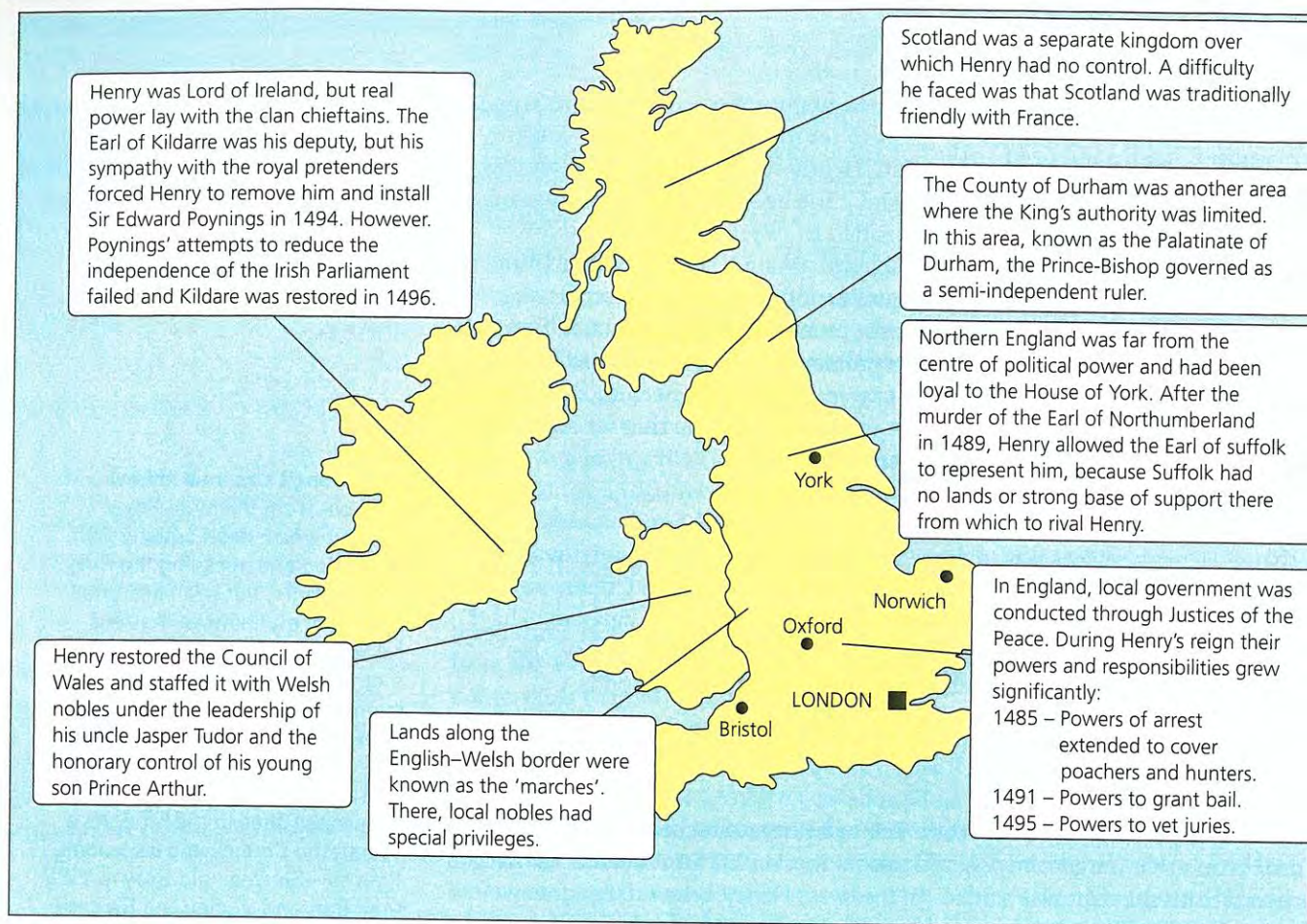




▲ Figure 3 Local and regional government in England and Wales under Henry VII.

Figure 4 Parliamentary meetings under Henry VII.

Year(s)	Approximate length of session
1485–86	3 months
1487	1 month
1489	1.5 months
1491	0.5 month
1495	2 months
1497	2 months
1504	2.5 months

National government

Fifteenth-century government was, in effect, personal government by the King and his advisers at court. Parliament existed but had a minor role in political life – mainly to pass laws that the King wanted and to vote him additional taxes. Parliament met infrequently and usually not for more than a few weeks or months at a time. For most of the time, the King ruled directly through decrees and proclamations. Henry kept things this way. He used Parliament sparingly, usually during his first decade as King to support him in controversial policies such as limitations on the traditional privileges of the nobility or new financial demands on his subjects, but he usually ignored it.

Henry had a clear purpose in the way in which he used Parliament once he had been crowned. His assumption – not challenged by Parliament – was that all power derived from the monarch. Parliaments were called to serve the interests of the monarch and keep his subjects under control, often by Acts of Attainder. Therefore there was no chance of Parliaments ceasing to exist, but they met on the monarch's terms.

- 1 Look at Figure 4. In what proportion of Henry VII's reign was Parliament actually meeting?
- 2 How does this support the information in the section on National government?

Of more importance to Henry were the committees and law courts within his government. Chief among these was the Royal Council. It was the place where Henry gathered together his most trusted supporters to give him advice and to take on some of the tasks of day-to-day management of the kingdom. Although records from Henry's reign list 227 men as members of the council, in practice regular membership was much smaller and included John Morton and Reginald Bray.

How did Henry improve the administration of his finances?

The Royal Council met when the King needed it and there were no written rules governing its procedure. During Henry's reign the key development was the emergence of committees of the council to deal with specific matters of policy. As we have already seen, the Council Learned in Law and the Star Chamber were two such committees.

Henry VII has gained a reputation for having a keen financial mind, so historians have tended to look at his policies in this area with special interest. By the end of his reign he had ensured that the Crown had built up enough annual income to meet its commitments, and that money was carefully accounted for. In part, Henry achieved this by taking a more direct personal interest in the state of national finances. At the beginning of his reign when Henry was inexperienced, he allowed departments of state such as the Treasury and the Exchequer to take control, but they were clumsy and inefficient. From 1487 onwards Henry quickly followed Edward IV's example by dealing with the administration of finance from his private rooms in the palace – the Chamber and Privy Chamber. This Chamber system became, as it had been in Edward IV's reign, the most important institution of financial administration. He also established a new post of Surveyor of the King's Wards to investigate cases of money owed to him from wardships (see Figure 5, page 22) and a Court of Audit to monitor government spending. As well as these institutional reforms, Henry also improved and developed the sources of his income.

Henry's financial policies were cautious and realistic. He understood that foreign wars had been the single biggest reason for the poverty of earlier kings, so he largely avoided conducting an aggressive foreign policy. He exploited his legal rights to claim special payments from his nobles, both to swell his treasury and to remind them of his control over them, but he was also prepared to overlook or to reverse his claims when it was necessary to win support.

To some writers, Henry was a miser, obsessed with hoarding more and more money from every source he could find. There is some truth in this, especially in the final decade of his reign. However, Henry always spent money extravagantly when it was necessary to enhance the image of his kingship. Henry's reputation for being greedy was begun by the contemporary writer, Polydore Vergil, who wrote that people:

'considered they were suffering not on account of their own sins but on account of the greed of their monarch'.

Star Chamber

Historians have debated the importance of this court of law in Henry's methods of controlling his leading subjects. It was created by the Star Chamber Act in 1487 and was responsible for prosecuting anyone who behaved in a rebellious or lawless manner. Members of the Royal Council – the King's most favoured advisers – sat on the court to make these judgments, so it was possible to haul even the greatest nobleman before it. It also came to be used as a Court of Appeal. Its exact importance in Henry VII's reign is unclear owing to a shortage of relevant records. Some writers argue that Henry made little use of Star Chamber during his reign, preferring instead to control unruly subjects by financial and other means. What is certain is that it became much more developed in its organisation and use under Wolsey.

