died. Henry VII deprived him of his estates. He fared well under Henry VII and accepted land in France. But in 1501, Tyrell got involved with rivals of Henry which led to a standoff. Tyrell was eventually said to confess the murder of the Princes. No record of the confession survives. The Tudors all accepted the account of Thomas More. Weir dismisses the claims of those who deny Tyrell's confession. On May 2nd, 1502, Tyrell was arraigned for high treason and on May 6th he was beheaded.

Tyrell's confession was suppressed however, and More's account long remained unpublished leaving the fate of the Princes in the Tower a matter of speculation during the reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII. Shakespeare's Richard III and More's work did more than anything to spread Richard III's evil reputation. No further searches were made for the bones of the Princes. Weir then discusses the fates of many of the minor characters in the book; then the history of those who had opinions about the subject is discussed. On July 17th, 1674, a reconstruction of the Tower was thought to turn up bones in a wooden chest whose skeletons were those of two children. Everyone assumed that these were the bones of the Princes. The find corroborated Thomas More's account. If the bones did not belong to the Princes, then the find was an astonishing coincidence.

In the twentieth century, the urn of bones was reexamined. While some animal bones were discovered, the incomplete skeletons of two children were found. Dental evidence suggests that both were twelve years old but the age of the bones and the sex of the skeletons could not be determined. The evidence seemed conclusive despite subsequent efforts to discredit the findings. Today a substantial body of forensic

evidence and associated theories exists. The work of the original twentieth century examiners, Tanner and Wright, could not be discredited. The studies of the bones suggested that the children were dead by the end of 1483 which suggests that Richard III must have been the killer.



# Characters

## Edward IV

King Edward IV (1442-1483) was the King of England from 1461 to 1470 and from 1471 to 1483 after a brief interruption from former King Henry VI. Edward came from the Plantagenet line, which had a strong claim to the English Throne. His father, Richard Plantagenet asserted his claim to the crown in 1460 which led to the Wars of the Roses. Through an alliance with the Earl of Warwick, Richard Neville, Edward IV was able to rout the opposing Lancastrian army and block Henry VI and his wife Margaret of Anjou from power. After ten years, Edward's alliance with Warwick fell apart and he had to resist another coup, this time from Warwick and his brother Clarence. After a year he successfully repelled them.

In the early years of his Kingship, Edward was highly regarded as an intelligent, witty, and talented man. He was a fair ruler and was admired for his physique, height, and handsomeness. He was considered a prize among European nobility but he married a commoner, Elizabeth Wydville, elevating her family to nobility, which in part due to their own crassness, led them to be widely hated. Together, he and Elizabeth had many children, including Edward V, the heir to the throne and Richard of York. Towards the end of Edward's life, he allowed a division of power to rise between his brother, Richard of Gloucester and the Wydville family which would lead to the conflict that resulted in the death of the Princes in the Tower.

## Richard III

Richard III or Richard of Gloucester was the brother of Edward IV. He is widely believed to have been moderately deformed and grew up during the violent Wars of the Roses, the youngest child of Edward's father. Richard and his brother Clarence helped Edward IV to the throne and Richard remained Edward's ally throughout Edward's conflicts with Clarence. Richard displayed skill as a local ruler and military commander, leading Edward to appoint him Governor of the North, making him the most powerful noble in England and eventually becoming the Lord High Admiral of England. He was much loved in the North.

After Edward IV's death, however, Richard displayed a far more evil and ruthless character. In Edward's final days, he made Richard Edward V's Lord Protector until Edward's age of majority at fourteen. The Wydvilles acted quickly to have Edward made King before Richard could assume power but Richard skillfully prevented them from doing so. Richard's triumph led him to become greedy for more power which in turn led him to claim that Edward V and his brother were illegitimate because Edward IV's marriage to Elizabeth Wydville was illegitimate. Through his political power, he forced Parliament to affirm this. As a result, he was crowned Richard III. He then imprisoned



Edward V and Richard of York and probably had them killed. The outcry from the deaths of the Princes in the Tower ultimately led to his downfall and the rise of the Tudor line.

## **Edward V**

This character was Edward IV's son and next in line to become King of England save for the political machinations of Edward V's uncle, Richard III. In all likelihood, Richard had Edward V killed when Edward was only twelve.

## **Richard, Duke of York**

This character was Edward V's younger brother who was also imprisoned with him in the Tower of London and likely killed by Richard III.

