1.1 Monarchy and government, 1509–88

KEY QUESTIONS

- What was the role of the monarchy in Tudor England, 1509–88?
- How did the role of parliament change between 1509 and 1588?
- What were the roles of the principal servants of the Crown?

INTRODUCTION

In 1509, when Henry VIII came to the throne, the Tudors were still a relatively new dynasty and faced threats from rival claimants. Nevertheless, they survived and created a period of political stability. Henry VIII and his children Edward VI, Mary I and Elizabeth I ruled in an age of personal monarchy when the ruler was still in charge of government. While Henry VIII inherited the throne as a young adult, his children faced particular challenges in governing the country. Edward VI became king at the age of nine, while his half-sisters were the first women to rule England in their own right since the 12th century. The period was also important for the contributions of the Tudors' chief ministers Thomas Wolsey, Thomas Cromwell and William Cecil. Finally, the actions of the monarchs and the changes that were made had important repercussions for the power and role of parliament, which grew considerably from the 1530s.

ACTIVITY
KNOWLEDGE

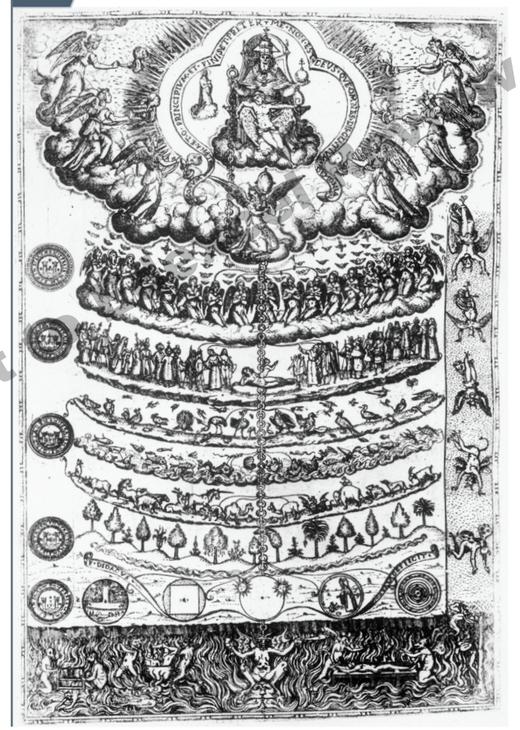
Society and status

Look at Source 1.

What does it suggest about how 16th century people viewed society and status?

How might an image such as this be used by the Tudor monarchs to reinforce their position?

SOURCE 1 The Great Chain of Being from *Retorica Christiana* by Didacus Valades, printed in 1579.



WHAT WAS THE ROLE OF THE MONARCHY IN TUDOR ENGLAND, 1509–88?

Tudor society was hierarchical in nature, with emphasis placed on the importance of obedience to the monarch as the pinnacle of society and God's representative on earth. One common way in which this was expressed was in the 'Great Chain of Being', which depicted all members of society having their place and being dependent on each other. This idea emphasised that God had created an ordered society and that obedience was owed to those higher up the social scale.

SOURCE 2 Sir Thomas Smith, *De Republica Anglorum*, 1583. Smith was a noted scholar and diplomat who wrote this book in the reign of Elizabeth I to describe the government of England.

> The Prince is the life, the head and the authority of all things that be done in the realm of England.

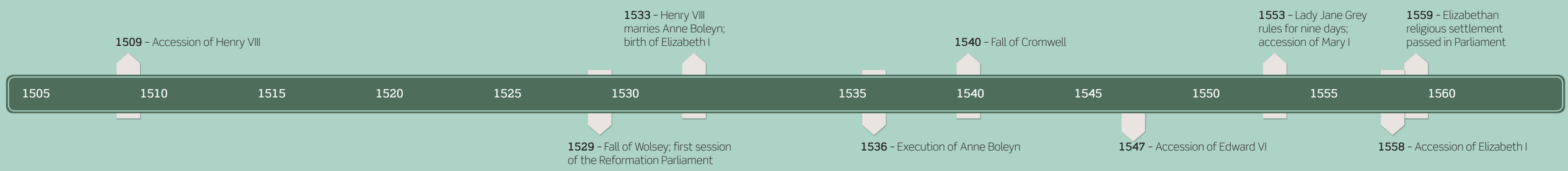
Between 1509 and 1588, the rule of the monarchy was personal and it was accepted that kings ruled 'by the Grace of God' (*dei gratia* – abbreviated to D.G. on coins even today). This meant that, in the 16th century, monarchs were still in control of government and that the monarchy passed by the rule of **primogeniture** from father to son. For example, monarchs made the decision whether to go to war or when to make peace. They could also summon and dismiss parliament at will. Under their coronation oath, they were responsible for upholding justice and the law, which was carried out in their name. However, to be successful, an English monarch could not ignore the customs and traditions of England or the laws made by parliament. Monarchs who tried to rule entirely as they pleased risked being labelled tyrants and could face rebellion and usurpation. This had happened to Richard II in 1399 and would later happen to Charles I in the 17th century. It was expected that, while a monarch would be able to choose their own friends and counsellors, they would also listen to their advice, though the monarch would not necessarily have to act on it.

KEY TERM

Primogeniture
The system of inheritance by which property and titles passed from father to eldest son or the eldest surviving male relative.

This personal style of monarchy required the ruler of England to be physically able to run the country. In 1509, this meant that they needed to be adult (technically, 21 years old), male, physically strong, able to lead an army into battle, and with enough intelligence to make decisions and have some involvement in the day-to-day running of the country. A ruler who did not possess these qualities might well lead the country to the brink of disaster, as the rule of Henry VI had shown in the 15th century. The role of the monarch was vital to the smooth running of the country and remained so throughout the Tudor period. This helps to explain why Henry VIII was so determined to produce a living son and heir to carry on Tudor rule; it also explains why the Tudor succession was, at times, in doubt. First, Henry VIII was succeeded in 1547 by his son and heir Edward VI, who was just nine years old and could not be expected to rule on his own. Edward was then followed by his two half-sisters, Mary Tudor (1553–58) and Elizabeth I (1558–1603). This was the first time that a woman had ruled in her own right since the 12th century, yet the Tudor dynasty survived.

