

# Why did henry vii win the battle of bosworth? essay sample



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There are a number of reasons why Henry VII won the Battle of Bosworth. Whilst there were political, military and economic reasons why Henry won, the political reasons held more weight.

There were long term political reasons that contributed significantly to Henry's success. For instance, the marriage arranged by Elizabeth Woodville and Margaret Beaufort that united Henry and Elizabeth of York. The marriage was publically announced by Henry in 1483 in the Rennes Chapel, Brittany. The marriage not only strengthened Henry's claim to the throne and increased his legitimacy, which was very important at this point in history, but it also increased Henry's support. It did this by uniting the support of Elizabeth and Margaret who had previously been enemies. This gave Henry support on the battlefield from not only Lancastrians but some Yorkists that had supported Edward V too, which naturally contributed to his victory as he had more people in England supporting him.

Henry's exile to Brittany was also important in Henry's success. During his 14 year exile in Brittany, Henry had been gathering a court in Paris as well as collecting troops for an invasion. It can be argued that due to the opinion that Henry Tudor might be useful in further negotiations with England, Henry VII had the support and protection of the Duke of Brittany. The implications of this and befriending Welsh exiles were hugely beneficial to Henry. Through having this support Henry was able to collect 1,500 French mercenaries, over 1,000 Welsh soldiers and had the support of 400-500 loyal Welsh exiles. This support contributed largely to his total army of around 5,000. Without this support it seems that Henry would barely have had an army at all, so his exile to Brittany was hugely important to his win at the Battle of Bosworth.

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Perhaps what is just as important to take into account as Henry's support, was Richard's lack of support. Through Richard's usurpation of the throne he had made many enemies. It caused splits in the Yorkist party and caused fear and doubt within the people. He had failed to win the full support of the nobility and had dropped in popularity even further after the introduction of his policy which involved him putting northerners in southern counties. In addition, with the speculation that Richard had murdered his nephews in 1483, his popularity only dropped further. Richard's decrease in popularity meant that people who no longer supported Richard would therefore support Henry, adding yet again to Henry's support which contributed to him winning the Battle of Bosworth.

There were also short term political reasons behind Henry's win. For instance, the role of the Stanleys on the battle field. It was arguably the turning point of the battle when the brothers, who had remained impartial surveying the battle waiting to see which army would take the lead, decided to enter it on the Lancastrian side. Having made up nearly half of Richard III's army, this addition of 6,500 soldiers to the Lancastrian army resulted in it being the bigger army of the two sides. They had a tactical position on the field, one brother on each side of the field, which meant when they attacked William, they could attack him from both sides. It was a combination of having more soldiers and the Stanley brother's strategic location on the battle field that then led to Richard's death and the end of the battle.

There were some short term military reasons as to why Henry won the Battle of Bosworth. Henry's uncle Jasper Tudor was able to assist him with his military expertise however it was largely down to military luck and chance <https://assignbuster.com/why-did-henry-vii-win-the-battle-of-bosworth-essay-sample/>

that Henry was victorious. Despite Richard the III having more troops that were better equipped, considerably more cavalry, the advantaged position on Ambien Hill and vastly more experience of battle, the first hour of the battle was evenly matched. This made Henry lucky, as the odds were heavily against him. It could be argued it was also Henry's luck that the Stanley brothers joined his side. However, when stalemate occurred Henry rode across to the Stanley's to offer persuasion to join the Lancastrian side. The fact that the Stanley's did eventually join the battle on Henry's side provides evidence that Henry's confidence as a military leader by being forward thinking and taking his initiative could instead be responsible in gaining the Stanleys support rather than it being completely down to luck.

Richard's tactical errors in the battle also contributed to why Henry won. Richard lost the opportunity to gain advantage in attacking Oxford by being too hesitant. This resulted in Oxford launching the first attack on Norfolk who was then killed. Richard's risk taking could either show him as a tactical leader, or a reckless one. However his risk in charging down from Ambien hill to attack Henry with the aim to potentially end the battle backfired on him as it resulted in his death as he had played into Henry's hands. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that Richard's risk taking was yet another tactical error on his part, which helped Henry VII win.

As well as political and military reasons, there were also economic explanations as to why Henry won the Battle of Bosworth. In order to have the resources and equipment for battle, large amounts of money were needed. Henry was able to gain the necessary economic support from

Charles VIII of France due to Charles hoping this would distract Richard III  
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from sending help to Brittany. It was this economic support that gave Henry VII the best chance in battle which therefore contributed to his victory.

It is clear to see that without doubt that the political reasons for Henry winning the Battle of Bosworth not only outnumber the military and economic reasons but they are of greater importance too. The military reasons hold little significance due to the nature of the battle. This is effectively put by Charles Oman, writer of *The Art of War in the Middle Ages* that the Battle of Bosworth “ can hardly be taken for serious military study- since it was not settled by strategy or tactics, but by mere treachery”. In addition to this, the economic reason was only one piece in the jigsaw puzzle to why Henry won, whereas the political reasons, both long term and short, made larger contributions to the victory as a whole not only in the build up to the Battle, but during the Battle itself.