In fact, for most of his reign, Henry's methods of accumulating wealth were quite normal – just very efficiently carried out. It was in the last few years, after the deaths of his son Arthur (in 1502) and his wife Elizabeth (in 1503), that he appears to have become obsessed with accumulating money. How far was this because he feared that the succession was not yet secure, and he wanted to end his reign with a lavish display of affluence at Court in order to make the Tudors appear even more powerful? His income was nearly 20 times greater than that of his wealthiest noble. However, Professor J. R. Lander who has researched the subject suggests that Henry's income in real terms was probably only roughly what the monarch's income had been a century before. What Henry VII gained each year (about £113,000) was certainly a lot less than the £800,000 the King of France had at his disposal.

Figure 5 Sources of royal income under Henry VII.

Source of income	Organisation/administration	Improvements/developments under Henry VII
Ordinary revenue		
Crown lands – Henry inherited all the lands held by the Houses of York and Lancaster, the Earldoms of Richmond and Warwick, the Duchy of Lancaster and the Principality of Wales. These were further increased by attainders (51 in one Parliament alone) and <i>escheats</i> – the reversion of land to the King if a tenant died without an heir.	Edward IV had improved the administration of Crown lands by introducing techniques of estate management. Sir Reginald Bray developed these further and applied them to other lands. Henry was less inclined to grant lands to friends and family than Edward. He preferred to hold on to them to maximise both his influence and his income from leases and rents.	In 1486 Henry used the Act of Resumption to reclaim all Crown lands that had been granted away since the start of the Wars of the Roses, but he did not always act on these claims. The potential threat to a noble family could be more useful to control them than actually pressing the demand for return of the land to the King.
Feudal dues – traditional rights held by the Crown to demand money, deriving from the principle that the King was the sole owner of all the kingdom's land and that others held it as his tenants.	The main types of payments that the King could demand from the nobility were: Relief – paid by an heir when he received his inheritance. Marriage – the King's right to arrange marriages of the daughters of tenants at a profit. Wardship – control of the estates of heirs under adult age, which allowed the King to manage these lands for his own profit. Livery – payment made by a ward on reaching adulthood and taking control of his lands.	Henry exploited feudal payments for both financial and political purposes. He used them to ensure good behaviour, but also benefited from wardships in certain powerful families, for example when the Earl of Northumberland was killed in 1489, leaving a ten-year-old son. Henry also improved the management of these revenues. For example, he appointed a Master of the King's Wards (Sir John Hussey) in 1503 to administer wardships. In 1487 his income from wardship and marriages was £350; by 1507 it had risen to £6,000 per year.
Customs duties – paid on goods entering or leaving the country. By the fifteenth century it was traditional practice for Parliament to grant these revenues to a monarch for life.	Money came mainly from tunnage (taxes on exports) and poundage (taxes on imports), particularly on the sale of wool, wine and leather. Both Edward and Henry tried to promote trade to maximise this type of income, and to close loopholes.	Henry largely continued the work and methods of Edward. He introduced certificates for coastal trade and twice updated the Book of Rates, which set out the charges on imports and exports of a wide range of items. Customs duties rose from about £33,000 per year at the beginning of his reign to about £40,000 at the end.
Legal dues – money from fines and other payments made by people appearing before the King's courts.	Payments came from both common law courts and the special courts operated by the Royal Council.	Henry increased the use of fines and attainders. These could be very lucrative sources of income – the attainder of Sir William Stanley in 1495 brought an immediate payment of £9,000 and £1,000 per year thereafter.

Source of income	Organisation/administration	Improvements/developments under Henry VII
Extraordinary revenue		
Bonds and recognisances – payments made as a guarantee of good behaviour (see page 19).	Demanded from those whose loyalty was suspect, such as Yorkist supporters. Also applied to merchants who owed customs duties.	Used by Henry for both political and financial purposes. Payments could be substantial – the Earl of Westmorland had to pay £10,000 after the Battle of Bosworth – but it was also an effective way of maintaining control. Henry used a special government court – the Council Learned in Law – to enforce payment of these debts.
Loans and benevolences – the King's right to ask for financial help in particular emergencies.	Organised by the Royal Council, loans could be requested from both individuals and institutions, such as town corporations.	The Council Learned in Law was also used to enforce these payments. This was an irregular source of income, raised as and when the King needed funds. In 1491, £48,000 was raised for war in Brittany, of which £9000 was contributed by the City of London.
Feudal dues – based on the same claims as in ordinary revenue, but related to single, extraordinary occasions.	The King was entitled to gifts for special occasions, such as when one of his sons was knighted or when a daughter married. Gifts were paid by leading nobles, but Parliament was also expected to make a grant on behalf of the people it represented.	Henry exploited this source of income fully – for example, he received £30,000 from Parliament in 1504 for the knighthood of Prince Arthur (who had died in 1502). He also increased his demands for payments from nobles who had tried to save money by being 'in distraint of knighthood', i.e. who had chosen not to take on the expense of becoming a knight.
Clerical taxes – special taxes which the King could levy on the Church.	The clergy were exempt from paying taxes to Parliament, so this form of taxation was the only way of securing money from the Church. It usually came in the form of a voluntary 'gift'.	Gifts from the Church were similar in amount to those received by earlier rulers. Henry used his right to appoint leading churchmen to raise money by selling offices – he raised £300 for the post of Archdeacon of Buckingham for example. This practice, called 'simony', was forbidden by the Church but widely practised.
Parliamentary taxes – special grants of taxes by Parliament to finance royal policies such as military action in Europe or Scotland.	Usually voted in the form of 'tenths' or 'fifteenths', taxes on the value of moveable property. Henry also tried a form of direct taxation, not unlike income tax, but it was widely resented and soon abandoned.	Parliamentary taxes were available when needed, but they were often unpopular, and triggered two rebellions in Henry's reign (in Yorkshire in 1489 and Cornwall in 1497). He avoided parliamentary taxes as much as possible.

KEY DATES: STRENGTHENING ROYAL GOVERNMENT

- 1455** Start of the Wars of the Roses
- 1483** Death of Edward IV; Richard III seized the crown
- 1485** Battle of Bosworth; accession of Henry VII; coronation; Act against illegal retaining by nobles
- 1486** Marriage of Henry to Elizabeth of York; Act of Resumption (reclaiming Crown lands lost since 1455)
- 1487** Star Chamber Act

3 Removing threats to Henry's power

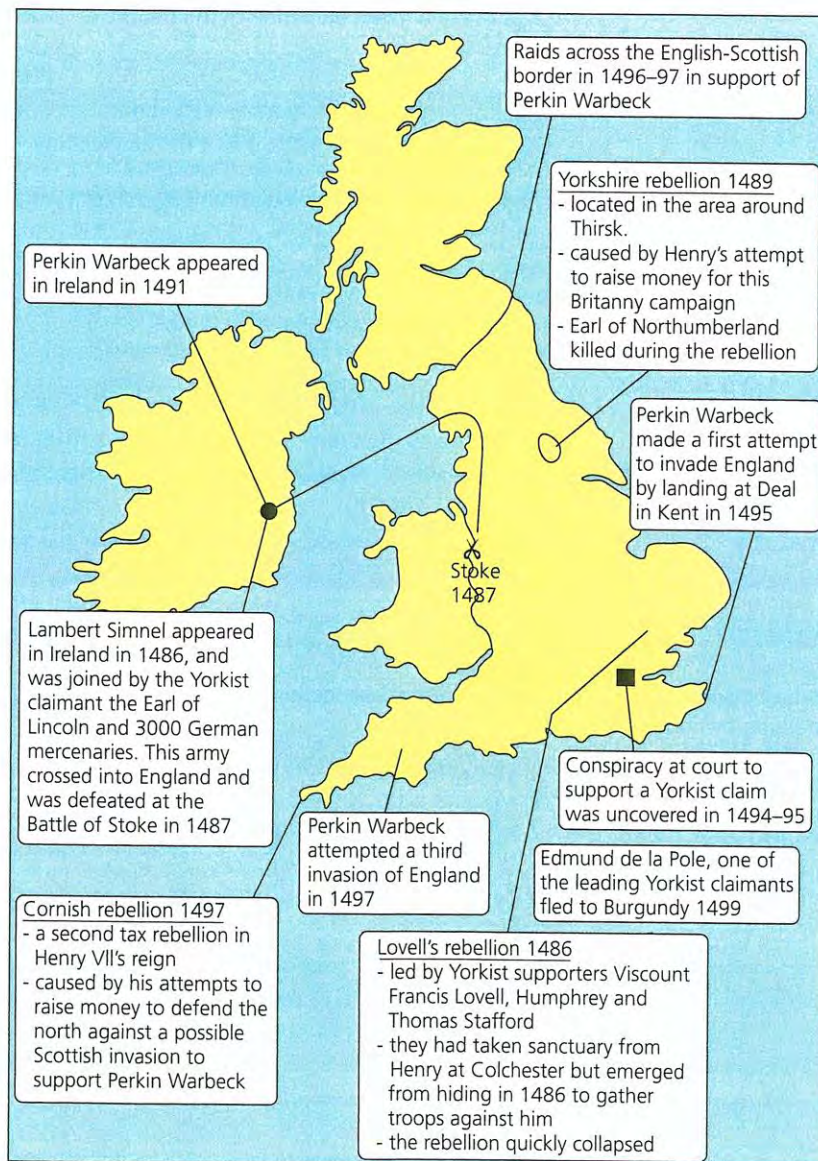
Henry VII was always aware of the circumstances by which he had gained the throne. Therefore, rebellions and potential rebellions were treated very seriously.

