

Why did Henry visit The Vyne? A historic environment study for A-level

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Contents

An A5 booklet aimed at A-level history pupils, titled 'Why did Henry visit The Vyne? A historic environment study for A-level'

A documentary-style video titled 'Henry VIII's visit to The Vyne' to accompany the booklet

Rationale

It is an often-overlooked fact that the Tudor court was rarely stationary for long. It frequently moved, engaging with various regions and localities throughout England, and occasionally beyond. This booklet's articles, sources and activities focus on a single royal visit to a courtier at a specific place and time. By examining this one event in its local context, readers can explore broader themes, such as the nature of the royal court, the mechanisms of royal authority and the roles of courtiers in matters of war, diplomacy and religious reform. At its core, this study highlights the life and career of a seemingly loyal Tudor courtier and the significance of his household. This resource directly supports the following themes from A-level history Tudor specifications:

- central and regional royal authority
- opposition to the religious changes of the 1530s
- the dissolution of the monasteries
- diplomacy and relations with France

As well as introducing an historic environment, these resources draw on the latest scholarship and immerse pupils in visual, cultural, architectural and written sources from the Tudor period.

A5 booklet

The booklet 'Why did Henry visit The Vyne? A historic environment study for A-level' is designed to support A-level history pupils by offering:

- a detailed case study of a courtier during the reign of Henry VIII, enriching understanding of the royal court, the mechanisms of royal authority and the roles that courtiers played in war, diplomacy and religious reform

- a broader perspective on the Tudor court, moving beyond the traditional focus on figures like Wolsey and Cromwell and challenging the notion of royal authority as static or limited to a few individuals
- an appreciation of the historical environment and heritage associated with Tudor history
- a more nuanced approach to source evaluation, combining primary written accounts with material culture from the period
- exposure to the latest historical scholarship

At the heart of the booklet lies a deceptively simple question: Why did Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn visit The Wyne in 1535? By examining this question from multiple angles, pupils are encouraged to engage in deeper historical enquiry and make connections with their broader Tudor studies. The booklet is structured into six chapters, each containing a short article and a curated selection of sources. Key questions are included in each chapter to guide discussion. While the booklet is primarily intended to extend pupils' knowledge and stimulate classroom debate, it also includes a couple of written tasks in the appendices. It is self-contained and suitable for use as a further reading assignment. Alternatively, it can support source-based activities in class or complement a physical visit to The Wyne in Hampshire. The booklet is formatted to be easily printed as an A5 booklet.

Video

The historical environment study of The Wyne would ideally involve a physical visit to the house to see the architectural and material sources. However, since the resource can also be used within the classroom or set as further reading, a video documentary is included. As well as providing an overview of royal progresses, this also enables pupils to see the historical environment. It is therefore intended as an accompaniment to the booklet.

Conclusions and reflections

What made the resource/enquiry powerful

This enquiry was powerful because it used a focused historical environment and moment in time to open up wider exploration of Tudor royal authority and royal progresses. Revolving the study around a single, well-defined enquiry question gave the learning a clear purpose, while allowing for increasing layers of complexity. Pupils could engage with a diverse range of primary sources, from written documents to artefacts and architectural evidence, which made the past tangible and relatable.

The structure of the resource – a six-chapter booklet combining concise articles with curated source material – supported a balance between narrative and investigation. Each chapter included guiding questions that encouraged pupils to think critically,

draw comparisons and revisit the central enquiry throughout their study. This continual return to the overarching question fostered coherence and deeper understanding. By examining one case study from multiple perspectives, pupils were able to connect local detail to national themes, developing both historical knowledge and disciplinary thinking. The enquiry's strengths lay in its clarity, depth and ability to make complex historical concepts accessible through rich, contextualised study.

[The underlying principles and how these could be transferred to different contexts](#)

The enquiry was underpinned by several key principles that can be effectively applied across different historical contexts.

1. Using local environments and individuals as gateways to wider themes

Placing local history at the centre of study enables pupils to see the national story through a familiar and tangible lens. It also helps them to appreciate how larger historical processes, such as royal authority, social change and diplomacy, were experienced in specific communities and places.

2. Engaging pupils with diverse types of evidence

Incorporating extended written sources, artefacts, visual materials and archaeological evidence enriches understanding. Viewing authentic materials and interpreting physical traces of the past make historical enquiry more vivid and memorable.

3. Integrating recent scholarship

Updating long-standing topics with new academic perspectives ensures that teaching reflects current historical debates and encourages pupils to see history as an evolving discipline.

These principles can be transferred to other periods and topics by selecting an appropriate local environment or event that reflects broader historical dynamics. For example, an enquiry on the Industrial Revolution could focus on a nearby factory or workers' housing to explore themes of innovation and social change. By grounding students' study in local evidence and pairing it with wider scholarship, teachers can create enquiries that are both intellectually rigorous and personally engaging.

[What made the planning and resourcing process successful and advice for other teachers](#)

The planning and resourcing process was successful because it combined a clear thematic focus with extensive local research and collaboration.

1. Reviewing recent scholarship

The process began with identifying the key themes and insights to communicate – in this case, the motivations behind Tudor royal progresses and how they reflected royal power. Consulting up-to-date historical research helped to ensure that pupils were exposed to current interpretations and could engage with genuine historical enquiry rather than a static narrative.

2. Connecting themes to the local environment

Choosing a local context that linked meaningfully to the broader topic was crucial. The itinerant nature of royal progresses made it possible to find local sites directly connected to the wider story of Tudor monarchy. This approach rooted abstract historical ideas in concrete places and experiences.

3. Building partnerships and sourcing materials

Engagement with local libraries, archives, historical organisations and the National Trust proved invaluable. Staff and volunteers frequently directed the project towards underused materials, including local maps, inventories and images that added richness to the resource.

For teachers seeking to replicate this model, start by identifying a strong enquiry question and then research how your local area can illuminate it. Make early contact with local heritage organisations, as their expertise and enthusiasm can greatly enhance your project. Finally, structure your materials so that pupils return repeatedly to the enquiry question, allowing them to build connections between diverse sources and to form well-evidenced conclusions.

Recommended resources

Howard, M. and Wilson, E. (2026) *The Vyne: a Tudor house revealed*, Swindon: National Trust Books.

Jenkins, J. (2021) *The King's Chamberlain: William Sandys of the Vyne, chamberlain to Henry VIII*, Stroud: Amberley Publishing.

Lipscomb, S. (2012) *A Visitors Companion to Tudor England*, London: Ebury Press.

Brewer, J. S. (ed.) (2020) *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Vol 1–16, 1509–1514*, London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, *British History Online*, www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol1

University of Southampton (n.d.) 'A Tudor soundscape at The Vyne', <https://sound-heritage.ac.uk/projects/tudor-soundscape-vyne>

Hall, E. (1809) *Hall's Chronicle: containing the history of England, during the reign of Henry the Fourth, and the succeeding monarchs, to the end of the reign of Henry the Eighth, in which are particularly described the manners and customs of those periods*, London: J. Johnson (original work published 1548), *Internet Archive*, <https://archive.org/details/hallchronicleco00halluoft/page/n7/mode/2up>