## **Elizabeth Wydville**

This character was Edward IV's wife and the mother of Edward V and Richard of York, Wydville was a commoner who was raised to nobility by her husband, Edward IV. She was political shrewd and often plotted to her own benefit. While she often lost political battles to Richard III after Edward IV's death, she eventually returned to power.

## **Lord William Hastings**

This character was one of the Yorkist noblemen who assisted Richard III against the Wydvilles. However, when Hastings spoke out against Richard's attempts to usurp the throne, Richard had him arrested and quickly executed.

## **Henry Stafford, Duke of Buckingham**

A prominent nobleman with a claim in the line of succession, Henry was married to Catherine Wydville, the Queen's sister. He became the ally of Richard of Gloucester after Edward IV's death. Buckingham did everything he could to support Richard's power until Richard told him that he intended to kill the Princes in the Tower. When he sought to conspire against Richard, Richard caught him and had him executed.

## **Henry Tudor, Duke of Richmond**

The King of England following Richard III, he ousted Richard from power when Richard's evil deeds alienated so much of the English ruling class. Henry defeated Richard at the Battle of Bosworth, which led to Richard III's death.





## **Sir Thomas More**

This individual was of the 15th and 16th century's great intellectuals, philosophers, lawyers, authors, and statesmen. It was Thomas More's writings about the Princes in the Tower that Weir relies on most heavily, although the reliability of this account is somewhat questionable.

## **Alison Weir**

This individual is a well-known popular historian of Britain, particularly Britain in the 15th and 16th centuries. She is the author of *The Princes in the Tower*.

## **George, Duke of Clarence**

The younger brother of Edward IV and senior brother to Richard III, Clarence rebelled against his brother Edward in alliance with the Earl of Warwick. He failed to overthrow Edward IV and future attempts led Edward to have him executed.

## **Sir James Tyrell**

This individual is the henchman of Richard III and the accused murderer of the Princes.

## **Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick**

One of the great English noblemen of his day, Warwick was initially an ally of Edward IV but helped Clarence to rebel against his brother.



## **Objects/Places**

### **The Garden/Bloody Tower/Tower of London**

This is the large tower in London where the Princes were imprisoned and killed.

### **The Plantagenet House**

This is the House of Plantagenet ruled England for 331 years, ending with Richard III.

### **The Wars of the Roses**

This is the name of the series of battles between the royal houses of York and Lancaster who fought for decades over who had rightful claim to the English throne. The Wars of the Roses are the backdrop for the Princes in the Tower story.

### **England**

This is the country setting for The Princes in the Tower.

### **London**

This is the capital city of England where the royal family lived.

### **York**

This is the city of origin for the Yorkist faction that was so heavily involved in the story.

### **Westminster Abbey**

This is the Abbey in London where Elizabeth Wydville and her family sought sanctuary.

### **Acts of Parliament**

Parliament is regularly used throughout the story as a means of rubber stamping tyrannical acts, depriving those out of favor of their estates and certifying the coronation of kings.



## **The Battle of Bosworth**

This is the Battle on August 22nd, 1485 that largely ended the Wars of the Roses. In this battle Henry Tudor defeated Richard III; Richard III was killed.

## **The Office of Lord Protector**

The Lord Protector often ruled England when the King was under the age of fourteen. Richard III was appointed Lord Protector by Edward IV's will until Richard usurped the throne.

## **Marriages**

Marriages were often used for political gain in the period surrounding the story of the Princes in the Tower. Several such marriages are discussed in the book such as the marriage of Henry Tudor and Elizabeth of York.



# Themes

## The Allure of Power

The main story of *The Princes in the Tower* is the story of the real-world corruption that is brought about by the lust for power. The Wars of the Roses, which arguably set off the Princes in the Tower conflict in the first place, was due to two royal houses, The York and Lancaster Houses, being unable to resolve their differences due to a desire to rule. Edward IV fought against Henry VI following his father's death, who himself had engaged in the same conflict. Edward IV spent his entire Kingship defending himself against potential threats, not the least of which included his former ally the Earl of Warwick and his brother Clarence. Edward IV's wife, Elizabeth Wydville, also sought after power, as did her entire family.

When Edward IV died, Richard of Gloucester sought to retain his right to be Lord Protector of Edward V and thus to rule England for a short period of time. But the allure of power led him to do what was in his power not only to neutralize his rivals, particularly the Wydviles, but to deprive Edward V of the right to rule, and that of his brother, Richard of York. Richard III's desire was so strong that he had a number of obviously innocent men executed and in all likelihood had the two young boys, Edward V and Richard, brutally murdered. His lust for power led quickly thereafter to his downfall.