Rebellions against Henry VII

What threats to his right to rule did Henry face between 1485 and 1500, and how did he deal with them?

The events of this section run parallel with the previous section on how Henry consolidated his power. The threats were most serious in the first few years, but he could never be fully secure even in the last few years of his reign, when he was more concerned about the succession.

It is very easy to believe that, because Henry survived as King, the threats to him were more imaginary than real. This section seeks to assess how real the threats were from a variety of directions.



► Figure 6 England and Ireland, showing the location and events of the rebellions of 1486–99.

Henry had grown up in uncertain times and had been isolated from the people he now depended on to help him govern the country. He was king only by virtue of conquest; others lived with a better right to be monarch than he. There was no doubt that he had enemies and that they were waiting to strike.

Although Henry worked hard during his first years as King to establish his claim to rule, he still faced opposition from the remnants of the House of York and its supporters. Figure 6 on page 24 shows the different threats to Henry's Crown before 1500. Between 1486 and 1499 his political enemies at home (the Yorkist de la Pole family) and abroad (Edward IV's sister, Margaret of Burgundy) remained a serious danger to Henry. There was also discontent within some regions of the country at the financial demands the King was making, provoking rebellions at inconvenient times.

The main threat that his enemies posed came from their support for 'pretenders' to the Crown – boys who were set up either as one of Edward IV's sons (who had been murdered in 1483, but whose bodies had never been revealed to the public) or as the imprisoned Earl of Warwick. These pretenders challenged Henry's claim to the throne and attracted dissatisfied nobles and foreign rulers wanting to undermine or be rid of him altogether.

Although neither Lambert Simnel (see below) nor Perkin Warbeck (see page 26) was a genuine contender for the throne, they posed a real threat because they were used by the Yorkists to question Henry's right to rule and to draw loyalty away from him at a time when he was still new to kingship. The weakness of his claim to the throne and the recent history of sudden changes of monarch made Henry vulnerable to attack; a victorious rival would soon have been able to justify seizing the throne from someone who had, himself, come to it through battle. Henry's marriage to Elizabeth of York and the birth of an heir had divided Yorkist loyalties, but widows could be remarried and baby princes controlled by their guardians.

On balance, the only effective obstacles to Yorkist success in the early years of Henry's reign were a certain war-weariness that favoured the occupant of the throne, and the skills and abilities exercised by Henry himself. Fortunately for Henry, his skills were up to the task. He placed key Yorkists under arrest and used spies and informers to keep track of what his more distant enemies, like

Lambert Simnel (1475?–1525)

Lambert Simnel was born in Oxford, where at the age of ten or eleven his marked resemblance to the younger son of Edward IV was spotted by his teacher, a priest named Richard Symonds. Symonds taught Simnel to claim that he was Richard, Duke of York, and took him to Ireland, which had become a centre of Yorkist support. There, Symonds seems to have decided that it would be more effective to pass Simnel off as the young Earl of Warwick (who was in the Tower of London at the time), and with the help of Yorkist lords like the Earl of Kildare, Simnel was proclaimed King Edward VI.

This plot was amateurish at best, because Henry immediately produced the real Earl of Warwick to demonstrate the falseness of Simnel's claims. What made it more dangerous was the support offered by Margaret of Burgundy in the form of 2,000 soldiers, and the flight of John de la Pole, the Earl of Lincoln, to join the rebels. Lincoln must have known that Simnel

was an impostor and may have intended to use him to further his own claims.

Simnel's arrival in Ireland in the company of the soldiers was the signal for the start of an invasion of England in May 1487. They landed at Furness in Lancashire and marched across the Pennines before turning south, but raised little support in the north, which had only recently seen the fighting of the Wars of the Roses. Henry met them with his army at East Stoke, just outside Newark, and the rebels were defeated in what historians have termed the last battle of the Wars of the Roses. Lincoln and several Yorkist leaders were killed, and Henry showed his ability to judge the nature of his enemies by sparing Simnel and offering him work in the royal kitchens. Symonds was also arrested, but escaped death because of his status as a priest. Henry's real enemies – Kildare, Margaret and the other Yorkists – lived to fight another day.

KEY DATES: REBELLIONS AGAINST HENRY VII

- 1486** Lovell rebellion, by supporters of the House of York
- 1487** Simnel rebellion and the Battle of Stoke; tax rises
- 1489** Yorkshire rebellion against tax rises
- 1491** First appearance of Perkin Warbeck
- 1495** Warbeck landed at Deal in Kent
- 1496–97** Warbeck raided northern England from Scotland
- 1497** Cornish rebellion against high taxes
- 1498** Warbeck imprisoned in the Tower
- 1499** Warbeck and the Earl of Warwick executed
- 1502** Edmund de la Pole (Earl of Suffolk) fled to the Netherlands, but was returned
- 1513** Earl of Suffolk executed by Henry VIII

the Earl of Kildare, were doing. Once the Simnel rebellion had been defeated at Stoke in June 1487 he made an important gesture towards the Yorkists by having Elizabeth crowned Queen in November. It is noticeable that when Warbeck appeared, his support was principally from outside England and his two attempts to invade both failed miserably. By isolating Warbeck through agreements with his fellow European rulers, Henry gradually cut off the support he was receiving. At the same time, he was prepared to be generous to Warbeck himself until the young man betrayed his trust. A more cynical view is that Henry was in sufficient control of the situation to use the Warbeck crisis both to root out potential enemies at court in the purge of 1495 and to provide the excuse finally to get rid of the Earl of Warwick in 1499.

The other major source of a threat to Henry after the death of Warwick was Edmund de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk. After a short period of Suffolk appearing to accept Henry's rule, he fled to the court of the Holy Roman Emperor (see page 28), Maximilian, in 1501. It was not surprising that Henry perceived him as a major Yorkist threat, especially when, from 1502 onwards, the future Henry VIII was Henry's own male heir. Some of Suffolk's relatives were imprisoned and when Parliament met in 1504 some were attainted. There were rumours of Suffolk plotting either to overthrow Henry or to alter the succession. Fortunately for Henry, diplomatic manoeuvres allowed him to gain possession of Suffolk on condition that he would not be killed. He was put in the Tower – where he remained until he was executed in Henry VIII's reign in 1513. Thus Henry could not have felt really secure from Yorkist threats until the last two years of his reign – and even then a peaceful succession depended largely on the teenage Henry.

