

Six wives.
Seven writers.
One story
dying to be told.

FATAL THRONE

THE WIVES OF HENRY VIII TELL ALL

EDUCATORS' GUIDE



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ABOUT THE BOOK

From seven of the most acclaimed YA authors working today comes a fictional account of Henry VIII's infamous marriages, told from the perspectives of Henry and his six doomed wives.

He was King Henry VIII, a charismatic and extravagant ruler obsessed with both his power as king and with siring a male heir.

They were his queens—six ill-fated women, each bound for divorce, or beheading, or death.

You will be spellbound as each of Henry's wives attempts to survive her unpredictable king and his power-hungry court. See the sword flash as fiery Anne Boleyn is beheaded for adultery. Follow Jane Seymour as she rises from bullied court maiden to beloved queen, only to die after giving birth. Feel Catherine Howard's terror as old lovers resurface and whisper vicious rumors to Henry's influential advisors. Experience the heartache of mothers as they lose son after son, heir after heir.

Told in stirring first-person accounts, *Fatal Throne* is at once provocative and heartbreaking, an epic tale that is also an intimate look at the royalty of one of the most perilous times in English history.



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WHO'S WHO

KATHARINE OF ARAGON—**CANDACE FLEMING**

HENRY VIII—**M. T. ANDERSON**

ANNE BOLEYN—**STEPHANIE HEMPHILL**

JANE SEYMOUR—**LISA ANN SANDELL**

ANNA OF CLEVES—**JENNIFER DONNELLY**

CATHERINE HOWARD—**LINDA SUE PARK**

KATERYN PARR—**DEBORAH HOPKINSON**

ELIZABETH I—**M. T. ANDERSON**

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

M. T. Anderson is the author of *Feed*, winner of the *LA Times* Book Prize, and *The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing*, winner of the National Book Award, the *Boston Globe–Horn Book* Award, and a Printz Honor. He lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Jennifer Donnelly is the author of *These Shallow Graves*, *Revolution*, and *A Northern Light*, winner of the Carnegie Medal, the *LA Times* Book Prize, and a Printz Honor. She lives in New York’s Hudson Valley.

Candace Fleming is the author of *The Family Romanov*, winner of the *LA Times* Book Prize and the *Boston Globe–Horn Book* Award; *Amelia Lost*; and *The Lincolns*. Candace resides in Oak Park, Illinois.

Stephanie Hemphill is the author of *Your Own, Sylvia*, a Printz Honor winner, and *Wicked Girls*, an *LA Times* Book Prize finalist. Stephanie lives in Naperville, Illinois.

Deborah Hopkinson is the author of *Titanic: Voices from the Disaster*, a Robert F. Sibert Honor Book and an ALA-YALSA Excellence in Nonfiction finalist. She lives in Portland, Oregon.

Linda Sue Park is the author of *A Single Shard*, winner of the Newbery Medal, and the bestselling *A Long Walk to Water*. She lives in western New York.

Lisa Ann Sandell is the author of *A Map of the Known World*, *Song of the Sparrow*, and *The Weight of the Sky*. She lives in New York City.

A NOTE TO EDUCATORS

While King Henry VIII, his court, and his six wives have long fascinated people, taking an iconic place in history, there is only partial agreement on the details of his personality, his reign, and his marriages.

Fatal Throne is written from the perspective of each of the six wives and Henry himself. It is an introduction to the complicated period governed not only by monarchies, but also by desire, power, and religion. *Fatal Throne* gives readers a glimpse into how King Henry VIII and his wives left their mark. It is not a biography or a piece of narrative nonfiction but a work of historical fiction. Historical fiction provides an ideal vehicle for students in an English and/or world history class to meet the key players of the reign of King Henry VIII and take a deeper dive into the personalities and events of this time of great upheaval, for both England and the world.

Common Core State Standards for ELA

The multiple perspectives and highly detailed writing make *Fatal Throne* a great text to demonstrate many of the Common Core ELA standards, including those for key ideas and details, craft and structure, integration of knowledge and ideas, and range of reading and level of text complexity. In addition, the potential for reader response and speaking and writing activities is endless.

This book captures readers’ interest with its story of shifting power dynamics, romance, tension between church and state, and a cast of characters that readers will hardly believe were real. This period of history has something for everyone, addressing in one way or another all ten themes of the social studies strands (socialstudies.org/standards/strands):

1. Culture
2. Time, Continuity, and Change
3. People, Places, and Environments
4. Individual Development and Identity
5. Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
6. Power, Authority, and Governance
7. Production, Distribution, and Consumption
8. Science, Technology, and Society
9. Global Connections
10. Civic Ideals and Practices

There are also many elements of this time period and the text that can be framed to meet the C3 FRAMEWORK Standards, which are available at socialstudies.org/sites/default/files/2017/Jun/c3-framework-for-social-studies-rev0617.pdf.