## The Mystery of the Princes' Deaths

One of the reasons that *The Princes in the Tower* has remained such a popular story and subject of historical inquiry for so long is that it is something of a mystery story. Richard III never confessed to murdering the Princes in the Tower and the Princes' bodies were never found. It is clear that Richard III had the Princes imprisoned. However, even the supposed confession of Richard III's henchman Sir James Tyrell has been lost to history. To show that Richard III killed the Princes in the Tower requires a great deal of careful historical work.

Alison Weir is convinced that the available evidence conclusively shows that Richard III killed the Princes in the Tower. She argues throughout the book that no other alternatives are available and amasses a great deal of historical evidence to support her case. However, Weir also makes a number of arguments for relying on some primary and secondary sources over others. For these choices, Weir is often criticized. For instance, Weir heavily relies on the biographical work of Sir Thomas More, who was not only too young to have been aware of the events as they took place but was very loyal to the Tudors. He also never finished his biography. Several historians have therefore challenged its reliability.



While the Princes bones were likely found, they did not provide enough clues to decisively conflict Richard III. To this day, it is still not entirely clear whether he murdered the Princes in the Tower.

## Political Conflict

The story of the Princes in the Tower, again, occurs against the backdrop of the Wars of the Roses, which were battles between the Houses of York and Lancaster for the Throne of England. As a result, political conflict is a constant feature of the book. It begins with the ascension of Edward IV following the death of his father, Richard Plantagenet and his and the Earl of Warwick's victory of Henry VI and his wife, Margaret of Anjou. For nine years, Edward IV ruled England only to be challenged by his brother George, Duke of Clarence and the Earl of Warwick who had by this time changed sides. Edward was ousted for a year and when he returned to power he had to regularly repel challenges to his rule.

After Edward's death, the Wydviles and Richard of Gloucester were left to contend for power. Richard had a right to be Lord Protector of Edward V but he had no right to engage in the many illegal acts that he used not only to attain the office but to ultimately rise to become King. He routed the Wydviles, killed many of his rivals and former allies and likely had Edward V and his brother, Richard of York, killed. As a result, he alienated many of his followers and much of the English elite defected to Henry Tudor who was busy allying himself with the Wydviles. Ultimately conflict between Tudor and Richard erupted. The conflict ended at the Battle of Bosworth where Richard was killed. Tudor then ascended to the throne.



# Style

## Perspective

Alison Weir is the author of *The Princes in the Tower*. Weir is a well-known popular British historian who frequently writes about the English Royalty in the 15th and 16th centuries. She has written extensively about Henry VIII, Elizabeth I, and the Wars of the Roses. *The Princes in the Tower* is simply one more work within a large body of work concerning the time period. Weir writes *The Princes in the Tower* with the intention of vindicating the claim that Richard III had the Princes in the Tower killed. Thus her bias is clear: she has it in for Richard III.

Weir is also biased in her selection of primary and secondary sources. Among historians, it is regarded as highly dubious to rely as heavily on the biographical work of Sir Thomas More as Weir did. She regularly defends her choice to rely upon his work. However, since More would have been too young to be a reliable primary source and was clearly allied with the Tudors, the reliability of his writing is suspect.

Weir also seems to sympathize with the people of England at the time of Richard III who thought that his sufferings were well-deserved for his deeds. Weir makes clear that while Richard III had a few redeeming qualities, they were overwhelmed by his wickedness. She even constructed stories about how events occurred that she could only infer from circumstantial evidence. Thus it is clear that she is committed to vindicated the widely believed claims of his guilt, even if it involves sometimes dubious reasoning.

## Tone

The tone of *The Princes in the Tower* combines that of a mystery novel, academic history, and a tragedy. *The Princes in the Tower* is not fundamentally a mystery novel. However, it is built around the mystery of who killed the Princes in the Tower. While Weir does not think that it is a mystery who the culprit is, she does examine the case of Richard III's guilt with a tone that suggests the possibility that he was innocent. She tries to piece together the events that led to Richard III's death and the story is told with a bit of mystique, along only a bit.

The tone also reflects that of an academic historian. The text is only sometimes dry but it is littered with analyses of historical texts about the time period, an analysis of the reliability of primary sources and the biases of the authors of secondary sources. While Weir sticks to a central narrative, much of the work clearly rests on historical scholarship which gives the book a drier tone than a pure historical narrative.