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EXTEND YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Henry VI and the Wars of the Roses, 1455–85

Although this paper focuses on the period from 1509, an understanding of the events of the 15th century helps to explain the actions and preoccupations of Henry VIII. Henry VI was king of England from 1422 to 1461 and from 1470 to 1471. He was indecisive and easily influenced, allowing powerful nobility to control him. His mental breakdown in 1453 led to disputes over who should be protector. The outbreak of civil war between the rival houses of York and Lancaster followed in 1455, which became known as the 'Wars of the Roses'. Henry was deposed by the Yorkist claimant, Edward IV, in 1461. He was briefly reinstated to the throne in 1470–71, but was defeated and died in suspicious circumstances. Edward IV ruled until his death in 1483. There was further political instability between 1483 and 1487. Edward's sons were usurped by their uncle, Richard III. In turn, Richard was killed at the Battle of Bosworth by the only surviving Lancastrian claimant, Henry Tudor, who became Henry VII. However, Henry faced challenges in turn as his claim to be king was weak, culminating in the Battle of Stoke in 1487. Yorkist claimants to the throne were still viewed with suspicion under Henry VIII.

Personal and political qualities of the Tudor monarchs

As long as monarchy remained personal, the personality, strengths and weaknesses of a monarch mattered, as they could have an impact on how effectively that monarch was able to rule the country. An indecisive or weak king like Henry VI could create serious political instability, while a charismatic ruler with strong leadership and military skills would be more likely to be seen to rule successfully, such as Henry V (1413–22).

Henry VIII, 1509–47

Henry came to the throne at the age of 17. Until 1502, he had been brought up as a second son who was not expected to become king, but this changed when his elder brother, Arthur, died. As the son of a king, Henry was well educated. He could speak four or five languages, and he could sing and dance. Henry was clearly intelligent. He wrote poems and songs, including 'Pastime with good company'. He even wrote a book in Latin, *Assertio Septem Sacramentorum* ('In Defence of the Seven Sacraments', 1521). As a king, Henry was forceful and sometimes cruel, as his treatment of his wives, chief ministers and even close friends shows. He also disliked writing state papers, which he described as 'both tedious and painful.' Instead, he preferred to leave the details of day-to-day government to his ministers, although he always remained in charge.

KEY TERMS

Renaissance
Meaning 'reborn', this is the term used to describe the renewed intellectual interest in ancient Greek and Roman culture. From the late-14th century, this led to experimentation in writing, art, architecture and thought.

Humanism
Renaissance Humanism emphasised the importance of education for men and women and particularly the need to speak and write well. Students were taught Greek, grammar, rhetoric, logic, history, poetry and moral philosophy. Famous Humanist thinkers and writers included Desiderus Erasmus and Sir Thomas More.

Henry was influenced by **Renaissance** ideas of 'honour', which required him to defend England's rights abroad. For Henry, this meant going to war to regain English territory lost in France in the 1440s and 1450s. In this, he was inspired by his namesake, Henry V, who had won famous victories against the French in the early 15th century. A Renaissance prince was supposed to be an accomplished fighter. This appealed to Henry, who also enjoyed military sports such as jousting.

Edward VI, 1547–53

Edward was just nine years old when he came to the throne and for much of his short reign he remained a political figurehead controlled by his Protectors. As heir to the throne, Edward was educated by the best **humanist** thinkers in the country, such as the brilliant Cambridge scholar John Cheke. Edward was an able child – at the age of seven he was already learning to read Latin. By 1550, he was also fluent in French, Spanish and Italian, and in 1551 he started to learn ancient Greek.

As a king he was also expected to lead an army, and he both watched and participated in tournaments. Edward also kept a Chronicle, a form of journal, which shows that he was also learning how to rule and was becoming increasingly involved in government. Edward's Chronicle and letters also reveal something of his personality. The longest and most detailed passages of his journal are related to military matters such as descriptions of jousts. Following a visit to Portsmouth in 1552, he wrote in a letter that the defences of the castle there were not as strong as they should be and he suggested some designs to improve them.

Edward's letters also reveal a tendency to priggishness and a growing Protestant faith. At the age of eight, he wrote to his stepmother, Catherine Parr, to ask her to persuade his elder half-sister Mary (who was nearly 30) 'to attend no longer to foreign dances and merriments [at court] which do not become a most Christian princess.' Unfortunately, Edward died at the age of 16, before he had an opportunity to fully take power.

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Mary I, 1553–58

Born in 1516, Mary was 37 when she became queen. Like her younger half-brother and sister, she was intelligent and had been well educated, especially as for many years it was assumed she would inherit the throne. Although Mary's childhood was happy, her teenage and adult years were overshadowed by Henry VIII's attempts to annul his marriage to her mother, Catherine of Aragon. Made illegitimate and excluded from the royal succession by the Act of Succession (1534), she was restored as second in line to the throne in 1544, but her illegitimacy was not reversed. Mary was personally pious and loyal to her Roman Catholic faith. During the reign of the Protestant Edward VI, she came under considerable pressure to renounce her beliefs, but she consistently refused. This stubbornness was later to cause problems during her own reign as she was determined to restore the English Church to full Catholicism. Politically, this was not an astute move as she failed to realise the complexity of the situation in England after 20 years of reformation.