IN THE CLASSROOM

The Tudors reigned from 1485 to 1603, beginning with the reign of King Henry VII and ending with the death of Elizabeth I. *Fatal Throne* focuses on the reign of King Henry VIII and his six wives—Katharine of Aragon, Anne Boleyn, Jane Seymour, Anna of Cleves, Catherine Howard, and Kateryn Parr—whose marriages ended in divorce, annulment, death, and two wives outliving their king.

A Tudor Motto

Each of the queens had a different motto. A motto is a short phrase that captures the beliefs or ideas of a person, organization, or institution. Use an online digital storytelling tool, such as SeeSaw (web.seesaw.me) or Voki (voki.com), to create a video introducing the world to one of the queens. Be sure to show how your queen lived a life that reflected her motto. Did her motto foreshadow anything? Would you suggest a different motto?



- Katharine of Aragon: *Humble and Loyal*
- Anne Boleyn: *The Most Happy*
- Jane Seymour: *Bound to Obey and Serve*
- Catherine Howard: *No Other Will Than His*
- Anna of Cleves: *God Send Me Well to Keep*
- Kateryn Parr: *To Be Useful in All I Do*

A Tudor Time and Place

Using Piktochart (piktochart.com) or another infographic maker, create a timeline, family tree, or other graphic about the people, events, and places that were important during King Henry VIII's reign. You may want to use the timeline in *Fatal Throne* as an outline, or you could create one on a timeline for one wife using her entries in the text.

Behind the Walls of Hampton Court Palace

What would Henry's wives say to him? After reading the story of one of the wives, create a dialogue between Henry and that queen. For example, what if Catherine Howard was able to speak to the king to plead her case?

Throughout the novel, you read about Henry's growing distrust and lack of respect for each of his wives. Why do Henry's attitudes toward his wives change over time? Is he looking for the same qualities in each wife?

If you were to interview any of the characters in *Fatal Throne*, whom would you interview and what would you ask them?

In the Palm of the Queen's Hand—or Not

Henry was concerned with the religion, skills, personality, interests, and attractiveness of his wives, as well as with their potential to give him a male heir to the throne. Does he value these traits equally from wife to wife?

Is the current British monarchy similar to the monarchy of King Henry VIII? In what ways?

Fatal Throne: The Reality Show

If King Henry VIII had a reality-TV show, it might play out like a season of *The Bachelor*, *The Apprentice*, or *Survivor*. Create a pitch for a television series featuring King Henry VIII, his court, and his wives.

Create a dossier for each character, using the details in *Fatal Throne*. A dossier is a collection of documents about a particular person, event, or subject. The dossier might consist of physical characteristics, place of birth, family history, and education, including languages spoken, talents, personality traits, and style.

The King Rules

Henry VIII gets to rebut the view of each of the wives after they have presented their situation. How do these glimpses into his thoughts reveal a personal side of Henry VIII, his motives, his desires, and his fears? For example, here is how he describes his initial thoughts about his first wife, followed by how he feels after the execution Catherine Howard, his fifth wife.

“When I first saw her, I was a boy, just a child, and she seemed to me to contain everything I wanted from adulthood in the years to come. There was the savour of foreign nations in her strange clothing; the hint of secret wisdom in the way she watched us all; the reminder of a wider world of kings and armies in her opaque Spanish language (at first we could speak together only in Latin, meeting in some middle place foreign to both of us); the revelation of beauty and dignity in her serene walk; and lastly, in the conferences about her marriage with my brother, she gave me the first glimpse I had that friendship, and even love, are chits in games of power.” (p. 56)

After Catherine Howard shares her story, Henry VIII says, “I am so alone. Teeming crowds fill the apartments of my palaces. They all plot against me.” (p. 314)

The King’s Wishes

“I must ensure that there is a line of heirs.” (King Henry VIII, p. 252)

How does this need shape Henry’s personal and public life? Why is a male heir so important to him, to his advisors, and to England? Working individually or as a group, present your argument on poster board or on padlet (padlet.com).

A Tudor Obituary

In writing obituaries, journalists try to sum up the life of the deceased. Choose one character from *Fatal Throne* and write them an obituary. You may want read obituaries in a current newspaper or online to get a better idea of structure. An obituary generally includes an announcement of death, a biographical sketch, names of surviving family members, and service information (if applicable).



Voices of the Tudors

To create historical fiction, facts must be balanced with compelling storytelling and authors must keep their characters true to the period in which they lived.

How does the narrative of each wife represent the social dynamics of her time? In this age of #MeToo, does anything in *Fatal Throne* reflect our world?

How do you think this book benefitted from having multiple authors? Would it have been different if it only had one?

This novel reads like a series of scenes. Take one scene and rewrite it as a monologue, or, if it involves multiple characters, create a readers' theater.

Identify your favorite lines from each character. Try to pick lines that share insight into the time period, the events, the monarchy, or the emotions and goals of court.

Create a set of speech bubbles (and/or comic frames) and match each statement with the correct historical figure. Below are sample statements and quotes from the novel to help you get started.

Sample Statements:

- ♦ I was the mother of Henry's only legitimate son.
- ♦ The king declared our union null and void.
- ♦ A Frenchman beheaded me.
- ♦ I will not have my marriage annulled.
- ♦ I had a minor place at court and a husband at court before I was widowed and caught the King's eye.
- ♦ My uncle and the dowager have set me up to catch the attention of the King after his annulment from Anna of Cleves.

