

SACE Board of South Australia

Sources to accompany the 2011 Modern History examination

SAMPLE

Representations of Henry VIII (1491–1547)

Henry VIII ruled England from 1509 to 1547. Henry VIII was very popular and admired for at least the first 20 years of his reign; however, as time progressed he became increasingly obese, unwell, and bad-tempered. He came to be regarded as a tyrant by many people.

SOURCE 1 — An account by Lord Mountjoy, an English nobleman, of Henry VIII's accession to the throne, 1509

When you know what a hero [the king] now shows himself, how wisely he behaves, what a lover he is of justice and goodness, what affection he bears to the learned, I will venture that you need no wings to make you fly to behold this new and auspicious star. If you could see how all the world here is rejoicing in the possession of so great a prince, how his life is all their desire, you could not contain your tears of joy. The heavens laugh, the earth exults, all things are full of milk, of honey, of nectar. Avarice is expelled from the country. Liberality scatters wealth with bounteous hand. Our King does not desire gold or gems or precious metals, but virtue, glory and immortality.

S. Lipscomb, 'Who Was Henry VIII and When Did It All Go Wrong?', *History Today*, Vol. 59, no.4, April 2009, p.17

SOURCE 2 — Views of historian, Alison Weir

The young Henry enjoyed robust good health, and was a man of great energy and drive. He had a low boredom threshold and was 'never still or quiet'. His physician, Dr John Chamber, described him as 'cheerful and gamesome', for he was quick to laugh and enjoyed a jest. One Venetian called him 'prudent, sage and free from every vice', and indeed it seemed so in 1509, for Henry was idealistic, open-handed, liberal and genial. Complacency, self-indulgence and vanity appeared to be his worst sins—he was an unabashed show-off and shamelessly solicited the flattery of others. He was also highly strung, emotional and suggestible. Only as he grew older did the suspicious and crafty streaks in his nature become more pronounced; nor were his wilfulness, arrogance, ruthlessness, selfishness and brutality yet apparent, for they were masked by an irresistible charm and affable manner.

A. Weir, *Henry VIII: King and Court*, Jonathan Cape, London, 2001, p. 2

SOURCE 3 — Views of Pasqualigo, an Italian diplomat visiting England, 1515

His Majesty is the handsomest potentate I ever set eyes on; above the usual height, with an extremely fine calf to his leg, his complexion very fair and bright, with auburn hair combed straight and short, in the French fashion, and a round face so very beautiful, that it would become a pretty woman, his throat being rather long and thick...[H]e will enter his twenty-fifth year the month after next. He speaks French, English, and Latin, and a little Italian, plays well on the lute and harpsichord, sings from book at sight, draws the bow with greater strength than any man in England, and jousts marvellously...[A] most accomplished Prince.

S. Giustinian, *Four Years at the Court of Henry VIII*, translated by Rawdon Brown, Smith, Elder & Co., 1854, p. 86

when answering Question 45.

SOURCE 4 — Views of historian, Suzannah Lipscomb

Instead of being known for the ease of his companionship and gentle graciousness, the older Henry was reputed to be irritable, capricious and capable of great cruelty... 'The King was irritated and...his ministers were at a loss to account for it.' Others commented on his mercurial unpredictability: 'People worth credit say he is often of a different opinion in the morning than after dinner.' His volatile moods were a source of anxiety for his counsellors. He was violent with...his...erstwhile closest confidant and chief minister Thomas Cromwell twice a

week, hitting 'him well about the pate'... By 1540, Charles de Marillac, the French ambassador, would describe Henry VIII as fearful, inconstant and 'so covetous that all the riches in the world would not satisfy him'...Henry's tendency towards the cruel dispatching of those who had wronged him — including those very close to him — reached its apogee¹ in his last decade...Henry had become a misanthropic, suspicious and cruel king, and his subjects began (discreetly, for such words were illegal) to call him a tyrant.

¹Height.

S. Lipscomb, 'Who Was Henry VIII and When Did It All Go Wrong?', *History Today*, Vol. 59, no.4, April 2009, pp.18-19

SOURCE 5 — Portraits of Henry VIII.

Source 5(a) Portrait of Henry VIII by Hans Holbein the Younger and workshop, probably 1541. During Henry's reign official portraits were used to reinforce the image of the king's power, competence, and benevolence.



Source 5(b) An engraving by Cornelius Matsys of Henry, c. 1544. Although it is unflattering, it is believed to be accurate.



Source 5(a) and 5(b): S. Doran (ed.) *Henry VIII: Man and Monarch*, British Library, London, 2009