



Off With Your Head

Recommended year group: Year 7

Subject focus: History, RE

Driving Question

Did life in England turn upside down between 1485 and 1700?

Introduction

The intention of this theme is for students to investigate power, belief and conflict in Tudor and Stuart England, guided by the driving question: *Did the world turn upside down?* Students begin by exploring the Tudor monarchy, including Henry VII, Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary I and Elizabeth I, examining how rulers gained, maintained and displayed power. They consider the impact of the 'Religious Rollercoaster', analysing how changing beliefs led to division, fear and instability within society. Students explore how power was communicated through images and language, including Tudor portraits and Elizabeth I's speech to the troops. As the theme progresses, students investigate the growing tension between monarch and Parliament, leading to the causes of the English Civil War and the execution of Charles I. They evaluate the consequences of these events, considering whether they represented a genuine upheaval of society. Throughout the theme, students develop disciplinary skills by analysing sources, interpreting evidence and evaluating different viewpoints. They make supported judgements about key individuals, particularly Oliver Cromwell, considering how and why he can be interpreted as both a hero and a villain. Ultimately, students draw on their knowledge to decide the extent to which England experienced significant change, and whether the world truly turned upside down.



Learning Checks

Lesson 5 – Big Write - Write about something gruesome and macabre

Lesson 7 – Big Read: Queen Elizabeth's Tilbury speech

Lesson 11 – Balanced argument: Oliver Cromwell: Hero or villain?

Look: [Armada Portrait of Elizabeth I](#)

Explore how Elizabeth carefully controlled how she was shown to the public. Rich clothing, pearls and symbols like the globe were used to present her as powerful and in control. The portrait also celebrates victory over the Spanish Armada, showing how images were used as propaganda to strengthen her authority.

Watch: [Elizabeth \(1998\) – Official Trailer](#)

This film shows Elizabeth's rise to power in a dangerous and uncertain world. It highlights key challenges such as plots, religious conflict and pressure to marry, helping to explain how monarchs had to fight to maintain control during this period.

Listen: [‘Six’ – from Six the Musical](#)

A modern retelling of the lives of Henry VIII's six wives, presented as a pop concert. Each queen tells her own story, helping to challenge traditional interpretations and emphasising how history can be reinterpreted from different perspectives.

Key vocabulary

Affectionate phrases, Anaphora, Cause, Civil war, Commons, Consequence, Divine Right of Kings, Flattery, Galvanise, Grisaille, Hero, House of Lords, Interpretation, Juxtaposition, Monarch, Parliament, Parallel structure, Pigment, Power, Proportion, Puritan, Repetition, Royalist, Source, Symbolism, Tone, Treason, Villain

Extended learning opportunities

Students could use these ideas to explore different features of the theme.

Careers

These ideas can be used alongside the lessons in order to discover career pathways associated with key elements of learning from this theme.

[politics | Search | National Careers Service](#)
[w4mp – The site for everyone working for an MP](#)
[Home | Civil Service Careers \(civil-service-careers.gov.uk\)](#)

Places to visit

This section offers a selection of virtual trips which support knowledge of key areas and attractions from the lessons.

[National Maritime Museum | Visit Royal Museums Greenwich \(rmg.co.uk\)](#)
[Hardwick | Derbyshire | National Trust](#)
[Official website for Visit Stratford-upon-Avon \(visitstratforduponavon.co.uk\)](#)
[Bosworth Battlefield Heritage Centre](#)
[The Commandery in Worcester - Museums Worcestershire](#)
National Portrait Gallery: [Discover the Tudors collection](#)



People, Place and Time

The 'People, Place and Time' resources provide support to key knowledge throughout the theme. More specifically:

People:	John Dee Mary Fillis Bess of Hardwick Francis Drake Miranda Kaufmann Prince Rupert John Smith and Pocahontas Squanto Nicholas Hilliard Matthew Hopkins
Place:	Who was really in charge? Empires and Dynasties around the world in the 16 th and 17 th Centuries
Time:	A timeline of Civil Wars since the 16 th Century

Ideas for Discussion at Home - These questions support the driving enquiry and build deeper understanding:

Power and Leadership

- What makes a strong ruler: fear, respect or persuasion?
- Should rulers have absolute power, or should they share it?

Belief and Religion

- Why can changes in religion cause fear and conflict?
- Should people freely choose their beliefs?

Images, Representation and Interpretation

- Can portraits and speeches change how people think about a leader?

My Friend Walter – Michael Morpurgo - A modern family discovers a ghost living in their house — but this is no ordinary ghost. Walter was a Royalist who died during the English Civil War. As he returns from the past, secrets about loyalty, war and kingship begin to unfold.

Treason – Berlie Doherty: When a young boy is caught up in a dangerous plot against Queen Elizabeth I, he must decide who to trust. In a world where one mistake can lead to execution.

The Queen's Token – Pamela Oldfield: Set during the reign of Elizabeth I, this story follows a young girl caught between different religious beliefs. As tension rises, she must navigate a world where religion can be both powerful and deadly.

Lady Grace Mysteries – Patricia Finney: Lady Grace serves at Elizabeth I's court—but behind the glamour lie secrets, plots and danger. Each mystery uncovers how power worked in Tudor England and how even small decisions could have huge consequences.

Cue for Treason – Geoffrey Trease: A boy on the run joins a travelling theatre company, but soon discovers a plot that could threaten England itself. With spies, danger and disguise, this story shows how divided and tense Elizabethan England really was.

