

# 1415: AGINCOURT

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*Background Guide*

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AIDAN THOMPSON (HE/HIM)  
DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL

# LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

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Hello There!

I would like to formally welcome you all to SSICSIM 2023! As director of 1415: Agincourt, my team and I - Agata Capomasi, Prisha Tharwani, and Victoria Toscano - have put a lot of work into creating this committee, and we are looking forward to welcoming you to this committee.

Before I get started, let me introduce myself! I am a second-year student attending the University of Toronto for Engineering Science. Now looking at the topic of this committee, you might be wondering how the two come together. History has always been a passion of mine and a fun hobby. However, it is important to realize that one can not be a good engineer without understanding the history and culture of the stakeholders they are designing for. In other words: you have to truly understand the opportunity you're given - inside and out.

The Hundred Years' War has always been an interesting topic for me to study - particularly due to its lack of popularity. What most people know about the conflict - if they've even heard of it before - is that the Hundred Years' War neither lasted a hundred years (it was actually 116 years), nor was it a conflict that lasted the entire time. But its importance to our modern day and age is unprecedented. It helped shape the French and English nobility for the years to come, influencing events such as the French Revolution. In addition, it helped invigorate ideas of nationality amongst people and aided in the general populace from pledging fealty to a monarch and rather to a country. Through this committee, I hope to open your eyes to this conflict and offer a small peek into this interesting and complex conflict.

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Furthermore, there have been numerous adaptations of this era of history throughout the years - especially with Henry V. For this case we will be basing this committee on fact rather than fiction - however, some elements may have history “bent” in order to better suit this committee. This background guide has been catered for beginners to this topic and should provide you with all the information you may need for debate on committee day. If you still want more information, please see the Other Readings/Links section of this background guide.

I hope you have as much fun participating in this committee as my staff and I have created it. You will always be on your feet, delegate, and be prepared for a real Shakespearean tragedy - full of betrayal, deception, acts of courage, and nobility. Without further ado, welcome to Medieval England.

Regards,

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ALEXANDER BOLDIS (HE/HIM)  
DIRECTOR, 1415: AGINCOURT

# INTRODUCTION

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The stage is set for one of the most influential conflicts in Medieval Europe. King Henry V has just been crowned and has stormed his court, some of the most notable lords and knights in the English Kingdom - including your delegate - with one decree: "We shall go to war with France." The Medieval war machine has once again been reinvigorated, and this time its eyes are towards France.

However, there is much that needs to be done before England can be remotely prepared to go to war with France. Henry V's father has left the kingdom in much disarray. Spending lives and gold on keeping his divided kingdom together, you must all work together with the King to reunite our land in preparation for war with France. Speaking of preparing for war with France, you must ensure that the nation's coffers do not run dry during the war, and collect adequate resources and gold prior to the conflict without upsetting the populace.

The task at hand is a momentous one. With a divided nation facing a looming war, this challenge will be hard to overcome - but not impossible. If you all work together to unite this nation and topple the French nobility, England will reign superior for the years to come. But beware delegates, for there are some nobles among you who shall have ulterior motives than that to the crown - and may even betray it. The choice is yours delegate - stand with your King, or betray him.

# DEFINITIONS

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## **Valois**

The ruling French royal dynasty from 1328 to 1589. Descended under Charles of Valois in 1328, and whose current ruling head is Charles VI.

## **Plantagenet**

The ruling English royal dynasty from 1154 to 1458. Descended from the marriage of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine in 1154, it had ruled England for most of the Middle Ages. It is currently divided into two factions: the House of Lancaster, which the current King belongs to - Henry V - and the House of York.

## **Burgundians**

The competing royal dynasty of France. They controlled parts of modern-day Belgium, Northern France, and central-east France at this time.

## **Chevauchee**

A form of medieval warfare that included burning and pillaging the countryside in order to hinder an enemy's supply chain and subdue them into submission.

