



## About this collection

*Humorous History Plays* is a brilliant collection of plays for children aged from eight to twelve. It addresses many of the suggested activities in the History Scheme of Work.

Each resource is housed in a handy ring binder so the teacher can add her own notes and ideas.

Each play is photocopiable so the teacher can make as many copies as required.

The collection aims to:

- support teachers by providing a wealth of ideas and suggestions for performing the plays;
- reduce teachers' preparation time;
- stimulate children's enjoyment and interest in plays and performing;
- develop children's speaking, listening and drama skills through stimulating and purposeful activities that are fun to do.

The plays can be used for shared or guided reading, they can be read purely for enjoyment or they can be performed in the classroom or on stage. There is enough information in the teacher's notes for a full production of each play with suggestions for props, costumes and performance ideas for key characters.

### Inside your ring binder

**Teacher's notes** – these contain curriculum links, vital background history information and suggestions for costumes, props and performances for each play.

**Curriculum links** – with references to the original Literacy Framework and the Renewed Framework plus any other cross-curricular links.

**Notes on each play** – character list, props required, background information where appropriate, suggestions and illustrations for making the props and performance ideas for key characters.

## Playscript conventions used

- Some of the plays are divided into acts and scenes;
- The characters' names are written in capital letters in the stage directions and on the left-hand side of the page to indicate when a character is speaking and/or acting. The words to be spoken are set out in lines that are underneath each other;
- The scene setting is in italics without brackets. These are messages that tell us where the characters are and what the set should look like;
- The stage directions are in italics within brackets. These tell the actors how to perform their lines. The children will need to be made aware that they do not read out the words in brackets;
- Some words in the dialogue are written using typography (such as capital letters) or punctuation to indicate how they are to be spoken.

## Acting in class

The most important thing to remember when working on these plays is to have fun. The more enjoyment children get from performing these plays, the greater the impact on their learning. Think about how to include the ethos and style of each individual class you are working with. For example, if your class is full of sporty, athletic boys, you might like to cast them in the role of Henry VIII's wives wearing, striking and colourful wigs! Henry can then be played by a girl! Sexual equality is always required!

Encourage the children to get involved in all aspects of the plays. When planning, build in time for making props, backdrops and scenery. Children particularly love the gory parts of the plays and will take a great deal of delight making the bloody heads for the execution



scene in the 'Tudor play' or the body parts for the mummification scene in the 'Egyptian play'.

Provision must be made for shyer and quieter children. They may like to become stagehands or take charge of lighting or sound effects.

These plays are excellent resources for cross-curricular work. You never know where they can lead. It could be a numeracy lesson counting in roman numerals, it could be a geography lesson learning about the River Nile or it could be a literacy lesson focusing on instructions, with the task being to write an instruction booklet on how to mummify a body.

Wherever it leads, have fun and enjoy!

# 3

PLAY

# Henry VIII

## TEACHER'S NOTES

### Curriculum links

Key Stage 2 History Scheme of Work Unit 7  
– Why did Henry VIII marry six times?

### Background history

In 1485, the famous Battle of Bosworth took place and the contender to the throne, Henry Tudor, beat King Richard III. Henry was a Lancastrian, and Richard belonged to the house of York. After the battle, Henry united both families by marrying Richard's sister, Elizabeth. The symbols of the red rose of York and the white rose of Lancaster merged to become a new red and white rose, the Tudor Rose. The Tudor dynasty had thus begun. Henry VII had two sons and it was expected that when he died he would pass on the throne to his eldest son, Arthur. Unfortunately, Arthur died before his father and Arthur's widow, Catherine of Aragon, married his younger brother Henry, as was the custom in those times.

Henry knew that after he took his father's place he would need to secure the Tudor lineage by producing a male heir. This was, however, easier said than done. Catherine of Aragon produced a daughter, Mary, but was unable to produce the son he needed. Unhappy and frustrated, Henry fell for the charms of Anne Boleyn, a lady-in-waiting at his court. She was young and beautiful and promised him the son he so dearly desired.

In order to achieve this he needed to get rid of Catherine. Catherine refused to divorce Henry and the Pope would not sanction such an action. His advisors suggested that the only way he would be free to marry Anne would be to break with Roman Catholicism and set up his own church, the Church of England. This happened in 1533 and a month later he and Anne were married.

Unfortunately, Anne promised more than she could deliver. She became pregnant very quickly but produced a daughter for Henry, not a son. Baby Elizabeth was not what Henry had wanted and Anne was not able to bear him any more children. He was back to square one – two wives

down, two daughters up and no sons!

Henry's approach to tackling this ongoing problem was to dispose of Anne and marry again. Rumours filled the palace that Anne had been unfaithful and was thus guilty of treason. She was beheaded in July 1536. Only days later, Henry went on to marry Jane Seymour, the daughter of a local lord. Jane and Henry were a true love match and the following year Jane bore Henry the son he so desperately desired – Edward. Tragedy was to follow and within two weeks Jane died after the trauma of childbirth.

