

Richard I, the Lion-Heart Encyclopedia Article

Richard I, the Lion-Heart

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Richard I, the Lion-Heart

1157-1199

English king who led the Third Crusade to the Holy Land. Richard was the third son of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine. At the age of 11, he was given control of his mother's Duchy of Aquitaine, and was named Duke of Poitiers in 1172. Richard held no allegiance to his father, and joined his brothers Henry and Geoffrey in a rebellion against the king in 1173. In 1189, he joined forces with King Philip II of France to force his father out of power and placed himself on the throne. In 1190, Richard embarked on the Third Crusade, hoping to regain Christian authority of the Holy Land from the Muslim sultan Saladin. His forces nearly took Jerusalem twice, but in the end Saladin prevailed. In 1192, Richard received word that his brother John was conspiring with Philip II against him and set off for home. On the way, a storm sent his ship aground near Venice, and he fell into the hands of the Austrian Duke Leopold, who held a grudge against him. The duke held Richard prisoner for a time, then turned him over to the German king, Henry VI, who kept him locked up at various castles until England paid a hefty ransom in 1194. Richard spent his last few years in battle against Philip II. In 1199, his desire for wealth led to his early death. Seeking treasure, he attacked the castle of the Vicomte of Limoges and was mortally wounded. Although not a particularly successful ruler, Richard's reputation as a courageous soldier earned him the nickname Coeur De Lion (the lion-heart).