This same stubbornness also drove her to believe that marriage to the Spanish king, Philip II, was the best way to achieve her religious aims. Her failure to realise the extent of opposition to this marriage and the English hatred and suspicion of foreigners led to open rebellion in 1554. Mary's health also affected her ability to rule effectively. She suffered from anxiety and depression, and her desperation to bear a son and heir led to phantom pregnancies, which kept her closeted in her chambers.

Elizabeth I, 1558–1603

Elizabeth (born in 1533) was the daughter of Henry VIII and his second wife, Anne Boleyn, for whom he divorced his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, and broke with the Roman Catholic Church in the process. Elizabeth was therefore the embodiment of the break with Rome and the movement towards a more Protestant Church.

Like her brother, she was brought up and educated by the best scholars available, including John Cheke's pupil, Roger Ascham. In 1536, Anne Boleyn was executed for treason and Elizabeth was made illegitimate in the second Act of Succession, but she was reinstated in the royal succession in 1544. Elizabeth was clever and quick-witted. She also learnt the harsh realities of politics at an early age. In 1549, she was caught up in the plans of Thomas Seymour, one of the uncles of Edward VI, to marry her without the king's consent. To marry a member of the royal family without the permission of the monarch was a serious offence that could even be classed as treason. This was what happened to Seymour, who was executed. Elizabeth's servants were arrested and questioned in the Tower of London and Elizabeth herself was questioned about her role.

In 1554, during Mary's reign, Elizabeth was arrested and sent to the Tower as it was suspected she had played a part in encouraging rebellion against Mary. She was questioned but would admit to nothing and eventually she was released to live under house arrest.

In 1558, Elizabeth became queen, and she had learned caution. As queen, this caution became indecisiveness – in a crisis, she would sometimes refuse to make a decision, much to the frustration of her councillors. She also had a fearsome temper. In 1587, for example, she wavered over whether she should execute her cousin, Mary, Queen of Scots, despite the threat that Mary posed to Elizabeth's life. She was eventually persuaded to sign Mary's death warrant, but then demanded that it should not be sealed or sent. In desperation, Elizabeth's council ignored this order and Mary was executed – Elizabeth was furious.

Elizabeth also had considerable strengths as a ruler. She was a **politique**, who preferred compromise and moderation (especially over matters of religion) to the hard-line approach of Edward or Mary. This moderation, combined with stubbornness and a talent for man-management, allowed her to survive successfully despite her illegitimacy in the eyes of some.

KEY TERM

Politique
A moderate who believed that the unity of the country could be achieved through allowing some religious toleration.

EXTEND YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Mary, Queen of Scots (1542–87)

Not to be confused with Mary Tudor, Mary Stuart (also known as Mary, Queen of Scots) was the daughter of James V of Scotland and the French Princess Marie de Guise. Mary was also descended from Henry VII via his elder daughter, Margaret, and so had a claim to the English throne, though she was passed over in Henry's Acts of Succession and will. Mary became queen of Scotland at six days old. She was sent to France to avoid English attempts to capture her and marry her to Prince Edward. Mary married the French heir to the throne, Francis, and was briefly queen of France (1559–60), but she was sent back to Scotland on Francis's death. She then married her first cousin, Henry Stuart (Lord Darnley) and they had a son, James, in 1566. The marriage was unhappy and Darnley was found murdered in 1567. Mary's Catholic faith had already caused disquiet among her Protestant nobles, but her marriage to the chief suspect in Darnley's murder, the Earl of Bothwell, shocked Catholics too. After a short civil war, Mary was forced to abdicate in favour of her son. In 1568, she fled to England, where she was kept in comfortable imprisonment by her cousin, Elizabeth. From 1569, Mary became the focus of several Catholic plots to assassinate Elizabeth and put Mary on the throne instead. Eventually, Mary was executed, but her son, James, became king of both Scotland and England in 1603.

What were popular attitudes to the Tudor monarchy?

With the personality of the monarch so vital to the running of the state, it should come as no surprise that the attitudes of their subjects towards the Tudor monarchs would impact their ability to govern. Although monarchs such as Henry VI had been forced to abdicate or had been murdered, this was still considered a last resort and respect for the monarchy as an institution remained high. When rebellions did occur in this period, they were usually aimed at the ruler's policies or at their 'evil counsellors', those who had given the monarch poor advice. For example, the rebels involved in the Pilgrimage of Grace (1536) complained explicitly about 'persons of low birth and small reputation' in Henry VIII's council, as well as the religious and economic policies being pursued by the king and his advisers.

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The Western Rebellion of 1549 was a reaction against the religious policies of Edward VI's government, while the noble leaders of the 1569 Northern rebellion against Elizabeth I called themselves her 'most true and lawful subjects' and ended their proclamation with the words 'God save the queen'. To remove forcibly or kill a monarch, however inept they were, was considered to be acting against God's will. As Henry VIII put it in his response to the Lincolnshire rebels of 1536: 'How presumptuous are ye, the rude commons of one shire, and that one of the most brute and beastly of the whole realm and of least experience, to take upon you, contrary to God's law and man's law, to rule your Prince, whom ye are bound to obey and serve.' (See Chapter 3 for further information on the Pilgrimage of Grace.)

However, there were strong popular beliefs and traditions associated with the power and role of the monarchy. For example, Tudor monarchs could not raise taxation without the agreement of parliament. When Wolsey tried to do this in 1525 on Henry VIII's behalf with the non-parliamentary Amicable Grant, it led to a serious rebellion. Nor could a monarch, or his advisers, simply ignore the laws of the realm made in conjunction with parliament, especially those protecting property and inheritance. In 1553, when Edward VI, with the connivance of the Duke of Northumberland, attempted to alter the succession to the throne and to bypass the Catholic Mary Tudor in favour of the Protestant Jane Grey, the result was a successful rebellion in favour of Mary. Although Mary was a woman, the third **Act of Succession** (1544) had made her second in line to the throne after Edward and there was a mass popular rising in her support.