Henry's position as king of England was often precarious. European kings and leaders were always a potential threat and it was common to make alliances with other countries through marriage. Henry was urged to marry again in order to make a strong alliance with his German neighbours. His son, Edward, was very frail and Henry therefore decided to marry again so that he might produce another son, thus ensuring that a male could succeed him. Anne of Cleves was chosen after he commissioned his favourite painter, Holbein, to travel to Germany to paint her picture. She was not, however, as beautiful in the flesh as her picture. In fact, she was ugly and Henry took an immediate dislike to his new, Germanic wife. Within six months they were divorced.

1540 was a busy year. In January he was divorced from Anne and by July he was married again – this time to Catherine Howard, the first cousin of Anne Boleyn. Unfortunately, she followed the same route as her cousin and was accused of adultery. In 1542 she was executed.

Henry's sixth and final wife was Katherine Parr. He married her in 1543. While they argued over religion, she was a submissive wife and helped reconcile Henry with his two daughters. Henry died in 1547. When he died he was grossly overweight and suffering from gout. After his death his son became king. Edward was nine years old and still very frail. After six years he died, leaving the throne to Mary. Mary reigned for five years until her death in 1558. Her half sister Elizabeth then went on to rule England for

a further 45 years until her death in 1603. This marked the end of the Tudor era.

### What is the play about?

The play is about the life of Henry VIII and centres around why he married so many wives. Famous for having six wives, few children actually know the reason why he had so many. This play follows Henry's journey to fulfil the wish of his father for him to produce a son to whom he can leave his kingdom.

### When does it take place?

Tudor times during the reign of Henry VIII from AD1509 to 1547.

### Where does it take place?

England, at the palace of Henry VIII in Hampton Court.

### Who are the main characters?

Henry, Catherine of Aragon, Anne Boleyn, Jane Seymour, Anne of Cleves, Catherine Howard, Katherine Parr, and Henry's trusted advisor.

## The play

### Costume ideas

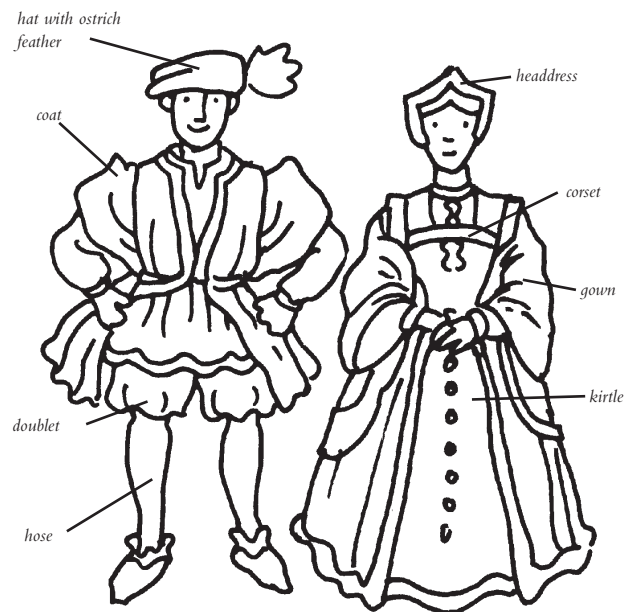
The play takes place during the Tudor times and actors need to dress up as Tudor men and women. To do this you may wish to investigate the traditional dress of rich Tudor people and represent it as closely as possible.

#### *Here is an essential 'look' for our Tudor man:*

- A floppy hat, often including a feather
- Tights or 'hose'
- Short trousers or 'doublet'
- A fitted jacket or a jacket with a coat

#### *Here is an essential 'look' for our Tudor lady:*

- A headdress
- A ruff
- A tightly fitted corset or bodice
- A skirt or kirtle
- Bold necklaces



*Male and female courtiers*

### King Henry

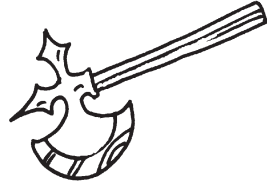
At the beginning of the play Henry is young and energetic. By the end he is old, frail and

grossly overweight. This can be achieved by placing a cushion up the actor's shirt mid way through the play. Henry should have a reddish beard and a large hat. He should also wear plenty of jewellery, to include necklaces and rings.

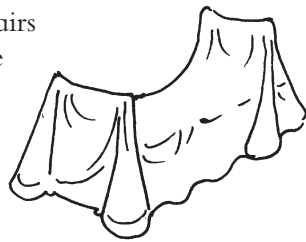


## Props

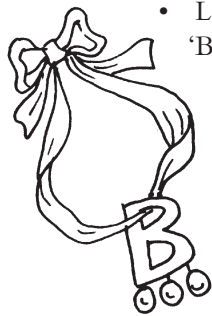
- Three replica toy babies (using plastic babies)
- Two 'mock' axes (attach an axe shaped piece of card wrapped in tin foil to a long stick such as the end of an old broom)



- Two heads – made from papier mâché and wearing wigs
- A bed (put two chairs together and drape material over it)

