

Thinking 'Henrician'

Welcome to Mr Yearnshire & Mr Flory's Summer Work for AQA A level History Unit 2: *Religious Conflict and the Church in England, 1529-c1570*. This unit is a depth study which examines the extent of religious, political, social and economic change during the second half of the reign of Henry VIII and the reigns of the later Tudors, Edward VI, Mary I and Elizabeth I, as well as drawing on the wider context of English and European society in the early sixteenth century. Year 12 is focused solely on Henry VIII. Thus, the term historians have used to describe this period and the early Reformation is 'Henrician'. Henry Tudor (Junior) is a larger than life historical figure; we think we all know 'good King Hal'; the handsome, the Casanova, the tyrant, the scholar, the athlete, the renaissance man, the selfish, the greedy, the fat, the cruel, the.....love him; loathe him; fear him; understand him?.....During this course you will find plenty to find the Henry you know or want to know.....and plenty to challenge these assumptions and beliefs.....While Henry is the constant 'elephant in the room' (who we **will** obsess about), you will also find our studies populated by some other equally beguiling, fascinating characters of huge importance not only to aspects of the sixteenth century but British history as a whole; Anne Boleyn (picture right), Thomas Wolsey, Thomas Cromwell (picture left), Thomas More, Katherine of Aragon, Catherine Howard, Thomas Howard, Pope Clement VII.....(obviously something in the name Thomas!).....the list goes on.....



However, history, as we will find out is not just the product of the needs, deeds and desires of 'great' men and women but also the interplay of these individuals with the 'mass' of society and the world around them and different groups within this; their needs, deeds and desires as well as political ideas, economic forces, social expectations, religious conviction, philosophy, culture.....The deeds of 'The Great' are determined by the often storm-tossed seas and powerful currents and forces of history. This historical **context** is crucial to proper, full historical understanding. Indeed, while Henry may literally have been king between 1509 and 1547, for historians, as always, 'context is king'. This 'mess' of history - in a time very different from our own - can appear bewildering, confusing, contradictory, sometimes

totally alien. But by goodness it is fascinating fun to try and unravel! With enthusiasm and commitment you will make sense of this crucial, defining period in British - and arguably world - history and feel all the better person for having done so!

So let's start the process of trying to unravel the knot.....

TASK 1 To get you started read the extract below which is written by a renowned Henrician historian; Derek Wilson. You then need to complete the listed tasks.

One of the key skills you will heavily utilise in the course is source analysis; two out of the four questions you complete on the final exam paper will involve this. You will also examine a wide range of historical sources to develop the depth and breadth of your understanding. You need to become effective at understanding what a source is saying, inferring, indicating and being able to summarise these meaning in concise form. In short you need to be good at précis; a summary of the essentials/key aspects of a text, sometimes known as synopsis.

From the Introduction to *Henry VIII: Reformer & Tyrant*, Derek Wilson, 2009

'As the heavens are high and the earth is deep, so the hearts of kings are unsearchable'

Book of Proverbs 25:3

Unfortunately, Hans Holbein Junior was a genius. Why unfortunately? Only because he has provided us with that image of Henry VIII which, whether we like it or not, automatically comes to mind whenever the name of the king is mentioned. We see him standing belligerently, hands on hips, his barrel chest adorned with jewel-encrusted vesture, his codpiece thrusting forward. He glowers at us from the canvas, warning us not even to think of contradicting him. The portrait is a magnificent piece of propaganda which has proved its effectiveness from the time of its creation in 1537 right down to the present day. However, (leaving aside issues of art appreciation) that is all it is – propaganda. A starting point for a realistic understanding must be the rejection of this forceful icon. This is Henry as he wanted to be seen – strong, assertive, his own man, not only powerful but worthy of power. This image of 'Henry the Magnificent' has always in the popular imagination, seen off other less flattering evaluations. The Elizabethan poet, Ulpian Fulwell, declared the late king to have been a 'tender father' to his subjects. Lord Herbert of Cherbury called Henry 'one of the most glorious princes of his time'. James Froude exculpated the king's crimes by asserting that he 'sustained nobly the honour of the English name and carried the commonwealth securely through the hardest crisis of its history'.

Other commentators have thought differently. To Martin Luther, Henry VIII was a 'fool', a 'liar' and a 'damnable, rotten worm'. Sir Walter Raleigh said of him, 'if all the pictures and patterns of a merciless prince were lost in the world, they might all again be painted to the life out of the story of this king'. Jacob Burckhardt found him 'loutish and disgusting'. Charles Dickens was repelled by a man who was nothing more than a 'blot of blood and grease upon the history of England'. In our own day, Professor Diarmaid MacCulloch has not hesitated to compare the second Tudor to Joseph Stalin. The prevailing interpretation seems to be that of a monster but one who is nevertheless compelling – aggressive, macho and definitely sexy. Like him or loath him, there is absolutely no doubt that 'Bluff King Hal' remains everlastingly fascinating.

