

Classroom resources for A-level:

The Field of the Cloth of Gold and the impact of the Reformation on York

For my Fellowship project, I planned and delivered three workshops in the style of an enquiry, aimed at sixth form history students, their teachers and local historians/heritage professionals. The overarching 'big question' was: How can scholars explore the progresses of Henry VIII in the twenty-first century? The sessions ran after school, as combined enrichment for the students and CPD for the professionals, and an overview of the rationale and output of these sessions can be found on the HA 'One Big History Department' blog, here:

<https://onebighistorydepartment.com/2025/09> (OBHD, September 2025). One of the sessions focused particularly on encouraging careers in heritage and history, and the ideas developed in this will be presented at the HA Conference in May 2026.

For publication purposes, I have developed a selection of the materials presented in these workshops for classroom use at A-level. I would suggest that the materials are adapted by teachers to fit into two enquiries.

Enquiry 1: What does the Field of the Cloth of Gold tell us about monarchy in the time of Henry VIII?

The materials published in this section focus on students analysing a range of primary sources to evaluate the role of conspicuous consumption in early modern diplomacy. There is a strong focus on how 'real' historians use primary sources and how these techniques can be adapted for examination preparation.

The key materials available are:

1. an inference diagram focused on the main enquiry question, using the famous artistic depiction of the Field of the Cloth of Gold in the Royal Collection
2. a 'source frame', designed specifically with Tudor courses in mind, which provides students with a method of analysing sources and asking more sophisticated questions than simply 'what does it show?' and 'is it biased?'
3. a pack of primary sources relating to the Field of the Cloth of Gold, which can be used in the classroom to give students the opportunity to see 'beyond the gobbet'
4. a PowerPoint with a range of activities for lessons on this topic, which can be adapted by teaching staff to reflect the needs of their own classes

Enquiry 2: What was the impact of the Reformation on York?

The materials published in this section focus on developing students' understanding of the Reformation and its impact on sixteenth-century society, using the case study of York. The enquiry equips students to analyse a range of primary sources, including the archaeological finds at St Mary's Abbey, to evaluate the significance of religious upheaval for different social groups. The resources also provide an enhanced chronological understanding of the key events of the reign and explain the reasons for rebellion against Henry VIII through events such as the Pilgrimage of Grace and the Wakefield Conspiracy. Activities focus on storytelling and role play, with Edward Lee – the Archbishop of York through much of Henry's reign – being the main character. Lee has been chosen because of his involvement with a large number of key events in the reign so, if preferred, the story of his career could be used as the basis of a chronology or revision exercise for the period.

The key materials available are:

1. a PowerPoint with a range of activities for lessons on this topic, which can be adapted by teaching staff to reflect the needs of their own classes
2. a timeline handout of key events of the Henrician Reformation
3. a story of Edward Lee's career, which can be used over a series of lessons to help to anchor students in the chronology of the period or be adapted to form a revision exercise at the end of the course/unit (notes giving background information are added in red)
4. character cards for role play and enhanced engagement with the story
5. a list of recent research findings from the Henry on Tour academic team regarding the 1541 Progress of the North, to be used as a basis for group/class discussion in relation to this event
6. a set of printable primary sources related to the history of York before and during the Reformation

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