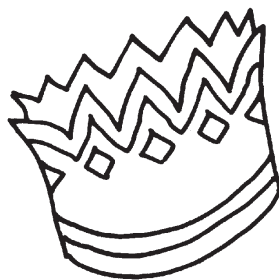


- A Tudor throne (a normal chair with material draped over it or staple gunned to it)



- Lots of jewellery including a large 'B' Anne Boleyn necklace (use some ribbon and hang a large cardboard 'B' onto it and from that hang some large pearls)

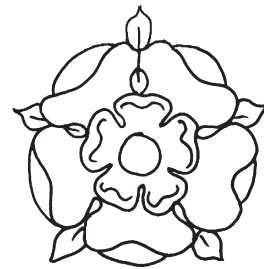
- Pictures of modern day film stars for Holbein's drawings (found in any current magazines)
- Artist beret and paintbrush and easel for Holbein
- King's crown for Henry
- Eyeballs that can be thrown into the audience using ping pong balls
- The book that Henry reads could be a copy of the school prospectus
- Toy rat
- Cushion



## Scenery

The play requires little scenery, but affords you and your cast an opportunity to have fun and be creative. The play takes place inside the royal palace. A throne is needed for Henry and a screen to allow the executions to take place. Add as many other Tudor touches as you like – for example Tudor Roses, candlesticks, hanging portraits, a four poster bed, wine tankards, tapestries, a large table with fresh food on it etc.

## Suggestions for background scenery



Tudor Rose



Tudor house

# Henry VIII

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Characters:      **HENRY VIII**  
                      **CATHERINE OF ARAGON**  
                      **ANNE BOLEYN**  
                      **JANE SEYMOUR**  
                      **ANNE OF CLEVES**  
                      **CATHERINE HOWARD**  
                      **KATHERINE PARR**  
                      **FATHER (HENRY VII)**  
                      **ARTHUR**  
                      **GOOD LOOKING SUITORS 1 TO 3**  
                      **NARRATOR 1 / COURT JESTER**  
                      **NARRATORS 2 TO 6**  
                      **NARRATOR 7 / SERVANT 1**  
                      **NARRATOR 8 / SERVANT 2**  
                      **NARRATOR 9 / SERVANT 3**  
                      **LADIES IN WAITING 1 TO 3**  
                      **ADVISOR**  
                      **AXEMEN 1 AND 2**  
                      **HOLBEIN**  
                      **ANNE OF CLEVE'S SISTER**  
                      **MINISTER**

*Inside a Tudor palace, at HENRY VII's deathbed. HENRY VII is lying on his bed (two chairs with a blanket over his lower body) moaning quietly*

*(Enter NARRATORS 1, 2 and 3 to centre stage)*

**NARRATOR 1:** Henry VIII was the second Tudor monarch. His father, *(pointing to the old man moaning on the bed)* Henry VII, had created the Tudor line by merging his house of Lancaster with the house of the York.

**NARRATOR 2:** Before Henry's father died, he lay on his deathbed and told his son the secret of being a successful monarch. *(to the audience)* That's king or queen to you and me.

*(Enter HENRY)*

**HENRY:** *(kneeling at his Father's side and holding his hand)* To be a fair monarch, is that the secret?

FATHER: No.

HENRY: (*earnestly*) To be kind, is that the secret?

FATHER: (*firmly*) No.

HENRY: (*gently*) To invade neighbouring kingdoms and bring home untold riches, is that the secret?

FATHER: (*getting frustrated*) No!

HENRY: Then tell me, father? What is the secret?

FATHER: (*feebly raising himself from his bed and whispering in his son's ear*) To produce a male heir to inherit your kingdom.

NARRATOR 3: Henry's father soon died.

*(FATHER makes dying noises, his body convulses a couple of times and then his lifeless body falls to the floor. Three SERVANTS enter. SERVANTS 1 and 2 carry the body off. One holds his legs, the other his arms. SERVANT 3 takes away the chairs and blanket. While this is happening HENRY looks in the direction of his FATHER waving goodbye to him and crying with grief, giving the occasional sob)*

NARRATOR 3: Now, Henry already had a wife. He hadn't chosen her; she had previously been the wife of his brother, Arthur.

*(Enter ARTHUR and CATHERINE of Aragon walking across the stage together in a regal fashion, arm in arm, waving to the audience)*

NARRATOR 2: Unfortunately, Arthur had died.

*(ARTHUR coughs and then falls down dead, legs flexing in the air a couple of times before eventually lying still. SERVANTS 1 and 2 again enter and pick up the dead body of ARTHUR. One holds his legs, the other his arms)*

SERVANT 1: (*wiping his brow and breathing heavily*) I wouldn't mind but this one is heavier than the last!

SERVANT 2: I know. Shame we don't get paid for each one we carry off.

SERVANT 1: (*to the audience*) It's not the cough that carried him off – it's the coffin they carried him off in!

NARRATOR 1: As was customary in those days it was Henry's responsibility to marry his brother's widow.

*(Exit SERVANTS and ARTHUR)*