

Fall 2023

## THE WARS OF THE ROSES

*The Dubuque Shakespeare Project* kicks off with the four linked plays enumerating *The Wars of the Roses*, civil wars between rival York and Lancaster houses for the throne of England in mid-fifteenth century. The first play starts with an unexpected death of Henry V and a weak Henry VI ascending the throne before he is ready. The final play ends with the death of a usurper king and the establishment of a Tudor dynasty that still holds the English throne. Between these two events lies a series of wars, anarchy and revolutions, rich characters engaging in human drama, and numerous historical and political lessons to learn and debate. But for Shakespeare's genius, these events would be historical footnotes among the numerous internecine conflicts that characterized medieval Europe. Indeed, the term *The Wars of the Roses* arises from a scene in Shakespeare's play Henry VI-1 where rival factions pick red or white roses to choose sides.

The Wars of the Roses have influenced many plays, novels and fantasies including *Game of Thrones* (York/Lancaster becomes Stark/Lannister, the latter even using a golden rose as a symbol). Characters such as *Richard III*, the charismatic hunch-backed villain have become part of popular mythology and may not be accurate representations of the true historical king.

Plays and poems are available free online through the [Folger Shakespeare Library](#) (provides context for the plays in addition to providing full-text)

Suggested Print Edition: The Norton Shakespeare

Through their streaming movie service *kanopy*, library patrons also will have free access to 37 film versions of the plays that are part of BBC Television Shakespeare.

### **Additional Resources**

The Hollow Crown: The Wars of the Roses (BBC series Season 2, 2016 with Benedict Cumberbatch playing Richard III).

*Conn Iggulden Wars of the Roses Series 4 Books Collection* (2015-17).

Gristwood, S. (2014) *Blood Sisters*. Reprint edition. Basic Books.

Michael, L. (2015) *Succession*. Thomas Dunne Books.

Weir, A. (1996) *The Wars of the Roses*. Reprint edition. Ballantine Books.

### **Ancillary Programming (dates TBD)**

Hollinshed as Shakespearean source for history, by John Eby (Loras College)

Talk about historical sources. A copy of Hollinshed is owned by Loras College.

-Late September or early October

Showing of the film *The Lost King* - Possibly in October or early November

Adaptation of two Shakespeare poems *Venus and Adonis* (at Convivium Urban Farmstead) and *The Rape of Lucrece* (at Voices). Staged by Fly-By-Night Productions.