

Note: To create this story, I put the progresses information sheet into Chat GPT and asked it to use the information to write a story of around 600 words, suitable for age 11 to 12 years. It created this in seconds. [Sarah-Jane Bee, Little Heath School]

Alice's story

Twelve-year-old Alice Weston stood on tiptoe, her eyes wide with wonder as the golden banners fluttered in the summer breeze. The year was 1541, and something incredible was happening – King Henry VIII himself was coming to their town of York on royal progress.

For months, the townspeople had worked day and night. Streets were swept until they shone, buildings were freshly painted and the town gates were decorated with flowers and ribbons. Even Alice's father, a carpenter, had been called to repair the mayor's hall, which was now grand enough to impress a king. Alice had helped her mother to sew extra lace on to their best dresses, hoping that they might catch the eye of someone in the King's enormous entourage.

And now, at last, the day had come.

From the distance, a deep rumbling echoed through the countryside. It wasn't thunder. It was Henry's travelling army of hundreds – perhaps thousands – of people, horses, carts, musicians, cooks, actors and guards. Alice could barely believe her eyes.

'They look like a parade of fire and jewels!' she whispered.

The first to appear were the yeomen of the guard, marching in perfect rows, dressed in cloth of gold and crimson velvet. Behind them came carts stacked high with golden plates, massive cooking pots and even – Alice was sure of it – a four-poster bed with carved lions on the posts.

Then came the musicians, flutes and drums playing a cheerful tune that echoed off the stone walls of the city. Actors in colourful costumes danced beside them, while jesters flipped and tumbled through the crowd.

'Look! There he is!' someone shouted.

And there he was. King Henry VIII, riding a magnificent white horse, his cloak shimmering like the sun itself. His feathered hat sat high on his head, and around his neck hung a chain so heavy that it looked as if it could weigh down an ox.

Trumpets blared as the mayor and aldermen stepped forward, bowing deeply in the mud. The mayor handed the King a golden key, the symbol of the city's loyalty. Henry

smiled – just barely – and the gates were opened. Bells rang, and the townspeople cheered as the King passed through.

That evening, Alice peered through the cracks in the walls of the great hall where the banquet was being held. She could smell roasted pheasant, sweetmeats and cinnamon from the other side. Candles and torches lit the room like a dream, glinting off gold goblets and silver dishes.

She heard the laughter of courtiers, the music of the King's own singers – and even, later, the powerful voices of two choirs trying to out-sing each other. 'It's the English versus the French!' someone said. 'The King hosted them both at the Field of Cloth of Gold!'

Over the next few days, the King hunted in the nearby forests, attended church in the cathedral and held meetings with powerful nobles. Alice even caught sight of his young queen, Catherine Howard, stepping from a litter, her gown sparkling with jewels.

But not all was joyful. The townsfolk whispered that Henry had come with four thousand soldiers, and some said that it was to remind York of its past rebellion. 'He made our leaders kneel in the mud,' Alice overheard.

Still, the excitement couldn't be denied. Even if the town's gold gift nearly bankrupted them, even if the feast left their pantries bare, no one would forget the week when the King came.

And neither would Alice. One night, as she lay in bed, she whispered to herself, 'I saw the King. I saw history walk through our gates.' And she dreamed of scarlet banners, golden robes and the sound of trumpets announcing a king who travelled not just with soldiers but with a kingdom at his heels.