## **The Medieval Siege**

A medieval siege involves surrounding a city's walls, essentially cutting them off from any outside supply. Then, one must "wait out" the city and force them to surrender due to lack of resources. These can take anywhere from a couple of weeks to entire months.

## **Chivalry**

The rules of medieval warfare. They must be followed by all participants in a war. These



include not murdering men of nobility, announcing to your enemy the location and time of the battle, not pillaging places of worship such as churches, and other rules that ensure that soldiers are noble on and off the battlefield. One important reminder is that in Medieval Europe, war was more of a game to kings.

## Dukes

Dukes are members of high power in the English monarchy. They control entire provinces in the Kingdom of England. This position is usually reserved for members of the royal family or individuals who have done a great deal for the kingdom and whom the King trusts. Once given a dukedom, dukes are responsible for ensuring that the members in their respective territories have a decent state of living, while also contributing to the royal treasury and army by collecting taxes and raising armies at the request of the King. Failure to comply with a King's requests may result in imprisonment, and conspiring against the King is considered to be a capital offence. One may decide to go to war with other dukedoms to increase their holdings within the kingdom, however, be aware that if the King decides to intervene on the side of the defender, it may result in strict consequences for the duke.

## Earls

Earls are a step below a duke, as they just control a township. Townships are considered to be entire cities within a province, of which as the duke must pay homage to the King, they too must pay homage to their respective dukes. For the purpose of this committee, we shall consider that the King will be maintaining the order between the kingdom and that dukes MAY NOT request their respective earls for any supplies or troops (similarly with Earls and Barons). Usually one becomes an Earl by proving their merit for England, or by having close relations with the King. Because of its decreased size, earls can only muster a fraction of the resources/armies a duke can. However, they may have the ability to stage an uprising against their respective dukes for the title or may seek out a better relationship with the King to request a dukedom.

## Barons

Barons are a step below an earl, as they just control their respective estate. An estate

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usually includes some land with a farm and a Manor where the baron resides. They usually obtain said estate by proving their merit to the King in combat and obtaining a knighthood. A baron may become an earl by further proving their merit to the King, or by expanding their network within the kingdom/relationship with the King. Because of the small size of their holdings, a baron is not expected to give much in taxes, and not have the responsibility of mustering a force for the Kingdom. However, they are expected to themselves to participate in any war the King calls for.

# HISTORY/CONTEXT

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Henry V had just succeeded his father and became the next king of England. The country finds itself in the middle of the Hundred Years' War, as well as teeming with civil unrest. However, in order to truly understand the problems that this committee faces, one must understand the history that led England up to this point in time.

## **The Hundred Years' War**

### *The Start of the Hundred Years' War*

The Hundred Years' War is a misleading name as it was actually a series of wars that lasted from 1337 to 1453 between the Plantagenets and the Valois over control of the French crown. There really was not a formal start to the conflict, as it was a result of numerous events in history that gave the English crown more French territories. For instance, the Norman Conquest of William the Conqueror in 1071 gave the King the lands of Normandy, and the marriage of Eleanor of Aquitaine and King Henry II in 1152 gave the English King authority over a lot of French territories. Over time, this caused tension between the English and French kings as there was still a lot of gray area between the hierarchy of the English and French kings. However, it all came to a head in 1330, when the French throne was left with two viable candidates, Edward III, from the English, and Phillip of Valois, from the French.

### *The First Invasion of France*

In 1337, Edward III led an invasion of France to take his "rightful" claim to the French throne. He and his son, the Black Prince, led the army of England through numerous victories. Through the use of chevauchee, the English were able to overwhelm the French forces. However, due to the Black Death and old age, the English eventually failed to keep their lands and lost them back to the French.

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### The “Peace” Time

Edward III’s Heir, Richard II, was more of a peace-loving king compared to his grandfather. Thus he traded most of the French lands back to the Valois - in exchange for a wife - and the Hundred Years’ War saw a little break. Yet soon thereafter, he was usurped by Henry IV due to his unpopularity.