Finally, the book has the tone of a tragedy as that is fundamentally what it is. Richard III was power hungry and Weir believes that his lust for power led him to kill two innocent young boys to secure his hold on the English Throne. Weir regards the murders as



tragedies though she believes that Richard III got his just deserts. Thus the tone is often sad and angry, reflecting a sense of grief over the fate of Edward V and Richard of York.

## Structure

The Princes of the Tower consists of twenty-one chapters that largely proceed in order from the rise of King Edward IV to the early reign of King Henry VII. It largely concerns the years from 1483 to 1485, but it gives a substantial pre-history and a sizeable post-history. The first chapter sets the stage for the book as a whole by outlining the historical methodology that Weir will use to conclusively show that Richard III killed the Princes in the Tower. She reviews a number of sources, primary and secondary. From there, Weir largely sticks to the main storyline and only from time to time discussing the details of historical scholarship.

Each chapter is supposed to be partly self-contained, covering a specific topic. The divisions are only somewhat artificial. Weir ably divides the story of the Princes in the Tower into discreet, comprehensible chapters despite the fact that the tale is genuine. The structure of each chapter typically contains a plot and a well-introduced cast of characters. Thus there are minor conflicts within the major plotline as a whole. The structure of the book also has a generational feel as it follows the coronation of Edward IV through his entire rule. It covers the birth, youth, adulthood, and reign of Richard III and it shows how Henry Tudor came to power as King Henry VII and how he ruled thereafter.



## Quotes

"Modern writers on the subject of the Princes in the Tower have tended to fall into two categories: those who believe Richard III guilty of the murder of the Princes but are afraid to commit themselves to any confident conclusions, and those who would like to see Richard more or less canonized" (Chapter 1, pg. 1.)

"Edward had come into his own again; the immediate threat from Lancaster had been removed and all was set fair for a period of stable government" (Chapter 2, pg. 26.)

"Richard was essentially the child of a violent age, born to a legacy of civil war" (Chapter 3, pg. 29.)

"It was, however, Edward IV's failure to envisage what the consequences would be to his kingdom and his heir if he were to die young and leave a minor on the throne that led directly to the tragedy of the Princes in the Tower" (Chapter 5, pg. 58.)

"There was no doubt in the mind of any contemporary writer that by the end of May Gloucester had made up his mind to take the throne" (Chapter 7, pg. 96.)

"Thus fell Hastings, killed not by those enemies he had always feared, but by a friend whom he had never doubted" (Chapter 9, pg. 105.)

"Gloucester was now apparently in a very strong position: he had all the Yorkist male heirs to the throne in his power, he had rid himself of his enemies, and armed support was on its way to him from York" (Chapter 10, pg. 113.)

"After the coronation, the Princes in the Tower were never seen alive again" (Chapter 11, pg. 138.)

"Ironically, by seeking to ensure the boys' safety, the conspirators - including their own mother - had sealed their fate" (Chapter 12, pg. 146.)

"When, on September 8th September, he walked hand in hand with his son and his wife into York Minster for young Edward's investiture as Prince of Wales, the King did so in the belief that he had removed the last dynastic threat to his throne and put an end once and for all to the conspiracies that had overshadowed his reign" (Chapter 13, pg. 162.)

"In conclusion...we may say that the evidence overwhelmingly suggests the Princes were murdered by Richard III in 1483" (Chapter 14, pg. 178.)

"The children of King Edward had been avenged at last" (Chapter 17, pg. 216.)

"Thus the murder may be viewed in its wider context as a single event that dramatically changed the course of history" (Chapter 17, pg. 218.)





"[Henry VII] gave his realm strong government and peace and brought to it the political stability it had lacked during the Wars of the Roses. In fact, what Henry achieved during his reign was to lay the foundations of the modern state of Great Britain" (Chapter 18, pg. 220.)

"Tyrell was found guilty, and on 6th May was beheaded on Tower Hill" (Chapter 20, pg. 247.)

"Given all the other evidence already discussed in previous chapters, then only one man could have been responsible for their deaths: Richard III" (Chapter 21, pg. 258.)

## Topics for Discussion

What is the controversy concerning the Princes in the Tower? Why has it remained a controversy for so long?

What are the arguments against the guilt of Richard III? Explain at least two in detail.

Why would Richard III have killed the Princes? Explain in detail.

How did the deaths of the Princes lead to Richard III's overthrow and his death?

Explain why Weir relies so heavily on Sir Thomas More's account of the Princes.

How did the Wars of the Roses tie into the Princes in the Tower?

In your view, who killed the Princes in the Tower? Defend your answer.