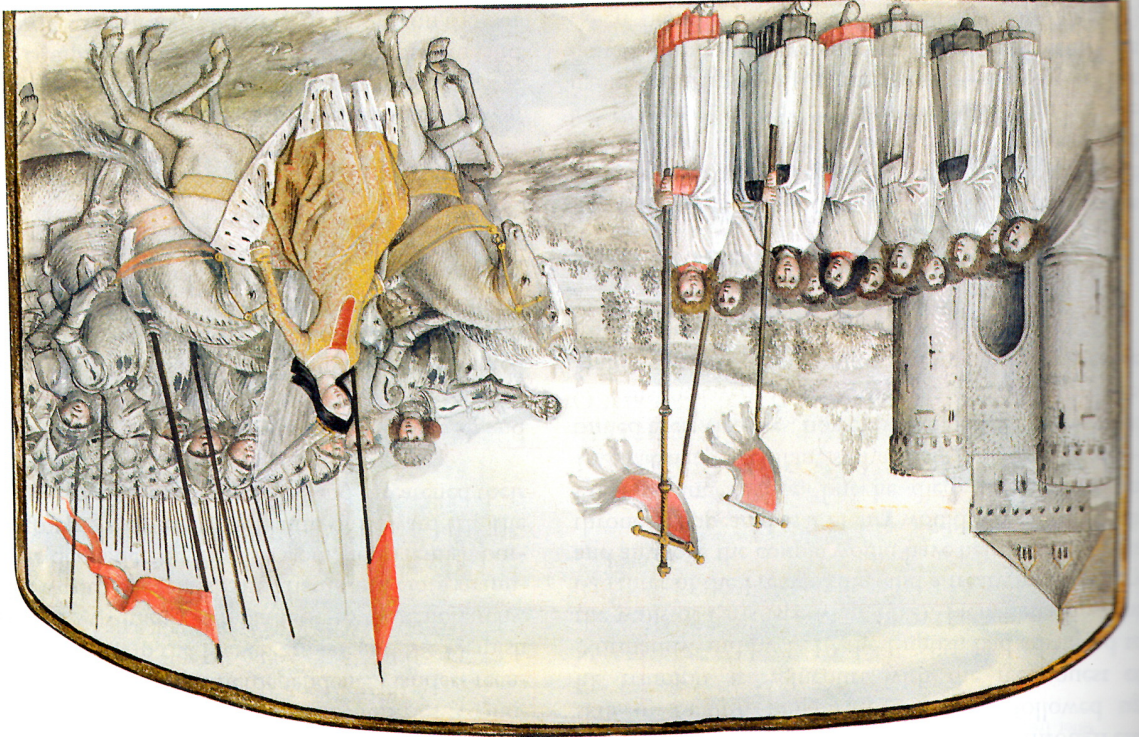


Isabella of France and Her Son Edward Enter Oxford In this illustration for the chronicles of the counts of Flanders (made in 1477 by the artist known as the Master of Mary of Burgundy) Isabella, the sister of Charles IV of France and the wife of Edward II of England, and her son Edward are welcomed by clergy into the city of Oxford in 1326. Isabella and Edward, who was only fourteen at the time, along with her lover Roger Mortimer, had just invaded England with a small army to overthrow her husband and end the influence of his male favorite, Hugh le Despenser. They captured and imprisoned both men, executed Despenser, deposed the king, and may have ordered his murder. Isabella ruled as regent for her son for three years before he assumed personal rule by force and had Mortimer executed. She lived another twenty-eight years in high style as a wealthy woman, watching her son lead successful military ventures in France in the first decades of the Hundred Years' War. These events add further complexity to the complicated dynastic disputes that led to the war and have been the subject of plays, novels, ballets, TV miniseries, and films. (By kind permission of Microsoft Coke and the Trustees of Holkham Estate, Norfolk/Bridgeman Images)



In 1329 Edward III formally recognized Philip VI's lordship over Aquitaine. Eight years later, Philip, eager to exercise full French jurisdiction there, confiscated the duchy. Edward III interpreted this action as a gross violation of the treaty of 1259 and as a cause for war. Moreover, Edward argued, as the eldest directly surviving male descendant of Philip the Fair, he deserved the title of king of France. Edward III's dynastic argument upset the feudal order in France: to increase their independent power, many French nobles abandoned Philip VI, using the excuse that they had to transfer their loyalty to a different overlord, Edward III. One reason the war lasted

succeeded to the [French] monarchy." French lawyers defended the position with the claim that the exclusion of women from ruling or passing down the right to rule was part of Salic law, a sixth-century law code of the Franks (see Chapter 7), and that Salic law itself was part of the fundamental law of France. They used this invented tradition to argue that Edward should be barred from the French throne. (The ban on female succession became part of French legal tradition until the end of the monarchy in 1789.) The nobles passed the crown to Philip VI of Valois (c. 1328–1350), a nephew of Philip the

1337	Philip VI of France confiscates Aquitaine; war begins
1346	English longbowmen defeat French knights at Crécy
1356	English defeat French at Poitiers
1370s–1380s	French recover some territory
1415	English defeat the French at Agincourt
1429	French victory at Orléans; Charles VII crowned king
1431	Joan of Arc declared a heretic and burned at the stake
1440s	French reconquer Normandy and Aquitaine
1453	War ends
1456	Joan cleared of charges of heresy and declared a martyr

The Hundred Years' War