Perkin Warbeck (1474?–99)

Perkin Warbeck first appeared as a threat to Henry in Ireland in 1491. Aged seventeen at the time, he was employed as a servant but claimed that he was Richard of York, the youngest son of Edward IV. Warbeck later admitted that his real name was John Osbeck and that he was born in Tournai and educated in Antwerp. His Burgundian origins and his appearance in Ireland suggest that the instigators of Simnel's rebellion, particularly Margaret of Burgundy and the Earl of Kildare, were involved at an early stage, but it was Charles VIII of France who first recognised his claims and welcomed him at Court in Paris. Charles was probably using Warbeck to embarrass Henry and to divert him while he attempted to annex Brittany (see pages 28–29).

In 1492, Charles made peace with Henry so Warbeck was forced to move on to Burgundy, where he was welcomed by Margaret and her son-in-law, the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I. However, Maximilian was too busy with affairs in Italy to offer much immediate support. This gave Henry breathing space to deal with the English end of the conspiracy. A number of leading figures, including Sir William Stanley, were accused and executed for treason in

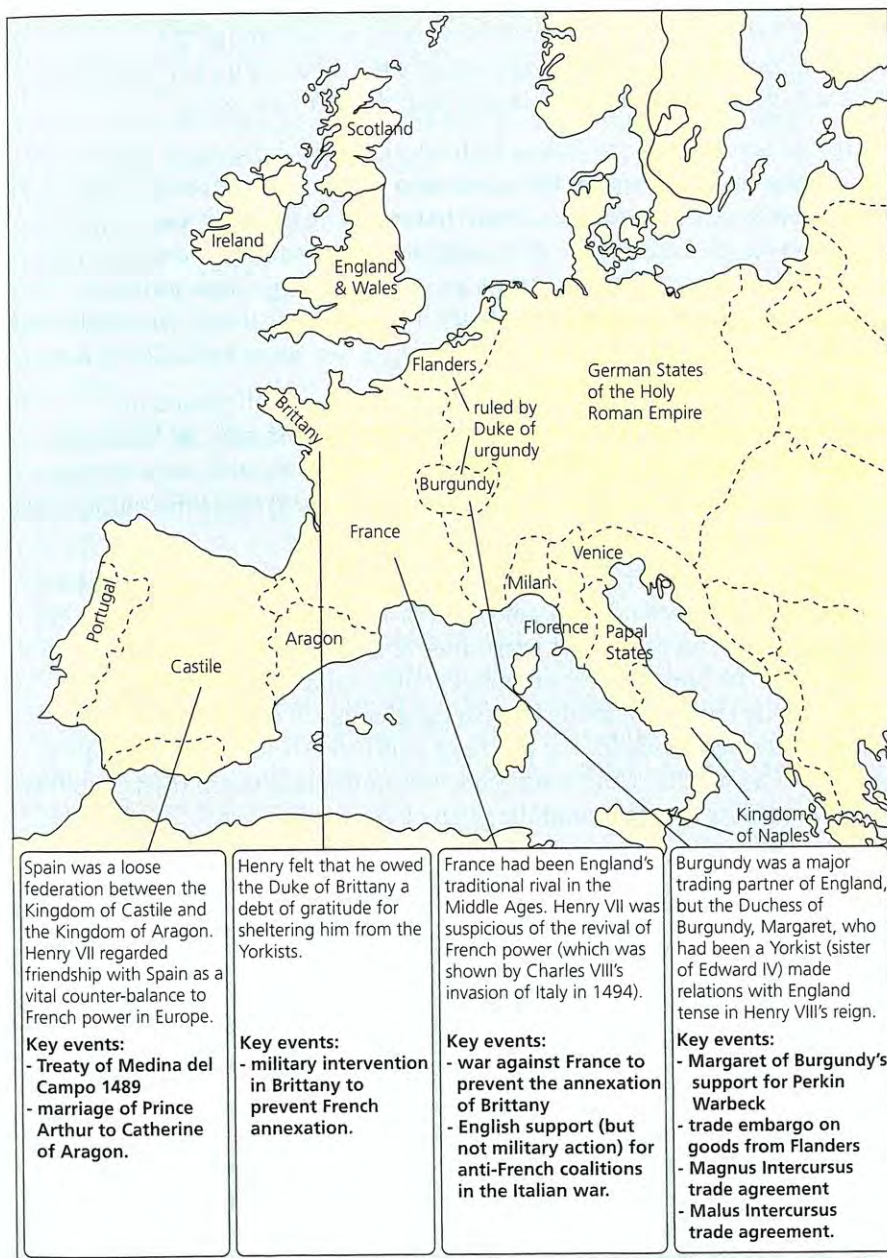
1495. So, when Warbeck landed in Kent in July 1495, he failed to rouse support and had to sail north to Scotland. There, he was befriended by King James IV, who may have been convinced that Warbeck was genuine, since he granted him an income of £1,200 per year and his own cousin in marriage.

However, James's attempt to invade England on Warbeck's behalf in 1497 was a disaster. Warbeck was horrified by the brutish behaviour of the Scottish troops in raiding the northern borderlands of England and refused to travel further south with them. When Henry offered James a truce, Warbeck fled to Ireland. By now he was running out of support and gave himself up in August 1497, making a full confession of who he really was. Since this achieved what Henry wanted, the King exercised calculated mercy and allowed Warbeck to remain at Court, but in 1498 Warbeck ran away and was imprisoned in the Tower upon recapture. There, he was involved in plotting to escape with the young Earl of Warwick and both were executed in 1499. Whether this plot was genuine or encouraged by the King's agents, it allowed Henry finally to dispose of two troublesome individuals.

4 Relations with other countries, 1485–1509

Henry VII faced a difficult international situation from the moment he became King. England's relationships with foreign powers were closely tied to developments in England, especially concerning marriage alliances, and the picture in Europe was complex:

- France was a much smaller country than it is now, with several areas such as Brittany virtually independent of the French King. Calais was controlled by England, the only remnant of the conquests by England of French territories during the Hundred Years' War (1338–1453).
- Spain was becoming united under Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile – though both provinces were mostly ruled separately.



◀ Figure 7 Europe in the reign of Henry VII.

NOTE-MAKING

As you work through pages 28–32 on Henry VII's foreign policy, list:

- what appear to have been his aims
- the successes he had
- the reasons why his successes were limited.

- A huge area of central Europe was known as the Holy Roman Empire, a conglomeration of states and territories under the nominal control of the Holy Roman Emperor. It included modern-day Germany and much land beyond. One large part was Burgundy and the Duke of Burgundy also ruled Flanders, which included what we now call the Netherlands. Their ports, especially Antwerp, were important for English trade. Antwerp was the most important centre for the cloth trade in Europe and wool was England's chief export (see Figure 7 on page 27).
- Italy was divided into city states that competed with each other for power, and European powers were constantly being tempted to intervene for their own benefit. This situation led to the so-called Italian Wars that started with the invasion of Italy by the French King, Charles VIII, in 1494.

Henry VII's aims in foreign policy

What considerations shaped Henry's relations with foreign powers and how successful was he?

Henry VII's foreign policy was initially dictated by two things: the circumstances surrounding his succession and his lack of money. Later his focus was on trade, dynastic expansion and his own succession.

Henry had become King by killing Richard III, but his legal status was insecure. There were other claimants to the throne and England's recent history had been punctuated by struggles for the Crown. In the first years of his reign, Henry's priority was to gain acceptance of his right to rule from other monarchs. This was important not only because rivals for his crown might seek shelter or assistance from other countries (as Henry had done in Brittany), but also because favourable words from a foreign ruler might give him more credibility at home.

Between 1485 and 1492 Henry built a series of truces with potentially dangerous neighbours: France in 1485, Scotland in 1486 and the Habsburg Empire (which included the Netherlands) in 1487. Henry also saw advantages in building a longer-term alliance with Spain as an insurance policy against any future problems with France.

In 1489, as part of the Treaty of Medina del Campo, England and Spain decided to work together to defend their lands and promised not to make agreements with France without consulting each other first. The treaty set up equal trading rights for merchants from both countries and fixed customs duties which actually tended to favour English merchants. To deepen the alliance, arrangements were made for the marriage of Prince Arthur to the daughter of the Spanish monarchs. This treaty cemented an Anglo-Spanish friendship that lasted for much of the time until the reign of Elizabeth.