Why? There are several answers to that question. One is that he presided over – and was in some degree responsible for – the most sweeping cultural and social changes in English history. The England of 1547 was profoundly different from the England of 1509. It had been staunchly orthodox Catholic; it was now ‘reformed’ and under the papal ban. The Church had been a major landowner and a political partner in the life of the state at central and local levels; now the bulk of its wealth had changed hands, much of it going to augment an emerging propertied ‘middle’ class. In terms of international affairs, England had become a major European power, exercising an influence out of proportion to its economic standing. Then of course, everyone knows that Henry VIII was the king who had six wives. This accomplishment has provided the material for a whole library of romantic novels and biographies, not to mention films and television series. To the aesthete Henry VIII will always be the vandal whose greed laid waste the monasteries and destroyed their garnered ancient treasures. For the aficionado of English history, this monarch uniquely compels attention. His personality was as massive as his frame and one cannot gainsay J.J. Scarisbrick’s assessment that the thirty-seven-and-a-half years of his reign ‘left a deeper mark on the mind, heart and face of England than did any event in English history between the coming of the Normans and the coming of the factory’.

All this suggests a powerful king who, for good or ill, deliberately set about transforming the realm he inherited from his father – and succeeded. A simplistic evaluation of the evidence neatly ties up the career of Henry VIII with Holbein’s uncompromising image. The king assumes heroic proportions, whether as a tyrant or as a creator of a modern state. The picture I shall try to paint in the following chapters is very different. I shall argue that Henry VIII was a man whose blistering egotism covered a basic insecurity. He was both morally and intellectually limited and heavily dependent on others – ministers, courtiers, wives. He was too self-obsessed to have any vision of a greater or better England. The changes that came over the nation during his reign were in large measure the work of others and often emerged from the muddled interaction of external influences and internal factionalism. My argument in the following pages is based on two premises. First of all, many of the changes which overtook England would have occurred whoever had occupied the throne. The Renaissance and Reformation, disseminated through new information technology, profoundly refashioned the thought processes of those who lived through them. Church and state and the relations between them could not have remained unaltered during the four decades of Henry’s reign. Of course, change has to be managed and it is no part of my thesis to assert that Henry had no ideas of his own and no impact on policy. However, what I do suggest, secondly, is that he was essentially reactive rather than proactive. He responded to events and was influenced by the powerful personalities of those around him (not to mention being a victim of his own passions). He chose some truly remarkable men and it was they who not only attended to the boring, day-to-day routine for which he had little taste, but shaped those policies whose effects were so profound.

What the Holbein portrait does reveal is Henry’s keen interest in PR. This stemmed not from the belligerent self-confidence of a ruler determined to force his will on the nation, but from an awareness of the importance of public opinion. On a number of key occasions he gave way to it. Henry was a great showman, forever parading himself in court entertainments, tiltyard heroics and public spectacles. He needed the flattery of courtiers and the applause of the crowd. Over and above all else, he was constantly haunted by the ghost of his father. If he was driven by any principle it was the need to outdo the achievements of Henry VII, the parent from whom he had been estranged in life but who had notched up achievements which always lowered over him in later years. The first Tudor had won his crown by hazarding his person on the battlefield at Bosworth. His son espoused military glory and

tried to win back the crown of France. The first Tudor had established a secure dynasty. His son's marital misadventures would be dominated by the need to provide a male heir. The first Tudor had cowed the nobility. His son was determined to bring the church to heel. The first Tudor had insinuated himself, by alliances and diplomacy, into the political life of Europe. His son entertained dreams of maintaining parity with his contemporary monarchs. The first Tudor had left a full treasury as the basis for strong, centralized government. His son would spend and spend without restraint in pursuit of unattainable objectives.

In pursuance of his ambitions Henry evolved from a spoiled adolescent into an unprincipled, unpredictable, paranoid and very dangerous eccentric. He demanded loyalty from those around him but it never occurred to him that they had the right to expect loyalty in return. It was not just his wives whom he treated abominably. He was profligate with the lives of his ablest servants. Remarkable men of the stamp of Thomas Wolsey, Thomas More and Thomas Cromwell were simply discarded on a whim or in pursuit of some passing advantage or to win popularity.

The 500th anniversary of Henry VIII's accession provides the occasion for fresh assessments and gives me the opportunity to offer the fruits of half a century of reflection and study. The historian David Starkey has suggested that an objective understanding of this king is inevitably shaped by changing fashions of historical discourse. I would like to believe there is more to it than that. Over the years, I have come to 'know' Henry obliquely through writing about contemporary personalities such as More, Wolsey, Cromwell, Thomas Cranmer, John Dudley, Thomas Howard, Holbein, Luther and Thomas Wriothesley: I hope that there is sufficient truth in the adage that you can tell a man by the company he keeps to make it worthwhile offering the insights I believe I have gathered. The result is not a work of political history; that would have made it too unwieldy. Nor, I think is it a full-blown biography; that, too, would have weighted the project down with details more interesting than revelatory. I wanted to keep the focus as tightly as possible on the changing character of the king; to see how it responded to inner impulses and the often bewildering changes and chances of external events. What I have tried to present is a tragedy, in the Greek sense of the word. The life of Henry VIII, for me, fulfils most of the criteria identified by Euripides and Sophocles: a flawed hero, struggling in vain against fate and his own weaknesses who is eventually destroyed by them. It is a chronicle of cruelty, irony and passion, of unrealized dreams, unfulfilled loves and thwarted ambitions, so that, finally, we can say that, if there is any truth in Holbein's Henry, it lies in the king's defiant stance not against human adversaries, but against those demons which opposed and eventually destroyed him

To Complete (on separate paper)

1. Who was Hans Holbein?
2. Search the internet for one of the Holbein portraits of Henry VIII. a) Give a brief précis of the key features of the portrait b) Explain how and why this is a magnificent piece of propaganda
3. What do you think is meant by the "popular imagination"?
4. What do you think is meant by the "commonwealth"?