From the novel:

- ♦ "I felt a sense of reprieve, but something else, too. For it seemed my husband could only be happy if I acted like a spaniel, lolling and looking up at him with doleful, begging eyes." (Kateryn Parr, p. 356)
- ♦ "And lastly Henry himself. He has pig's eyes and fingers like sausages and is as fat as three men. He wears a coat of velvet and a codpiece the size of a dinner plate. The sore on his leg oozes pus through his stocking. He smells like midden." (Anna of Cleves, p. 203)
- ♦ "My ladies and I follow the constable one final time down the twisting staircase onto the Tower Green. Two hundred of the King's guard wait to escort me to the scaffold." (Anne Boleyn, p. 129)
- ♦ "I wept with happiness. Freely. Openly. Before my ladies and the midwife and the wet nurse. At that glorious moment, I cared not a whit for queenly dignity. My son lived! He was healthy. He lived! 'Give him to me,' I begged. Maud and the midwife exchanged glances. 'Her,' said Maud. 'You have a beautiful girl, Your Grace.'" (Katharine of Aragon, p. 37)
- ♦ "Henry has sent small tokens every day this week. Poems, a bowl of candied plums—never mind that he must have gotten them from my father's kitchens. And now a letter." (Jane Seymour, p. 169)
- ♦ "Day after day, His Majesty refuses to let me into his chambers. I get so worried that I can't sleep. How can I please the King and get with child if he won't even see me?" (Catherine Howard, p. 291)

Religion in the Age of the Tudors

Throughout this novel, there are many insights into the roles of religion and the monarchy. King Henry VIII began the English Reformation, breaking from the Catholic Church and papal authority. Research how religion and government were inseparable at the time, and find out how religion still plays a role in governments across the world today.



Henry VIII was very well educated and used his knowledge of the Bible to justify his request for an annulment of his marriage to Katharine of Aragon.

In particular, he noted the Old Testament (Leviticus 20:21), which states:

“And if a man shall take his brother’s wife, it is an unclean thing; he hath uncovered his brother’s nakedness; they shall be childless.” (p. 48)

Was it important for Henry to have the support of the Roman Catholic Church? Discuss the inherent paradox in Henry’s requiring permission from the church, even though he considered himself king by divine right. How did he change religious history forever?

The Power of the Tower: Wall Graffiti

The Tower of London plays an important role in the deaths of two of Henry’s wives, Anne Boleyn and Catherine Howard. While they were both sent to the tower to await their executions, they were decapitated differently: Anne was beheaded by sword, Catherine by axe. Why? Does this say something about the differences in their standing at the time of execution? How do you think they felt as they awaited their deaths? Cover a wall with paper and ask students to imagine they are one of these two women, locked in the Tower of London. Have them write graffiti that could have been written by Anne Boleyn or Catherine Howard, explaining their situation.

Tudor Culture: Music, Dance, Theater, the Arts, and Sports

Throughout *Fatal Throne*, there are references to music, portraits, dance, masquerades, needlepoint, and other forms of culture. Henry VIII is credited with helping to secure some of England’s musical history, even contributing multiple works. Identify a piece of music that is a metaphor for Henry VIII’s reign or a portion of it.

Research how art was important during the Tudor reign. For example, what if Holbein’s portrait of Anna of Cleves had not appealed to Henry VIII, would that have meant one less wife?

What was the role of dance and performance in court?

Wrestling and jousting were two sports in which Henry VIII demonstrated his power. Describe how his physical prowess played a role in his attitudes toward his wives and the world. Consider presenting this as a graphic novel or in a comic strip.



INTERNET RESOURCES TO EXPLORE KING HENRY VIII, HIS WIVES, AND THEIR FATE

Hampton Court Palace

hrp.org.uk/hampton-court-palace/

This site includes information about one of the main castles where Henry and his wives spent their time, as well as portraits of King Henry VIII and each of the queens. The castle hosts events, tours, and visitors throughout the year.

A one-page summary of King Henry VIII and his wives from Historic Royal Palaces

hrp.org.uk/media/1274/teach005-factsheet_henry6wives.pdf

Images and summaries of King Henry VIII and his wives and advisors

www.luminarium.org/renlit/sixwives.htm

The Wives of Henry VIII featured in Britain Magazine

britain-magazine.com/features/history/divorced-beheaded-survived-the-wives-of-henry-viii/

Lyrics

“Henry VIII” (to the tune of “Money, Money, Money” by ABBA)

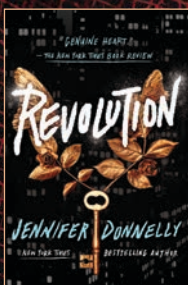
[youtube.com/watch?v=3EGzHsye71c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3EGzHsye71c)

“Divorced, Beheaded, Died”

lyricsmode.com/lyrics/h/horrible_histories/divorced_beheaded_died.html

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