KEY TERM

Acts of Succession
These were passed by Henry VIII's parliaments and made changes to the line of succession and to the legitimacy of his daughters, Mary and Elizabeth. The Act of 1534 reinforced Cranmer's judgment that Henry's marriage to Catherine was invalid and that Mary was illegitimate. The Act made Henry and Anne's children the legitimate heirs.

The 1536 Act, passed after Anne's execution, declared that Elizabeth was illegitimate as well and replaced her in the line of succession with the as yet unborn heirs of Henry and Jane Seymour.

The Act of 1544 named Edward as Henry's heir, but it also restored Mary and Elizabeth to the royal succession, although it did not explicitly make them legitimate again. The 1544 Act also made provision for a regency council should Henry die while Edward was still a minor; under the terms of the Act, the council was to be nominated by Henry in his will.

These Acts were significant because it was the first time that parliament had been used in this way to give legal standing to the royal succession. This shows the growing importance of parliament in this period as well as the political confusion created by Henry's marriages and the need to clarify who Henry's heirs were. However, in each case the Acts were made to reinforce the king's actions; parliament did not have the power on its own to dictate the royal succession.

Tudor propaganda

Although there was popular acceptance of the role and powers of the monarchy, the Tudor monarchs used a range of methods to reinforce popular obedience and loyalty. It was common for the royal courts of Tudor monarchs to put on 'disguisings', such as tournaments, which were open to all spectators. There were also more private court plays and banquets. The purpose of these often extravagant displays was to emphasise the power, wealth and legitimacy of the Tudor dynasty.
As religious changes took effect in the 1530s, propaganda was also used to spread the beliefs adopted by the monarch. For example, Henry VIII's reign saw a staged battle on the Thames between two barges representing the king and the pope, in which the actors playing the pope and his cardinals were ducked in the river. Tudor monarchs also increased their visibility through progresses around the country, which were an opportunity for the monarchs to show themselves and be seen by their people. Elizabeth I, in particular, used this method and went on progresses with her entire court nearly every summer, staying in the houses of leading local nobility and gentry to save money. For example, in 1560 and 1569 she visited Hampshire, in 1572 she went to the midlands and in 1578 she visited East Anglia.

Before Henry VIII became too old and ill to travel, he, too, used progresses, though to a lesser extent – in 1535 he visited Salisbury and the Bristol Channel, and in 1541 he went on a progress to the North of England, which included a stay at York. This latter progress was partially a response to the northern-based rebellion, the Pilgrimage of Grace (1536), and further unrest in 1541, but it shows the importance of the physical presence of the monarch to both impress and intimidate the local population. Although the reigns of Mary I and Edward VI saw fewer progresses as a result of illness and youth, they still used plays, masques and other displays to reinforce their rule. Edward's protector, the Duke of Northumberland, erected huge temporary banqueting houses in Hyde Park in London to entertain and impress the visiting French ambassadors and the Londoners alike.

Although Tudor monarchs did occasionally face popular rebellion, this was not usually aimed at removing them from their throne. Instead, rebellion was a response to unpopular policies. Evidence that the monarchy was genuinely popular is hard to find, though it is possible to argue that the absence of unrest is in itself evidence of acceptance. However, genuine popular reaction can be seen in the fact that the day of Henry VIII's death was commemorated every year by solemn mourning until the 1560s. Similarly, Elizabeth I's accession also became a day of national celebration – albeit one encouraged by the queen – when there was bell-ringing, prayers, bonfires, firing of guns and sports.

ACTIVITY
KNOWLEDGE

Successful monarchy

1 Make two lists under the headings 'qualities of a successful monarch' and 'qualities of an unsuccessful monarch'.

2 Write down three ways in which Tudor monarchs attempted to increase their popular support.

3 Discuss with a partner why it might be difficult for a historian to establish how popular the Tudor monarchy was.

What challenges did the Tudor monarchy face between 1509 and 1588?

How strong was the Tudor claim to the throne in 1509?

Although Henry VIII succeeded his father Henry VII to the throne peacefully and without incident in 1509, this could not disguise the fact that the Tudors were a new dynasty with a weak claim to the throne. The period from 1455 to 1487 had been disrupted by civil war between two rival families who claimed the throne – the Yorkists and the Lancastrians. Henry Tudor, the Lancastrian representative, had won the crown at the Battle of Bosworth where he had beaten the last Yorkist king of England, Richard III. Although it was commonly accepted at this time that victory in battle meant that God had given his blessing to the winner, the Tudor claim was not strong.

Henry Tudor, now Henry VII, inherited his claim to the throne from his mother, Margaret Beaufort, who was descended from King Edward III (1427–77). However, the Beaufort line was descended from the illegitimate children of Edward III's third son, John of Gaunt. They had only been made legitimate on the proviso that they, and their descendants, would not lay claim to the crown. Added to this, the remaining Beaufort descendant was Margaret, a woman. The succession at this time was determined by the theory of primogeniture. This meant that a woman could transmit a claim to the throne, but that it would not be as strong as a claim transmitted by a man. Thus, Henry VII's survival as king was by no means guaranteed and he faced a series of challenges from rival claimants who were related to the Yorkist kings he had replaced. However, Henry VII survived, aided by a marriage to Elizabeth, the eldest surviving daughter of the Yorkist king, Edward IV. Henry and Elizabeth's children had a stronger claim to the throne because of their combined Yorkist and Lancastrian blood. Furthermore, Henry VII enhanced his children's claim through a series of international alliances. His eldest son Arthur (who died in 1502) had married the daughter of the Spanish monarch, Catherine of Aragon. The death of Arthur was a blow to the new dynasty, but Henry's remaining son, the future Henry VIII, did survive and succeeded his father in 1509 without opposition.