Relations with France were initially friendly because Henry's fight for the throne had been encouraged by the French court. However, he had also depended on Brittany (which was semi-independent from French rule) for sanctuary during his fourteen-year exile. This put Henry in a difficult position when France moved to absorb Brittany between 1488 and 1492. He faced a serious problem because an accepted view of national security included the belief that the coastline across the Channel should not be held by just one power. If France gained control of Brittany the south coast of England would be in a militarily weaker position; Calais (the last surviving outpost of England's medieval empire in France) would be more vulnerable; and trade could be disrupted. These considerations made the 'Breton Crisis' of 1488–92 the major foreign policy problem of Henry's reign, and the only time he committed troops outside the British Isles.

Breton Crisis

The way in which the crisis unfolded tells us much about Henry's aims and methods in foreign policy. He did not rush towards war because it would be dangerous to annoy France when pretenders to the throne were active, and also because he lacked funds. Instead, Henry opened negotiations with France while at the same time secretly allowing English troops to cross to Brittany to help the Bretons repel the French army. When these manoeuvres failed, he tried to win support at home and abroad for a short campaign. The Treaty of Medina del Campo bought off Spain and Henry also approached the rulers of the Netherlands, some north German states and even the Pope for either assistance or at least their neutrality. Parliament was summoned to make a grant of £100,000 to finance a small force (estimates suggest between 3,000 and 6,000 men).

When this army crossed the Channel in April 1489 Henry made it clear to the French that he was only acting in defence of Brittany; there was no intention to go further and re-open the longstanding English claims to French lands that had been the issue in the Hundred Years' War. These reassurances did not satisfy the French, who showed their displeasure by receiving the pretender Perkin Warbeck at court and by pouring more of their own troops into Brittany. In the final stages of the war, Henry took a great risk. He led a larger force of 12,000 troops into Brittany, gambling that France did not want a long conflict. He was right: France was beginning to take an interest in the divisions within the Italian peninsula and wanted to be free of commitments elsewhere. Under the terms of the Treaty of Etaples (1492), Henry's army left France in return for a payment of 745,000 crowns (payable at the rate of 50,000 crowns per year, about five per cent of the King's annual income) to cover the costs of the expedition, and an agreement by the French King not to support Henry's enemies. This was very important in Henry's dealings with Perkin Warbeck (see page 26).

At face value, the Breton Crisis had been a successful baptism of fire for Henry VII. Early in his reign, while still insecure at home, he had pursued a difficult diplomatic path with skill. England's basic friendship with France had remained intact; military intervention had been brief and had not damaged England's reputation. Moreover, France had been persuaded to stop supporting pretenders to the throne and had made payments that offset the cost of the conflict. However, it must be remembered that England's armies did not win any of the main engagements in Brittany and at the end of the crisis the fact remained that Brittany was little more than a satellite of France (it was finally absorbed into the French state in 1532). All of the southern shore of the English Channel except for Calais was in French hands. Henry had failed to restore English glories in Europe.

Expanding trade and exploration

As part of Henry's policy of building up the country's strength and wealth, he was keen to encourage trade. This was particularly important in the years immediately after 1485 when his position was precarious, and he knew that building up trade would help with creating wealth. Yet an analysis of his actions shows no coherent pattern. Henry was an opportunist – hence his actions often seem fragmentary and inconsistent.

Henry VII and Scotland

In the Tudor period Scotland was a distinct country, with its own Parliament and monarch. Relations between Scotland and England were usually strained. To preserve their independence, the Scots had looked to France for support, which created the uncomfortable situation for England of having potential enemies to both the north and the south. Henry VII was concerned that if James III of Scotland refused to accept him as King of England there could be problems in the north, where the Yorkists still had support. He quickly arranged a truce in 1486, but his efforts were ruined by James's death two years later, and with the accession of fifteen-year-old James IV. As you will see in later chapters, Scottish history in this period was to be punctuated by the sudden deaths of monarchs and the instability caused by long regencies.

The nobles who governed on behalf of James IV were hostile to England and James himself showed a willingness to upset his southern neighbour by harbouring Perkin Warbeck between 1495 and 1497.

Relations were improved by the Truce of Ayton in 1497 which matured into a formal peace treaty in 1502. In a significant move for the future, Henry's eldest daughter, Margaret, was married to James IV in 1503, apparently settling the ill-feeling between the two monarchs.

Hanseatic League – A league of German towns which dominated trade in the Baltic. They aimed to maintain a monopoly of trade there.

New World – This was the term being used to describe the continent of America that was discovered by Spanish sailors during the reign of Henry VII.

In particular, he sought to break up the stranglehold of the **Hanseatic League**. Navigation Acts were passed (1485–86) which encouraged the use of English ships to carry goods rather than foreign ships. In particular wines from France could only be imported in English ships. All this assisted the activities of the London-based Merchant Adventurers.

An Act was passed in 1489 which limited the export of English wool and made it illegal for foreigners to buy wool for making into cloth on the continent. This reflected the needs of the important cloth industry in England, and Henry was keen to show his support. At the end of his reign the export of raw wool was 30 per cent lower than it had been in 1485.

Henry also tried to encourage the English cloth trade by trading agreements with the rulers of Burgundy who controlled the port of Antwerp. The most important agreement was the *Intercursus Magnus* of 1496 which allowed English merchants to trade freely with all parts of Burgundy except Flanders. There were occasional disagreements and interruptions to this trade agreement, but by 1509 English merchants were shipping more than half the cloth exported to Europe. Overall, 60 per cent more cloth was being exported to Europe in 1509 than had been at the beginning of the reign. Henry hoped, through England's alliance with Spain, to encourage trade in southern Europe and the developing **New World**.

Henry also hoped to develop trade in the Mediterranean, especially with Florence. Venice was the Italian city state that dominated trade there and therefore the Venetians were seen as a rival. Indeed, as soon as Henry had persuaded some merchants to trade in the region, Venice retaliated by imposing heavy tariffs on all English goods imported into Venice. In 1490 a treaty was signed that allowed English wool to be imported into Pisa, the main port of Florence. Henry also restricted the sale of wool to the Venetians. Fearing that Florence would gain trade at their expense, the Venetian government lifted the import duties on English goods. Therefore Henry had gained the right for English merchants to trade with the wealthiest state in the west Mediterranean.

Henry also started to build up an English navy which Henry VIII was able to expand. Although it was small – he left his son only nine ships – the ships were of good quality. They were bigger and better equipped than those of his predecessors. The *Regent* carried large guns and anticipated the development of warships under Henry VIII and Elizabeth. Portsmouth was established as the country's first fortified naval base.

Henry showed interest in the geographical discoveries of the age by supporting the voyages of John and Sebastian Cabot. John Cabot reached Newfoundland in 1497 and claimed it for England. Unfortunately Cabot died on the way home. His son, Sebastian, sailed with Henry's blessing in 1509, to find a route to China round the north of America. This was, of course, impossible, but he did reach what we now call Hudson Bay. When he returned, convinced that he was on the way to finding a route to the Far East, Henry VII had died and the new king was not interested in maritime exploration.

Henry's overseas policy on trade therefore achieved some success, but in a limited way. Customs duties rose at the beginning of the reign, but compared with the Hanseatic League, Spain and Venice, England's merchants were only trading small amounts. The main importance lies in the foundations laid and with the way in which the encouragement of overseas trade helped Henry to sit on his throne more securely.

Foreign policy in the last years of Henry VII's reign

Henry found it difficult to maintain his early achievements in the last years of his reign because of changing situations. In England the death of Prince Arthur (1502) and his wife Elizabeth (1503) caused renewed worries about the succession. Henry began to consider whether he should marry again, but a possible Spanish match became less of a possibility when Queen Isabella died in 1504. There was no guarantee that Spain would stay united, and Ferdinand's first priority was to ensure that this happened by becoming Regent. He did so on behalf of Isabella's daughter Joanna, married to Philip, Duke of Burgundy, who had ambitions himself to succeed.