At this point, both sides were busy with civil war so the conflict between the French and English went on hold. Henry IV was busy dealing with Welsh and Scottish rebels, as well as any other possible usurpers to the throne. Charles VI - the then king of France - had to deal with a civil war in 1411 between the Valois and Burgundians, as well as his rapidly deteriorating mental health.

### The Coronation of Henry V

We now arrive at the present day in committee. Henry IV’s son, Henry V, has just been crowned after his father’s passing - and his first goal is to reclaim the French lands that were “unjustly” stolen from him by the Valois. It is up to this delegation to ensure that this is successful. More information is available in Topic #3: War with France.

## **Religion and Medieval Europe**

### Religion and War

In the Medieval Ages, war had to be just. It had to have a just cause by the rightful authority of a sovereign prince and with righteous intent. Both sides used religious symbols and “divine judgement” to boost morale in their army. Such symbols included having the arms of St George, and banners of St. Edmund, St. Edward, and the Virgin Mary and her Child.

In addition to religion, chivalry heavily influenced war. Soldiers went to war for the prospect of honour and valour. War is a game to kings - at the peasant’s expense. However, it is possible for a peasant to prove their worth during war and be knighted by a king, or perhaps gain a ransom by capturing a nobleman. For more information, please see *Chivalry*.

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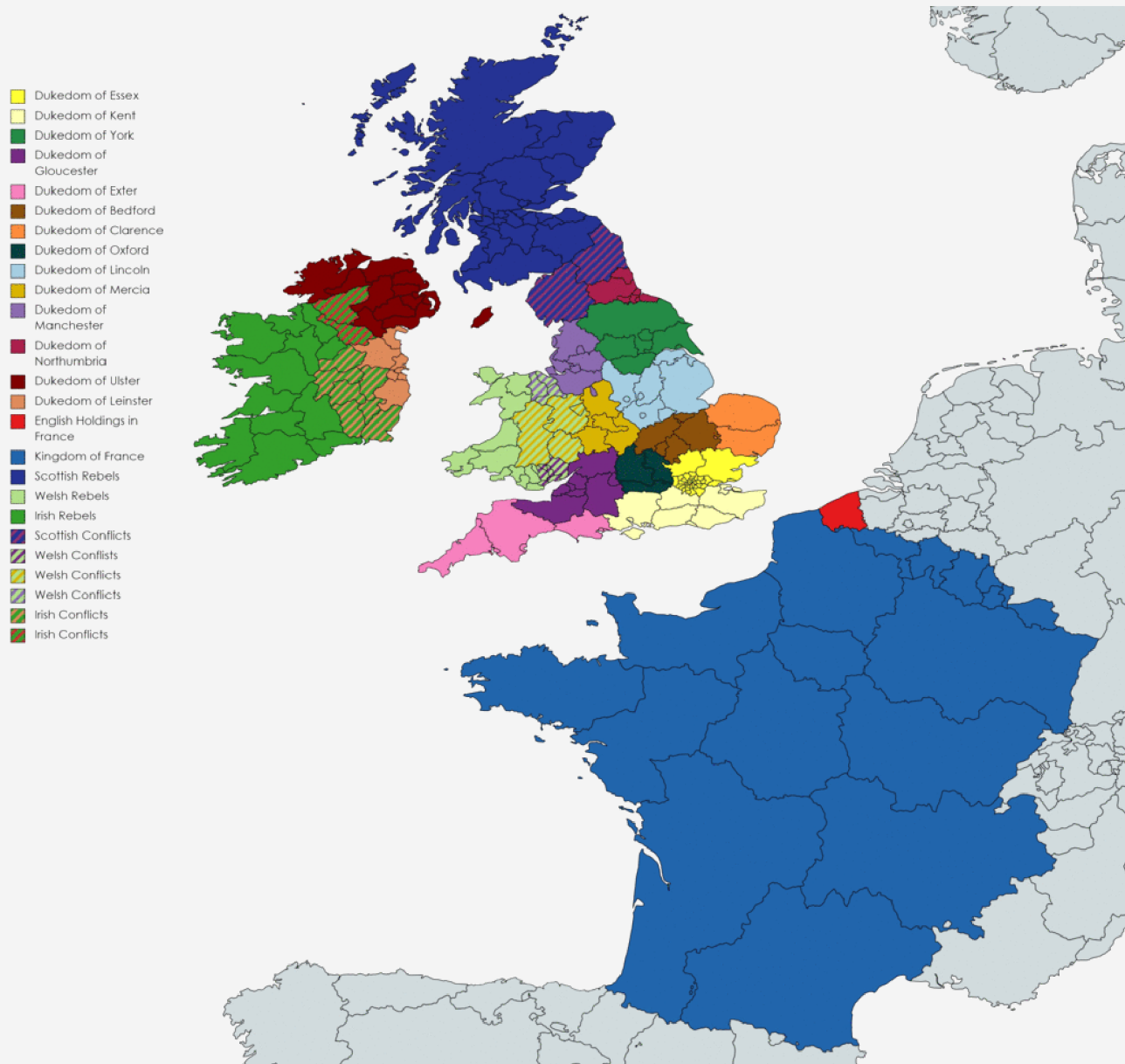
## Religion and the Monarchy