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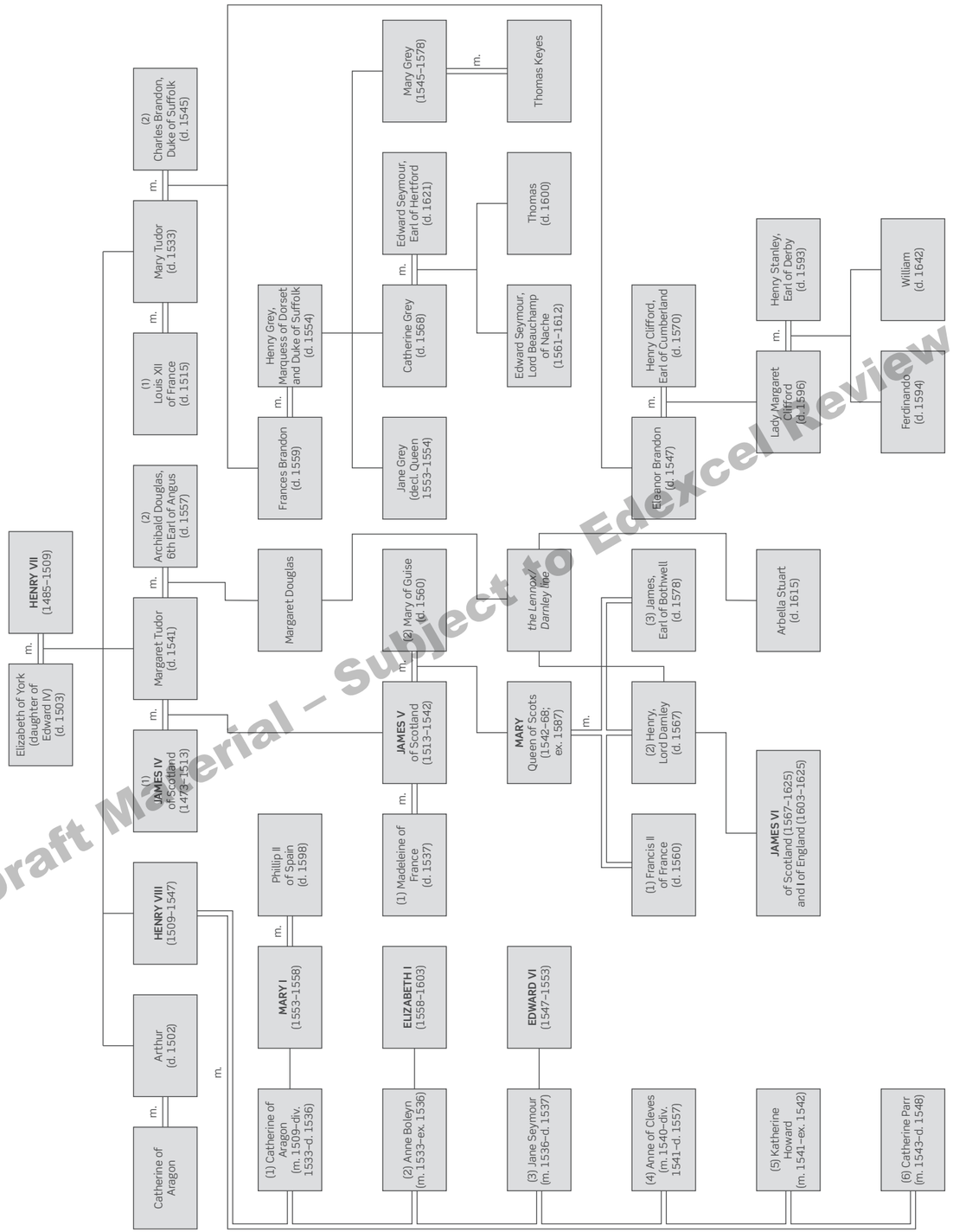


Figure 1.1 The Tudor family tree.

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What problems did Henry VIII face in securing the Tudor succession?

As the son of a usurper, Henry VIII still needed to consolidate the dynasty by marrying and having a surviving son of his own. Given the prevalence of diseases that could kill children and teenagers, it was advisable for the monarch to have more than one living son. Henry himself was the second son of Henry VII; his elder brother Arthur (the original heir to the throne) had died at the age of 15 in 1502. Failure to produce a son would not only jeopardise the survival of the Tudor dynasty after Henry VIII, but also create speculation as to who would be king after he died. This speculation was dangerous as it could lead to political instability and plots focused on possible rival claimants, something that had happened repeatedly in the reign of Henry VII. These rival claimants from the Yorkist line (sometimes known as the **White Rose Party**) were often harshly dealt with, mostly because they had a good claim to the throne while Henry VIII struggled to produce a living male heir.

KEY TERM

White Rose Party
The term given to those descended from the 15th century Yorkist claimants to the throne such as the de la Poles and the Poles. The White Rose was the badge of the Yorkists.

Henry VIII married his brother's widow, Catherine of Aragon, as soon as he inherited the throne in 1509. Although Catherine at 24 was nearly seven years older than Henry, there was no reason to expect that she would not be able to fulfil her main duty as queen, providing Henry with a male heir. Unfortunately, between 1510 and 1518, she suffered a series of miscarriages and infant deaths. On 1 January 1511, Catherine did give birth to a living son also named Henry, to national rejoicing and the king's delight, but the child died just three weeks later. Catherine's only surviving child, born in 1516, was a girl, Princess Mary. Catherine's last pregnancy was in 1518, when she again gave birth to a girl who lived for just a few hours. In an age when it was accepted that only a man could rule, this lack of a male heir was potentially disastrous for Henry and his dynastic hopes. Women were not thought fit to rule and the only precedent for a woman ruling in her own right was the 12th century Queen Matilda, whose reign had led to a vicious civil war. Although Princess Mary was brought up and educated as a future queen of England, the lack of a surviving and legitimate male heir contributed to Henry's decision to annul his marriage to Catherine and his eventual decision to break from Rome. It also explains his treatment of Anne Boleyn, his second wife.