Henry was thus forced to reappraise England's foreign policy. He needed to maintain good relations with Spain (for dynastic and trading reasons) but also with Burgundy (because of England's trade with Europe and also as a possible ally against France should this be needed). Henry's actions were therefore frequently short term, reacting to the latest European situations.

In 1505 Henry was moving towards more friendly relations with Philip of Burgundy in case of possible aggression from France. He opened discussions about a possible Burgundian bride for his son, Henry. This automatically made relations with Ferdinand of Spain worse. Ferdinand turned to France. Louis XII had felt surrounded by Spain, Burgundy and the Netherlands, and was also ready for friendship. This was cemented in late 1505 when Ferdinand married Louis XII's niece, Germaine de Foix.

However, all this diplomacy was turned on its head when Philip of Burgundy suddenly died in October 1506. This weakened Burgundy. Joanna was said to be mad with grief and deemed unfit to rule. Ferdinand took the opportunity to declare himself King of Castile, in succession to his deceased wife, Isabella. The heir in the Netherlands was the six-year-old Archduke Charles (son of Joanna and Philip), with Margaret of Savoy acting as Regent for her nephew. Bearing in mind the importance of the Netherlands for English trade, Henry was afraid that France might take the opportunity to take some of the Netherlands. It was Ferdinand who was now well-placed in international diplomacy and he was seen as a threat to the other rulers.

Henry thought that his best hope now was friendship between England, the Netherlands and France. It allowed Henry to end the temporary disagreements over trade that had developed. There were several plans for marriage alliances involving these countries, with the intention of isolating Ferdinand.

This all changed when in 1508 the League of Cambrai came into existence. Louis XII and Ferdinand came together, with the Archduke Charles and the Pope, in an alliance against Venice, the powerful city state that controlled an important part of the Italian coastline. It looked as if England had been left isolated, but in fact the alliance moved the focus of attention away from England towards Italy for what turned out to be the last few months of Henry's life. None of the other countries saw England as the enemy.

How successful was Henry VII's foreign policy?

Henry wanted security from invasion and recognition of the succession after his death; he wanted England to be a major player on the European stage, and he wanted to secure England's trade. Overall, he succeeded – though not with a carefully thought-out plan that was maintained during his reign. Especially at the beginning and in the last few years he had to be pragmatic. His limited financial budget curbed his aspirations towards expanding English territory.

KEY DATES: FOREIGN RELATIONS IN HENRY VII'S REIGN

- 1486** Truces signed with Scotland and France; commercial treaty with Brittany
- 1488** Succession of 15-year-old James IV as King of Scotland; French attack on Brittany
- 1489** Henry intervened to help Brittany remain independent from France; Treaty of Medina del Campo with Spain
- 1491** Perkin Warbeck made his claim to the throne
- 1492** Resolution of the Breton Crisis in the Treaty of Etaples
- 1497** Scottish invasion of northern England; Truce of Ayton
- 1501** Marriage of Prince Arthur to Catherine of Aragon
- 1503** Marriage of Henry VII's eldest daughter, Margaret, to James IV of Scotland
- 1504** Death of Queen Isabella of Spain
- 1506** Death of Philip of Burgundy – led to succession crisis there and in Castile
- 1508** League of Cambrai set up

Using your knowledge, how far do you agree with Sources G and H?

The problem of the royal marriage in 1509

The issue of Catherine's marriages was to cause enormous problems in English politics in the reign of Henry VIII. The official position of the Catholic Church was complicated, but in general terms marriage between a man and his brother's widow was forbidden. However, if there had been no sexual relations between the couple, then it was not a proper marriage so the restriction did not apply. According to Catherine, their youth (Arthur was fifteen and she was thirteen when they married), Arthur's poor health and the fact that they had only been married for five months before he died, all meant that she had remained a virgin, so was free to marry Prince Henry. This marriage took place in the first year of Henry VIII's reign.

Source G A verdict on Henry's foreign policy. From *Henry VII* by C. Rogers and R. Turvey, (Hodder Education), 2005, p.153.

In 1509 Henry could be well pleased with the results of his diplomacy. England was on good terms with most of Europe, his dynasty was secure and was recognised by other rulers, and, most importantly, all this had been achieved without draining his treasury of its hard-won treasures.

Source H Another verdict on Henry VII's foreign policy. From *The Reign of Henry VII* by B. Thompson (ed.), (Oxbow Books), 1995, p.8.

The avoidance of war was no panacea for a new monarchy, since war was more popular than not, and was therefore backed by money and manpower, especially when successful. Even Henry's foreign policy, though astute, was more problematic than it needs to have been as a result of his own need for dynastic security ... In his quarter-century of instability and uncertainty, Henry never secured the loyalty of the realm through stable and representative rule, and therefore never escaped from the consequences of being a usurper.

The last decade of Henry VII's reign

What major problems did Henry VII face in the last few years of his reign, and how successful was he in dealing with them?

By 1502 Henry seemed to have achieved most of his aims. He had established his dynasty with the marriage of Arthur to Catherine of Aragon in 1501, defeated key rivals, strengthened the institutions of government, put finances back on a sound footing and reduced his dependence on the nobility for support. Overall, England was better governed, more prosperous and more peaceful than at any time in the past fifty years. Nevertheless, when Henry died he was not popular. His death in 1509 was greeted with relief. His ministers, Empson and Dudley, were so unpopular that the young King Henry could gain instant popularity by acting against them. They were arrested two days after Henry VII's death (before the death had even been made public) and executed the following year.

The explanation for this change in Henry's fortunes can be found in two factors: first, a series of deaths that suddenly made his dynasty seem insecure; and, resulting from this, the increasingly harsh application of the financial and political measures that Henry used to maintain control.

Renewed instability

By 1500, Henry had four children, including three sons (Arthur, Henry and Edmund). The prospect of a smooth succession to his eldest child Arthur, who was fourteen at the time, seemed certain. However, a series of shocking events changed all that. In 1500 his youngest son, Edmund, died. This was followed in 1502 by the death of Arthur, and in early 1503 by the death of Henry's wife, Elizabeth of York, shortly after she had given birth to a daughter. This sequence of events clearly devastated Henry personally and politically. The loss of two sons left the future of the Tudor dynasty dependent on the life of Prince Henry, and Elizabeth's death robbed him of some Yorkist loyalty as well as the possibility of more children born from a union of Lancastrians and Yorkists. The renewed danger was highlighted by the departure of Edmund de la Pole, the Earl of Suffolk, to take refuge in Burgundy in 1503.

A further complication was the damage that the death of Arthur might do to relations with Spain. Henry was keen to remain on good terms with the Spanish monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabella, as they shared a common distrust

of France. To secure this friendship, he had negotiated the marriage in 1501 of Prince Arthur to Catherine of Aragon, daughter of the Spanish monarchs. Arthur's death threatened to disrupt the close relationship that Henry had worked hard to achieve, but he was able to secure a new royal marriage between Catherine and Prince Henry. Because Catherine was marrying her husband's brother, Henry had to get special permission from the Pope, but he felt that this was a small price to pay to protect the Anglo-Spanish alliance and to keep the money and gifts that she had brought with her to her first marriage.

Harsh policies

The sudden deaths of Henry's wife and two sons had exposed a weakness in the Tudor dynasty that its enemies might exploit. To prevent this, Henry seems to have spent his final years using the powers at his disposal to make certain that the nobility was not in a position to threaten him or his only surviving son. Earlier in his reign, Henry had exercised his powers flexibly. He had used punishments such as placing nobles under a bond or recognisance sparingly, often showing leniency or reversing a fine after a few years to win gratitude and loyalty. This skill of manipulating the powers at his disposal lay in using them just enough to maintain the threat of penalties for disloyalty or rewards for service, while not over-using them to the point where they created resentment and open opposition. In the last years of Henry's reign there is evidence that he got that balance wrong.