5. What did Charles Dickens call Henry VIII?
6. The following different descriptions of Henry VIII are made in the text. 1) 'Henry the Magnificent' 2) "A 'fool' a 'liar' and a 'damnable rotten worm'". For each of these opposing interpretations list all the different reasons/evidence for this. You could use separate headings and/or a table.
7. You need to get used to dealing with different (often wildly) historical interpretations; the views and opinions of historians. You also have to get good at précisising these, comparing and evaluating their relative worth/accuracy. In this text Wilson gives many of his views and interpretation of varying aspects of Henry's reign and/or précis those of other historians. Some of them could be summarised under the following headings:
 - Henry's personality
 - The role of others (courtiers, VIP's) in government
 - The role of ancestors and the historical context pre Henry's reign
 - The role of different ideas

Write a paragraph précis of what the article says about each of these different themes/headings included in the text.

8. Write a paragraph explaining why you think Henry VIII and his reign remain "everlasting fascinating".

TASK 2

You will need to read the recent Guardian article by Hilary Mantel. This coincided with the publication of *Bring up the Bodies*, the second part of her fantastic trilogy focused on the life and times of Thomas Cromwell.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2012/may/11/hilary-mantel-on-anne-boleyn>

1. You are to create either
 - a) a mind map (see for example):
<http://www.thinkbuzan.com/uk/support/mindmapgallery>
 - or
 - b) a mood board¹ based on the content of the article.

¹ A **mood board** is a type of poster design that may consist of images, text, and samples of objects in a composition of the choice of the mood board creator. Most often used by designers to develop their design concepts and to communicate to other members of the design team to get a feel of the 'big picture' and key features of a design idea. This can also be used to summarise the big ideas, key individuals and features of a historical topic or period. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mood_board

'Stems', themes, individuals etc you could include in your work could include; religious debate, ideas and beliefs, courtiers, Anne Boleyn, Henry's personality, the role of others; Thomas Cromwell, Cardinal Wolsey, Katherine of Aragon, Charles V, The Papacy the role of other powerful courtiers e.g. Thomas Howard (Duke of Norfolk). You may need to do a little supplementary research to identify exactly who some of these individuals, themes are.

2. Write a paragraph precis of Mantel's article.

Task 3: Optional preparatory reading

Recommended Reading

AS History (HIS2B); The Church in England: The Struggle for Supremacy, 1529-1547

There is a wealth of fiction available that is closely linked to or based on the events and topics that we study in our AS course. Some of this excellent and can really help you develop a deeper understanding and empathy with the events and historical context of the course and the first half of the 16th century. As good historians we have to treat such source material with care but with a balanced reading such material can be most useful.

- ***Wolf Hall (Part 1) & Bring up the Bodies (Part 2), Hilary Mantel***
YOU MUST/SHOULD READ THIS TEXT AT SOMETIME DURING THE COURSE. BOOKER PRIZE WINNING FIRST CLASS HISTORICAL FICTION WHICH 'DOES' MOST OF COURSE. There is also now the BBC tv series and adaption of Wolf Hall and Bring up the Bodies available on DVD.
 - **C.J. Sansom** (these are in the correct chronological sequence to read), ***Dissolution, Dark Fire, Sovereign, Revelation, Heartstone, Lamentation.*** Excellent crime thrillers based around the lawyer hero Shardlake. These books give a real insight into the religious, political, social, cultural and economic landscape of the reign of Henry VIII.
 - ***The Courier's Tale, Peter Walker***
A documentary novel that takes in all the intrigue, corruption, intellectual, political and religious sophistication and complexity of the 16th Century; the English & European Reformation world through the eyes of Reginald Pole's (Henry's cousin and exiled nemesis) courier; Michael Throckmorton. Also takes in what happened after Henry's reign; Mary & Edward.
 - **VIII, H. M. Castor**
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Enjoyable 'teen' style literature on Henry's life.

- ***Harvest*, Jim Crace**

Gives you a real feel for the life of the majority of people in England during the 16th and 17th centuries and an insight into one of the great social and economic changes of this period; the enclosure of agricultural land and great consequences of this. A refreshing break from high politics of this era, in a fictionalised account on everyday village life.

- ***The Other Boleyn Girl*, Philippa Gregory**

Popular, enjoyable fiction with a 'factual' heartbeat but use with care; not literally. Philippa Gregory has also written a wealth of similar literature based around medieval and early modern times which can provide some useful contextual understanding.