Henry's search for a son and heir

Henry married Anne in 1533 when she was already pregnant by him. The hope was that she would bear the son and heir Henry desired, but instead she gave birth to a healthy daughter, Princess Elizabeth. This series of events only served to fuel uncertainty over the succession. In annulling his marriage to Catherine, Henry had argued that it had never been legal in the first place and thus his daughter Mary was illegitimate and could not inherit the throne. This situation, and the position of the Princess Elizabeth as the new heir, was confirmed by the Act of Succession (1534).

However, Anne's subsequent miscarriages, including that of a deformed male foetus in January 1536, helped to bring about her own downfall.

Significantly, Henry was determined that his next marriage could not be challenged. Catherine of Aragon had died in 1536 and he wiped the slate clean by annulling his marriage to Anne Boleyn and passing a second Act of Succession (1536). Anne Boleyn was executed on the charge of adultery and Henry promptly married Jane Seymour. In 1537, Jane gave birth to Henry's only surviving son and heir, Edward, but unfortunately she died shortly after.

At the age of 46, Henry had finally succeeded in securing a son and heir, some 28 years after his first marriage and the succession looked more secure. However, Henry had no more children after Edward despite three more marriages. Furthermore, his reign was rocked by serious rebellion in 1536, and it is no accident that, in the aftermath of this instability, the remaining Yorkists were either executed or, in the case of Reginald Pole, forced to flee the country. Henry himself acknowledged the continuing uncertainty in the third Act of Succession (1544) in which he restored both Mary and Elizabeth as heirs to the throne after Edward, although he never reversed their illegitimacy. This was an attempt to shore up the Tudor succession in the case of the early death of Edward. As Henry himself knew from his own experiences, it was by no means certain that Edward would survive, and he had no second son to fall back on. While there were no signs that Edward was anything other than a healthy child, the ageing Henry needed to ensure the continuation of the Tudor dynasty to his children.

EXTEND YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Yorkist claimants to the throne in 1509 and their eventual fates

Edmund and Richard de la Pole
- Nephews of Edward IV and Richard III.
- Edmund was imprisoned by Henry VII and executed by Henry VIII in 1513. Richard died in exile at the Battle of Pavia (1525).

Margaret Pole (Countess of Salisbury) and her sons Henry and Reginald Pole
- Descended from George, Duke of Clarence, brother of Edward IV and Richard III.
- The Poles were closely connected to the conservative faction at court. Margaret and Henry were arrested as part of the 'Exeter Conspiracy' (1538). Henry was executed in 1539, Margaret was executed in 1541. Henry's son remained in prison until Mary's reign. Reginald was forced into exile abroad where he remained in the service of the pope. In 1538, the pope gave him the task of organising a Franco-Spanish crusade against England. Pole also survived several assassination attempts by Cromwell's agents. He returned to England in 1554 after Mary came to the throne.

Henry Courtenay (Marquess of Exeter) and his son Edward (Earl of Devon)
- The son of Catherine, a daughter of the Yorkist king Edward IV.
- Henry was arrested for allegedly conspiring with Reginald Pole to create a Catholic rebellion (1538). He was executed in 1539. Edward remained in prison until Mary's reign.

Edward Stafford (Duke of Buckingham)
- Descended from Edward III.
- Buckingham was executed for treason in 1521.

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The role of faction at the Tudor court

Because Tudor monarchs had personal control over government, one route to power and influence was to gain personal access to the ruler. As a result, it became common for factions to form. In the later part of Henry's reign, during the 1530s and 1540s, faction often formed along religious lines; the conservative faction at court that favoured a return to traditional, Catholic forms of worship, was led by the Duke of Norfolk, his son the Earl of Surrey, and the bishop of Winchester, Stephen Gardiner. The reformer faction, which favoured more reform to make the English Church more Protestant, included Jane Seymour's brother, Edward Seymour, Earl of Hertford, and Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury. These competing factions attempted to influence Henry by placing their supporters in positions where they could influence him, often in the Privy Chamber or Council. An active adult monarch, as he was for most of his reign, Henry would not be undermined by these factions as he was able to control them by balancing the competing the groups and playing them off against each other. In Henry's last years and in the reign of his son (a young boy), factions did at times destabilise politics.

Henry VIII's will, 1547

The 1540s were increasingly dominated by the uncertainty caused by the fact that the aging Henry VIII was in increasingly ill-health caused by his lack of activity as the result of a jousting injury to his leg, which had led to a infected sore. As the 1540s progressed, it became apparent that the king was likely to be succeeded by a minor, an underage child, who would not be old enough to rule in his own right and who would need a form of protectorate or regency council until he was of age. The precedents for such a situation were not promising. The last minor to succeed to the throne in 1483, Edward V, had been usurped by his uncle, Richard III, and had disappeared without trace. It was vital, therefore, for Henry to ensure that his young son succeeded him without challenge.

However, by 1546, Henry's declining health meant that he was no longer able to control the rival **factions** in his Chamber and Council. This led to political instability that was a potential threat to the Tudor succession and the power of the Tudor monarchy. The balance of power between the rival factions had swung in favour of the reformer faction led by the Earl of Hertford. Hertford ensured that men loyal to him were placed in key positions in the Privy Chamber, where they had direct access to the king – these men included Sir John Gates and Gates' brother-in-law Sir Anthony Denny, who between them controlled access to the **dry stamp**. Influenced by this dominant faction, Henry was persuaded to change his will in December 1546 to make provisions for a regency council of 16 men who would rule on behalf of his son. In making this decision, Henry clearly wanted to avoid naming one Protector who would rule the country, preferring instead rule by committee. However, in January 1547, as Henry lay dying, a series of political manoeuvrings took place through which Hertford was able to enhance his control over the future boy king.