The most obvious source of resentment was the activity of the Council Learned in Law. This council was used by Henry, in conjunction with his other special courts such as Star Chamber, to maintain his feudal rights over his leading subjects. In 1493 bonds from the nobility brought in £3,000 in cash, although much more had been demanded and promised. In 1505 the equivalent sum was £35,000. To some extent this might have reflected a change of personnel – the death of Sir Reginald Bray led to the appointment of Sir Richard Empson as the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in 1504. He and Edmund Dudley created a system of spies and informers who looked for signs of misdeeds among wealthy people. In Henry's reign 46 out of 62 noble families suffered financially for one reason or another, and the level of activity increased rapidly in the last years of the reign. Royal demands were increased and enforced far more rigorously than in earlier years. For example, someone might be fined for an alleged offence, but then forced to sign a bond in which there was a promise to pay a sum of money to the Crown each year as a guarantee of their future good behaviour. Edmund Dudley confessed in 1509 that in at least 84 cases he had extracted money illegally. Since this information was revealed after he had been arrested by Henry VIII, it is difficult to know how accurate it is, because he might have been pressured into exaggerating the scale of his crimes. Allowing for this, it remains the case that the Council Learned in Law was conducting its activities in a way likely to cause resentment, and it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Henry VII was aware of this.

Death of Henry VII

Henry VII died in April 1509, aged 52. He had been visibly ailing for the previous few months and had hardly been seen in public since February. He had continued working, planning ahead and especially securing the future of the Tudor dynasty.

Henry had achieved stability, defeated rivals, controlled the nobles, improved finances, and was able to pass all this on to his eldest surviving son who became Henry VIII. His secure foundations made possible the achievements of the later Tudors. However, as explained above, he died more respected than loved. The extent of his achievements has also been questioned.

Study Source I. On a piece of paper, draw a line down the middle. In one column list all the reasons you can find to agree with the source. In the other column list all the reasons that suggest partial or total disagreement.

Source I One verdict on Henry VII's reign. From *History in Depth: Henry VII* by C. Towle and J. Hunt, (Longman), 1998.

How well did Henry govern? If you compare the situation before and after his reign you have to say that he had done well. Law and order was established; the budget was in surplus; trade was flourishing, and with it the merchant classes; nobles were no longer a danger to national order; the Church was less corrupt than it had been. Though still far from perfect; ordinary people could be confident that their lives would not be disrupted by the kind of disorder which their forefathers had suffered.

Some other historians have been much more limited in their praise for Henry VII. For example, Colin Pendrill's view that:

'Henry's reign was unstable because he had no real claim to the throne, and he over-reacted to the threats'.

In your study of his reign you must analyse and reach your own judgement based on the evidence you have accumulated.

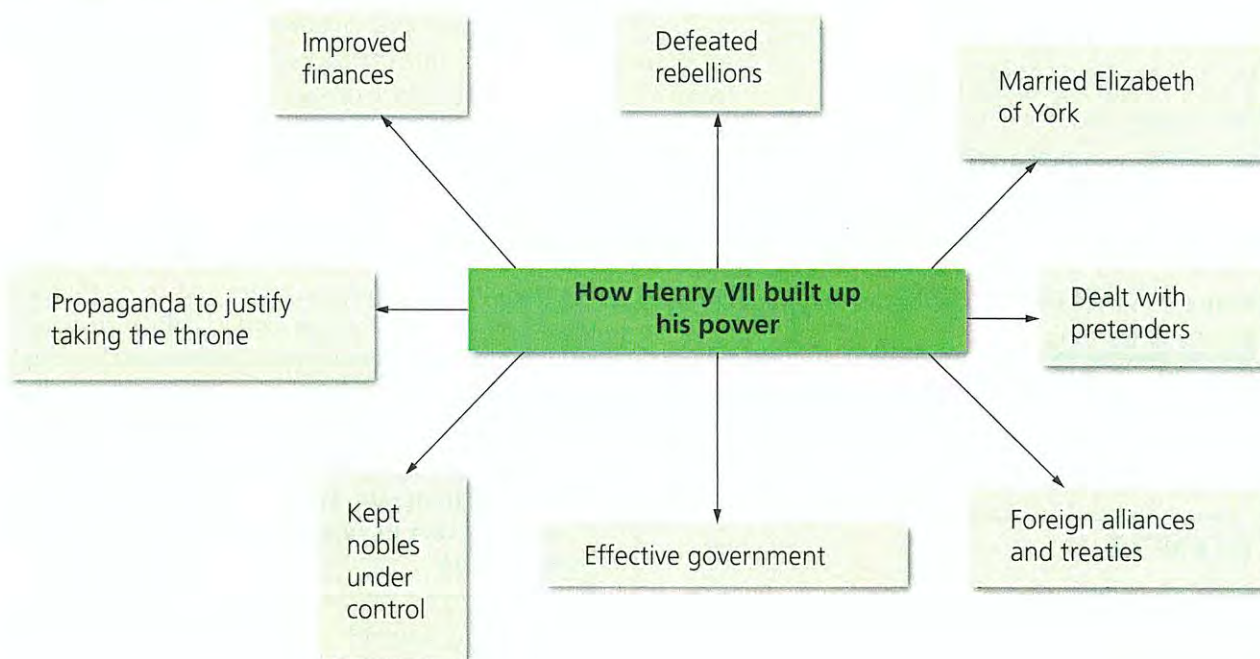


▲ The tomb of Henry VII and his wife Elizabeth in the Henry VII Chapel in Westminster Abbey. The gilt-bronze effigies of the king and queen were made by the Italian, Pietro Torrigiano, and added by Henry VIII. Both the Chapel and the effigies show how much Henry VII and his successors were prepared to spend money on lavish displays to build up the appearance of grandeur of the Tudor monarchy.

Chapter summary

- England in 1485 was a relatively unimportant country on the edge of Europe, with a weak monarchy and over-powerful nobles.
- Henry VII established Tudor rule, ending the Wars of the Roses.
- He used propaganda skilfully to justify becoming King, including symbolically uniting the Red and White Roses by marrying Elizabeth of York.
- He kept the nobles in check through good government, patronage and limiting noble retainers.
- He improved the Crown's finances.
- He defeated rebellions, for example, Lovell and Stafford.
- He dealt successfully with pretenders (Lambert Simnel and Perkin Warbeck).
- He worked hard to build up diplomatic and trading relations in Europe.
- After the death of Arthur in 1502, he worked hard to re-build his achievements so that his legacy would be secure.
- His reputation was one of fairness but harshness; he was respected rather than loved.

Chapter summary diagram



Working on essay technique: focus, structure and deploying detail

As well as learning the facts and understanding the history of the period you are studying, it is very important to develop skills in answering the types of question that will be set.

Essay focus

Whether you are taking the AS exam or the full A-level exam, Section B presents you with essay titles. Each question is marked out of 25.

AS examination	Full A-level examination
Section B – Answer ONE essay (from a choice of two)	Section B – Answer TWO essays (from a choice of three).

Several question stems are possible as alternatives, but they all have the same basic requirement. They all require you to analyse and reach a conclusion, based on the evidence you provide.

For example, 'Assess the validity (of a quotation)', 'To what extent ...', 'How successful ...', 'How far ...' etc.

The AS titles always give a quotation and then: 'Explain why you agree or disagree with this view'. Almost inevitably, your answer will be a mixture of both. In essence, it is the same task as for the full A-level – just more basic wording.

Each question will reflect, directly or indirectly, one of the breadth issues in your study. The questions will have a fairly broad focus.

EXAMPLE

Look at the following AS-level practice question:

'Rebellions can be seen as the greatest challenge facing Henry VII's rule, 1485–1509'. Explain why you agree or disagree with this view.

(25 marks)

This type of question requires you to identify the challenges that faced Henry VII. You must discuss rebellions as one of those challenges. So there are two parts to the question:

- The challenges facing Henry VII (your primary focus).
- The challenge that was posed specifically by rebellions (your secondary focus).

Structuring your answer

A clear structure makes for a much more effective essay. In order to structure this question effectively you need approximately three or four paragraphs. In each paragraph you will deal with one factor. One of these must be the factor in the question.