The Armourer's House – Rosemary Sutcliff: Tamsyn's life changes when she moves into a house filled with secrets from the past. As she learns about Tudor life, she begins to understand how power, loyalty and history shape people's lives.

The Executioner's Daughter – Jane Hardstaff: In a world of crime and punishment, the executioner's daughter must face difficult truths about justice and fairness. This story explores what it meant to live in a time where power could decide life or death.

Wolf Hall (Young Readers Edition) – Hilary Mantel: Follow Thomas Cromwell as he rises from poverty to power in Henry VIII's court. This story reveals the dangerous world of politics, where ambition, loyalty and betrayal decide who survives.

Lessons

Lesson title	Subject	Essential knowledge/concepts	Competencies	National curriculum coverage
01 Who on earth are the Tudors?	History	Identify who the Tudors were and when they ruled Describe key events that brought the Tudors to power Explain why the Tudors are significant in British history	SE.HS.02: Making historical connections (change and continuity, cause and consequence, significance / importance, similarity and difference)	History: The development of Church, state and society in Britain 1509–1745. Understand historical concepts such as continuity and change, cause and consequence, similarity, difference and significance, and use them to make connections, draw contrasts, analyse trends, frame historically-valid questions and create their own structured accounts, including written narratives and analyses.
02 Tudor Kings	History	Describe the roles and actions of Tudor kings Explain how Tudor monarchs maintained control Analyse the impact of Tudor leadership on England	SE.HS.05: Writing historical arguments	History: The development of Church, state and society in Britain 1509–1745. Students can: frame historically-valid questions and create their own structured accounts, including written narratives and analyses
03 The Religious Roller Coaster	RE History	Describe how religion changed during the Tudor period Explain why monarchs changed religion Analyse the impact of religious change on people	SE.RE.03: Making connections between religious beliefs and practices	NATRE guidelines: Explain and interpret ways that the history and culture of religions and worldviews influence individuals and communities, including a wide range of beliefs and practices, in order to appraise reasons why some people support and others question these influences.
04 Tudor queens	History	Identify key Tudor monarchs and their characteristics Explain challenges faced by Tudor queens	SE.HS.02: Making historical connections (change and continuity, cause and consequence,	History: The development of Church, state and society in Britain 1509–1745. ‘Pupils should identify significant events, make connections, draw contrasts, and analyse trends within periods.’

		Compare leadership styles of Tudor queens	significance/ importance, similarity and difference.	
5. Big Write – Similes and Metaphors	English	Identify similes and metaphors in texts Explain how figurative language creates meaning Create similes and metaphors to describe people and events	CL.WP.05: Select effective vocabulary appropriate to task and purpose (Word Choice).	Writing – Composition (Vocabulary & Figurative Language) “Select appropriate vocabulary and grammar, reflecting audience, purpose and context.” “Make effective use of linguistic and literary devices.” Writing – Composition (Descriptive Writing) “Write for a wide range of purposes and audiences... including well-structured descriptions.” “Draft and edit writing to improve clarity and effectiveness.” Grammar & Vocabulary “Consolidate and build on knowledge of grammar and vocabulary.” “Use Standard English confidently... including varied sentence structures.”
6 Careers in the Civil Service	Personal Development	Identify the different job sectors within the civil service. Describe the careers that are available in the Civil Service. Present information about these job sectors and careers within them.	PD.CA.02: Experiencing the world of work.	Every student, and their parents, should have access to good quality information about future study options and labour market opportunities.

7. Big Read – Queen Elizabeth I speech	English	Identify key language techniques in a speech Explain what these techniques make an audience think or feel Analyse how language inspires, persuades and unites people	RL.ID.04: Identify and interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyse how they affect meaning or tone.	English: ‘Knowing how language, including figurative language, vocabulary choice, grammar, text structure and organisational features, presents meaning’ and ‘making inferences and referring to evidence in the text.’
8. Tudor portraits	Art	Identify the symbols used by Tudor portrait artists Sketch a proportional face Apply art techniques to create a Tudor-style portrait	C.OT.02: Developing Ideas: Express a variety of relevant thoughts and ideas.	Arts and Design: ‘Pupils should be taught to use a range of techniques and media, including painting.’
09 Tudor and Stuart government	History/Citizenship	Describe features of Tudor government and leadership strategies Explore power dynamics between monarchy and government Compare Tudor and modern-day government	SE.HS.02: Making historical connections (change and continuity, cause and consequence, significance, similarity and difference).	Citizenship: The national curriculum for citizenship aims to ensure that all pupils: acquire a sound knowledge and understanding of how the United Kingdom is governed, its political system and how citizens participate actively in its democratic systems of government.
10 Execution of a king; the English Civil War	History	Explain the causes of the English Civil War Analyse how Charles I’s actions led to consequences Evaluate why Charles I was executed using cause and consequence	SE.HS.02: Making historical connections (change and continuity, cause and consequence, significance / importance, similarity and difference).	History: The development of Church, state and society in Britain 1509–1745: ‘Pupils should identify significant events, make connections, draw contrasts, and analyse trends within periods.’
11 Oliver Cromwell:	History	Identify reasons why Cromwell can be seen as a hero or villain	SE.HS.04: Using historical interpretations	History: ‘Understand the methods of historical enquiry, including how evidence

Hero or villain?		Use evidence from sources and interpretations Write a clear historical argument and reach a judgement	SE.HS.05: Writing historical arguments	is used rigorously to make historical claims, and discern how and why contrasting arguments and interpretations of the past have been constructed.'
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