- The will was changed to give the regency council was given 'full power and authority' to make any decisions necessary to the government of the realm.
- A further addition to the will was the 'unfulfilled gifts' clause that allowed the council to make gifts after Henry's death which he had 'granted, made… or promised.'
- Henry's death on 28 January 1547 was kept secret for three days while behind-the-scenes negotiations took place. These included getting custody and control of the young King Edward.
- The regency council named by Henry voted to make Hertford Edward's Protector.
- Hertford's supporters were then rewarded under the 'unfulfilled gifts' clause. Hertford made himself the Duke of Somerset; Lisle became the Earl of Warwick; William Parr (Queen Catherine's brother) was made Marquess of Northampton. In total, Crown lands worth £27,053 were granted to Hertford and his supporters.

KEY TERMS

Faction
An informal grouping whose members have shared aims, for example to promote religious reform. Faction members would seek to gain power and access to the monarch – both informally through the Chamber and through formal positions in the government, such as the Council. Membership of factions fluctuated and was not stable.

Dry stamp
The holder of the dry stamp could use this to put Henry VIII's signature to documents. The stamp had a raised impression of the signature. This could be used to make an imprint of the signature, which could then be inked in.

Although there was no suggestion that Edward VI should not inherit the throne, these changes to Henry's will show how easily the political situation could be manipulated when there was a minor on the throne rather than an adult capable of running the country for himself.

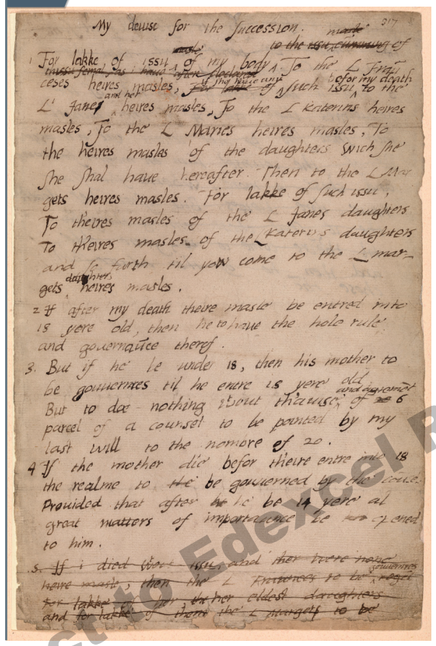
Edward VI and the question of the succession, 1553

Historians of Edward's reign, such as A.F. Pollard, used to believe that Edward was a sickly child whose early death was no surprise. In fact, as Loach has shown, Edward was in generally good health, taking part in the usual childhood sports and games of a prince such as swordfighting, hunting and riding. But in early 1553, Edward fell ill with a feverish cold that rapidly developed into incurable pulmonary tuberculosis. The king, aged 16, had not yet married or had a son of his own. Even worse, Edward had no close male heir to whom the throne could pass – all his surviving closest relatives were women. In the event of Edward dying without children, under the terms of the Act of Succession (1544) and Henry VIII's will, the throne was supposed to pass first to Mary and her heirs, then to Elizabeth. The next heirs after this were the daughters of Henry VIII's youngest sister Mary and her husband Charles Brandon – Frances and Eleanor. Edward's actions in 1553 reveal the attitudes typical of the Tudor period – that women were not fit to rule, though they could transmit their claim to the throne to their sons. However, Edward's decision-making process regarding the succession was also influenced by John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, who had taken Hertford's place as Edward's Protector in 1550.

As Hertford had done with Henry VIII, Northumberland surrounded the king with members of his faction. For example, Edward's tutor Sir John Cheke was loyal to Warwick. Similarly, Sir John Gates, who had previously served Hertford, had by now transferred his loyalties to Northumberland, remained in control of the dry stamp.

Another factor that encouraged both Edward and Northumberland to undermine the succession was the issue of religion. By 1553, England had undergone a rapid and radical series of religious changes that had created a fully Protestant Church. Edward, a committed Protestant, knew that if the throne were to pass to his sister Mary, a committed Catholic, the reformation would be reversed. In addition, under the terms of the 1534 Act of Succession, Mary had been bastardised. This had never been formally reversed, though Henry VIII had revised the succession to include her in 1544. This explains why Edward in 1552 chose to pass over Mary. However, his younger sister, Elizabeth, had more Protestant leanings, yet Edward chose not to leave the throne to her either. This was because Edward believed that she too was illegitimate as a result of the 1536 Act of Succession. At this time, a monarch's birth and parentage had to be unquestionably legitimate. Suspect legitimacy could be manipulated by potential rivals to the throne and lead to political instability. As it turned out, both Mary and Elizabeth were able to overcome this disadvantage, but in 1553 Edward did not know that and so he passed over both of his half-sisters in his plans. Instead, Edward turned to his cousins, the descendants of Henry VIII's sister, and especially the children of Frances Brandon, the Duchess of Suffolk, who had married Henry Grey and had three daughters: Jane, Catherine and Mary.

SOURCE 3 Edward's device for the succession.