It is a good idea to cover the factor in the question first, so that you don't run out of time and forget to do it. After you have covered that factor, then cover the others in what you think is their order of importance.

Remember that you also need a short but clear introduction that briefly explains your argument in relation to the question and a conclusion that provides a summary. This is a useful structure to apply to many questions.

Writing a focused introduction

It is vital that you maintain focus on the question from the beginning of your essay. One way to do this is to use the wording of the question to help write your argument. The first sentence in answer to the practice question above, for example, could look like this:

Rebellions were an important threat to the reign of Henry VII, but they were not the only challenge that he faced in his reign in the years 1485–1509.

That opening sentence provides a clear focus on the demands of the question, recognising that the task is to balance 'rebellions' against other challenges. It provides a spring-board for a clearly planned essay. Remember, you must learn how to apply this approach to other questions you may encounter. You are not just learning how to respond to this question.

Focus throughout the essay

Structuring your essay well will help with focus throughout the essay, but you also need to remember to maintain this throughout the piece. Here are some ideas that will help you to focus your answer.

- Use the wording of the question to help write your answer.

For example, in answer to the practice question on page 36, you could begin your first main paragraph with 'rebellions'.

Rebellions were a major factor in the challenges faced by Henry VII.

This sentence begins with a clear point that refers to the primary focus of the question (the challenges faced by Henry VII) while linking it to a factor (the challenge posed specifically by rebellions).

- Have a paragraph for each of your other factors. You may wish to number your factors. This helps to make your structure clear and helps you to maintain focus. Later we will look at prioritising factors in order of importance.

Summary

- Work out the main focus of the question.
- Plan your essay with a series of factors focusing on the question, starting with the 'named' factor.
- Use the words in the question to formulate your answer.
- Return to the primary focus of the question at the beginning of every paragraph.
- Make sure that your structure is clear to the reader.

ACTIVITY

Having now read the advice on how to write a structured and focused essay, plan and write the first sentence to the following AS-level practice question:

'Securing the Tudor succession was the most important aim of Henry VII's foreign policy.'
Explain why you agree or disagree with this view.

(25 marks)

Deploying detail

As well as focus and structure your essay will be judged on the extent to which it includes accurate detail. Detailed essays are more likely to do well than essays which are vague or generalised.

There are several different kinds of evidence you could use that might be described as detail. This includes correct dates, names of relevant people, statistics and events. You can also make your essays more detailed by using the correct technical vocabulary. Here you could use words and phrases such as 'parliamentary session' and 'tonnage and poundage' that you have learnt while studying this subject.

ACTIVITY

Consider the following A-level practice question:

'Henry VII's financial policies were the most important reason for the success of his rule.'
Assess the validity of this view.

(25 marks)

- Create your own brief essay plan for this question, making a list of points you will include.
- Using your notes from this chapter, find at least three pieces of detail to support each of these points. It is best to use different types of detailed evidence, for instance, not just statistics or technical vocabulary, but also dates and specific people.

As well as studying the facts of an event in history, historians also use these facts in order to reach conclusions on, for example, why something happened. In other words, they have to interpret the facts in order to reach their conclusions. Often the evidence does not just point in one direction. There is scope for historians reaching different conclusions and producing different interpretations.

Section A of the examination requires you to read and evaluate different interpretations – that is, looking at how historians do not always agree in the judgements they reach. In Chapters 2, 3, 5 and 6 there are contrasting interpretations for you to study and activities for you to practise your skills – that is, your skills in using evidence to see how far you agree with each interpretation.

In this chapter, as well as Chapters 4, 7, and 8, there is one, longer interpretation to read, followed by some questions that are designed to help you build up your skills as well as helping you to consolidate your knowledge of each chapter.

Working on interpretation skills: extended reading

How great a monarch was Henry VII?

Historian Dr David Grummitt considers why Henry VII has claims to be a great monarch as the founder of the Tudor dynasty.

Few English monarchs can have come to the throne with as little preparation or experience as Henry VII. He had previously been in exile in Brittany and France for some fourteen years. His promise to marry Elizabeth of York, the daughter of the recently deceased Edward IV, before a gathering of die-hard Lancastrians and disaffected former Yorkists in Rennes cathedral on Christmas Day 1484 transformed him into a credible claimant to the throne and a serious threat to the usurper, Richard III. Yet here was a would-be king who had no practical experience of English politics or government, and whose formative years had been spent in the very different political world of continental princely courts.

In those circumstances the simple fact that Henry survived a reign that lasted twenty-three and a half years and was able to pass the throne uncontested to his eldest son might be seen to qualify him for greatness. Historians have struggled to agree whether Henry should be judged as the last medieval king of England or the founder of a 'New Monarchy'. Scholars writing in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries identified him as the champion of the 'Middle Classes', keen to consolidate the crown's power and crush the barons who had caused the civil wars of the fifteenth century. More recently historians have identified continuities between early Tudor government and rule of his Plantagenet predecessors, or even argued that Henry was a poor king who fundamentally misunderstood the nature of the kingdom he ruled. Henry VII, however, does have a claim to greatness and for laying the foundations of a distinctive Tudor polity.

In two keys areas of government Henry transformed the nature of the English realm. First, he prepared the foundations for a fundamental shift in the nature of the king's relationship with his greatest subjects, the parliamentary peerage. Unlike the Yorkist kings, Henry did not inflate the ranks of the nobility. Instead he weakened their local power by using the royal estates, spread widely throughout the realm as a result of forfeiture

ACTIVITY

Having read the essay, answer the following questions.

Comprehension

- 1 What does the author mean by the following phrases?
 - a) 'New Monarchy' (paragraph 2) [line 15]
 - b) 'king's household' (paragraph 3) [line 33]
 - c) 'his feudal rights' (end of paragraph 3) [line 40]

Evidence

- 2 Using paragraphs 3 and 4, list the ways in which the author states that Henry VII deserves the title of greatness.

Interpretation

- 3 Using your knowledge from your study of Henry VII's reign, list evidence to suggest that Henry VII was not necessarily as great as the author suggests.

Evaluation

- 4 Write an essay in answer to the following question:

'Henry VII does not deserve to be considered a great King. Above all, he was lucky.'

To what extent do you agree with this?

and accidents of inheritance during the fifteenth century, to project his authority at a local level. Similarly, he drew members of the nobility to his court, informally by making it a cultural and political centre, but also formally by expanding the membership of the king's household and through a system of bonds that enforced the nobles' attendance at court. Second, Henry oversaw a radical shift in the nature of royal finance. The poverty of the crown had been one of the most pressing concerns of much of the later Middle Ages, but under the Yorkist kings the much-expanded royal estates had provided the basis for a recovery. Henry took this one step further, exerting his personal control over all aspects of royal finance and pressing hard to collect taxes, customs and, especially, his feudal rights. This resulted in a huge treasure which gave him the freedom to pursue radical policies at home and realise his diplomatic ambitions on the continent.

In other ways Henry presided over a revolutionary change in English political culture. His government was staffed by 'new men', often men trained in the common law or in the new humanist learning that was sweeping the continent. These individuals fostered a culture in which the authority of the crown was strengthened against challenges from the church, the nobility and town corporations. Initiatives such as the *Quo Warranto* ('By what authority') proceedings in the 1490s sought to abolish separate legal franchises and bring every aspect of English law under royal control. This paved the way for the challenge to Papal authority in the 1530s and the English Reformation. Changes in education and in the ways that people thought about politics and government during his reign were a result both of the impact of the Renaissance, but also of Henry's own exposure to the continental practice of government. As the Spanish ambassador observed in 1498, Henry 'would like to govern England in the French fashion'. There developed between 1485 and 1509 a court-based politics, based on intrigue and plots as much as on violence or debate in parliament, that would characterise the rule of the Tudors.

Henry VII thus deserves to be considered a great king. He saw off challenges both domestic and foreign to pass the throne to his son. He ensured the financial stability of the crown and consolidated royal authority in almost every aspect of English life. More importantly, his rule prepared the way for the monumental changes that took place in the sixteenth century.

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