In the Medieval era, a monarch was said to be “ordained by God.” In other words, a monarch had “divine” reasoning for their actions, and any person who disobeyed them would disobey God themselves. In reality, the monarch would use the Church as a propaganda machine, and this was no different for Henry V, who used the church to help advocate for a war with France.

## **The Nature of the Feudal System**

An important aspect of feudal society is that there was no concept of a “nation” until the end of the Middle Ages. Instead, peasants were loyal to their lord, who were loyal to their duke, who was loyal to their king. If the King called for a raise to arms, it would be the responsibility of the independent duchies to raise said armies, and similarly so if the King called for taxes. Each duchy had the liberty to decide how they would enact the King’s will in their territory, but one important thing was that they had to enact the King’s will. Otherwise, they would be arrested or executed by order of the king. However, those loyal to the King would earn high-ranking positions in court, as well as multiple rewards after a war - such as treasures and most importantly, land.

# COMMITTEE MAP



Above is a map of the current holdings of the Kingdom of France and the Kingdom of England around the time of the coronation of Henry V. Britain is divided into its various dukedoms and rebel regions.

# STATE OF AFFAIRS AND TOPICS OF DEBATE

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## Topic #1: Civil Unrest

The Kingdom of England currently oversees a large amount of land with various cultures, including Welsh, Scottish, Irish, and - most importantly - English. This wide range of differing cultures has caused various conflicts in the past, and is currently an important issue the committee has to deal with.

With the usurpation of the throne by King Henry IV, this division only accelerated. As with any usurper, Henry V's father spent most of his reign trying to keep his position as king. With rebellions from all sides of the kingdom, he struggled to keep control of the kingdom. The worst of said rebellions was the Hotspur rebellion, where Sir Henry Percy, or "Hotspur," led a rebellion to place Edmund Mortimer as the King of England.

Currently, there are still rebellions from the Welsh, Scots, and Irish that must be put under control to ensure England's survival in these times. Furthermore, the Scots have always been known to strike the English whenever our army was out of the country. There is also the problem with peasant uprisings. If left unchecked, peasants have the tendency to grow discontent with the current reign and may revolt against the nobility and cause severe problems for your budget and supply chains. In addition, nobles can form factions and they themselves can rebel against the current King to place one of their candidates on the throne. However if unsuccessful, the consequences for even plotting said acts are severe.

### Guiding Questions

1. How should we deal with the current uprising across the kingdom?
2. How do we ensure that the peasants in our domain remain happy?

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## Topic #2: The Medieval Economy

The Medieval Economy is primarily composed of farming and agriculture. Overall, due to its location, England is heavily reliant on being self-sufficient if it were to endure a blockade, trade could be jeopardized. In order to ensure that we have enough food to feed our people and armies, the committee must ensure that the peasants cultivating the food are happy. Otherwise, it could run the risk of rebellion.

The main way England receives funds for its army or any major project is through taxes. Generally the lower the taxes, the more happy your peasants are. The King will always demand taxes from their nobles, who will collect them from the citizens on their respective land. A sudden rise in taxes has been known to cause uproars and riots in the past, and a prolonged period of high taxation has the same effect. It is important to know how to balance the budget and ensure that civilians are happy while your coffers are not bled dry.

Furthermore, the English are known for trade with their allies. For instance, English sheep's wool is known to be a vital element in the Burgundian textile industry. Knowing which nation your country currently trades with can be vital for developing alliances and perhaps even allies in the eventual war with France.

### Guiding Questions

1. What is the best balance of taxation for the peasants of England?
2. How do we ensure that there are enough resources for our armies while ensuring that the citizens are happy?

## Topic #3: War with France

When King Henry V was crowned, he made one thing clear - he would take back his rightful lands in France. It is clear that if this committee sticks by this King, this is the inevitable path that England will go towards. However, there is much to plan for said conflict.

Firstly, if ever was the time to strike France, it would be now. With a king currently unfit for



ruling the kingdom, and after enduring a bloody civil war, France has been severely weakened. However, they are still a rival to not underestimate. With an army almost three times the size of England's, and a country with almost double the land, it would be a feat to defeat the French army. However, the high command is full of knights waiting to prove their worth in chivalry, and they might risk strategic advantages for "glory on the battlefield."

In addition, you'll have to decide what means of attack you'll employ. Whether it'll be heavy infantry with armoured knights and cavalry - which have been known to overwhelm an enemy, yet also be susceptible to surprise attacks and is slow - light infantry is known to be fast and maneuverable, but not have enough strength to attack the heavy infantry.

As for archery, Welsh longbows have been known to have more range than the typical French crossbow. Although, those Archers take a long time to train and are often mentored from a young age. It's helpful to keep in mind, however, that they devastated the French when Edward III launched his campaign into France in 1337.

There is also a form of attack available to us. Do we choose chevauchee, or perhaps a more conventional battle on the field? Or maybe a long drawn-out siege on a city to ensure a supply hub for our invasion? And there is also the matter of the location of each battle. If we are outnumbered, it might be a viable solution to use a territorial advantage. However, the King will decide how to conduct war is entirely up to this committee.

Overall, there are a lot of preparations and planning that need to be made before England is remotely ready for a war with France. Please note, that it is **strongly advised** to ensure all your home matters are in order before launching a war with a superpower.

### **Guiding Questions**

1. What is the best course of action for war with France? Should we or should we not pursue it?
2. How should we arrange the English army in order to ensure victory over France?

# CONCLUSION

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With King Henry V crowned, he entrusts his kingdom to you, delegates. He expects that you will advise him with the best possible ideas and plans on how to ensure England will prosper in the coming years. And this is no small task, as there are a lot of problems currently plaguing the Kingdom. A divided people, an unhappy populace, and a looming war with France. It is up to you, delegate, to choose whether you will stand - or betray - your king, and ensure England will thrive. But let it be known, that each of you have your own kingdoms behind your eyes.

## **Other Reading/Links**

If you would like more information on the General History of the Hundred Years' War, I would highly recommend watching Extra History's series on the conflict (view link below). They provide a summarized and well-organized presentation of the history at hand.

[Extra History Hundred Years War Series](#)

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**DIRECTOR**

Alexander Boldis

**MODERATOR**

Prisha Tharwani

**CRISIS MANAGER**

Victoria Toscano

**CRISIS ANALYSTS**

Agata Capomasi | Chloe Legel | Natalie Lee

**PAGE**

Anna Tian