My devise for the succession.
For lakke of issue of my body to the L Jane
heires masles, for lakke of such issue to the
L Jane heires masles, to the L Katherins heires
masles, to the L Marves heires masles, to
the heires masles of the daughters such she
she shal have hereafter. then to the L Mar
gets heires masles. for lakke of such issue,
To theires masles of the L Janes daughters
To theires masles of the L Katerins daughters
and so forth til you come to the L Mar
gets daughters heires masles.
2 If after my death theire masle be entred into
is yeere old, then he to rule the hole rule
and gouernaunce thereof.
3. But if he be vnder 18, then his mother to
be gouernesse til he entre is yeere old
But to doe nothing about the rule, but a
parcel of a counsell to be ordered by my
last will to the nomore of 20.
4 If the mother dies before theire entre into 18
the realme to be gouerned by the counsell
Prouided that after he is be 14 yeere al
great matters of importaunce be signed
to him.
5. If i died [illegible] and that there male
heire were vnder then the L Princes to be maried
to lakke of issue of the L Margets to be

Edward's 'device for the succession'

In early 1553, with the help of Northumberland and his advisers, Edward began to draw up the document known as 'the device for the succession'. This document was written and altered by Edward himself and shows how, as his illness progressed, Edward's plans changed. Initially, Edward was still hoping to marry and have sons of his own, but he still outlined his plans for the succession if he were to die childless. When he originally wrote his 'device', Edward assumed that there would be time for either the Duchess of Suffolk or her eldest daughter Jane to have a son and heir. In his 'device' he left the crown to 'to the Lady Fraunceses heirs male' or 'for lack of such issue to the Lady Janes heirs male.' Edward's plan, therefore, was that if he did not have a son and heir, the throne would pass to the son and heir of either Frances or Jane. By late May 1553, however, it had become clear that Edward was dying and that there would be no time for either Frances or Jane to produce a male heir to the throne. Edward, again with the advice of Northumberland and his supporters, changed his 'device'. He now left the throne to 'the Lady Fraunceses heirs male, if she have any such issue before my death to the Lady Jane and her heirs males.' As Frances had not had a child for some years, at a stroke of the pen, Edward had left the throne to her eldest daughter, Jane, disinheriting both his half-sisters and overturning both an Act of Parliament and Henry VIII's will.

The Duke of Northumberland and the disputed succession

Although the 'device' was Edward's own work, there is some debate about the amount of influence brought to bear on him by Northumberland and his allies. Northumberland was careful to control access to Edward though the Privy Chamber. It is possible that the 'device' was dictated to Edward by Sir John Gates. Northumberland also had a good deal to lose if Edward died and either Mary or Elizabeth became queen. Northumberland's power rested on his relationship with Edward. Moreover, the Duke was also responsible for overseeing the final stages of the Protestant reformation. Northumberland's motives in 1553 were to retain his power and political position after Edward's death. This meant that he was unlikely to support the claim of either Mary or Elizabeth. Under the rule of the Catholic Mary, a grown woman who would be likely to reverse the religious changes that had occurred, the best that Northumberland could hope for was to be removed from power. At worst, he would be vulnerable to attacks from his political opponents. Nor could the Duke hope to retain power under Elizabeth who, at nearly 20, would be equally likely to reject any attempts to control her as he had done her younger brother. On 21 May 1553, Northumberland enhanced his potential grip on power through the marriage of his fourth son, Sir Guildford Dudley, to Lady Jane Grey. Loach has suggested that Edward's alterations to the 'device' took place after this date, which meant not only that Lady Jane Grey would be queen, but that Northumberland would be her father-in-law. However, while Northumberland was motivated by the desire to keep hold of his power and position, it was ultimately Edward's decision to make Lady Jane Grey his successor.

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Why did Mary Tudor become queen in 1553?

Despite the fact her brother had written her out of the succession, Mary Tudor gained popular support in 1553 because under the laws of the kingdom and by Henry VIII's will, she was the next in line to the throne. Mary herself took an active role in the crisis of July 1553. Northumberland had told her that he would support her claim to be queen after Edward, but spies at court informed her that he was lying. Mary, with the help of her advisers, then made sure that Northumberland would not be able to capture her. Instead of riding to London, Mary travelled to her estates in East Anglia, arriving at Kenninghall in Norfolk, where she heard the news of Edward's death.

At this point, it did not look likely that Mary would be able to claim the throne because Northumberland had control of London, the central offices of government and the navy. However, Mary was determined to declare herself queen and she was able to do this because she attracted popular support to her cause. She already had loyal supporters in her own household who hoped to see the return of the Catholic faith to England. To these were added other members of the religiously conservative East Anglian gentry such as Sir Henry Bedingfield, who had loyally served Mary's mother Catherine of Aragon. Members of the nobility also came to support her such as the Earl of Sussex. These men all brought money, provisions and armed men. On top of this, word began to spread of Mary's defiance. Although many towns and local officials followed Northumberland's orders and proclaimed Jane as queen, they began to buckle and change allegiance to Mary. Thomas Cornwallis, the sheriff of Norfolk and Suffolk was one such official. Initially, he followed orders and declared for Jane, but when he saw that popular support lay with Mary, he changed his mind. The result was that Northumberland himself was forced to leave the relative safety of London to deal with the threat. In his absence, the Privy Council, who had supported Jane, also began to change its mind. On 18 July, it issued a proclamation for the arrest of Northumberland and the following day it declared openly for Mary. The news was greeted with joy by Londoners and on 20 July Northumberland surrendered at Cambridge.

Mary was successful because of popular support for her legal claim to the throne. Ultimately, in mid-16th century England, this mattered more than the gender of the claimant. But for the first time in 400 years, a woman was queen in her own right, and she faced a whole new set of problems in asserting her rule.

What were 16th century attitudes towards female rulers?

Sixteenth-century attitudes to women meant that people commonly believed them to be inferior to men. John Knox, the evangelical opponent of Mary, wrote that the 'regiment' (rule) of women was 'monstrous' (unnatural). Knox argued that, according to the Bible, women were inferior to men, firstly because women had been created from man (Eve had been made from one of Adam's ribs) and secondly because in the Garden of Eden, Eve's temptation of Adam had led to man's fall. Women, according to Knox, could not be trusted.

While English law did not actually forbid a woman from becoming queen in her own right, there were no strong precedents for this.

THINKING HISTORICALLY Causation (3a&b)

The might of human agency

1 'Our lack of control'.
Work in pairs.

Describe to your partner a situation where things did not work out as you had intended. Then explain how you would have done things differently to make the situation as you would have wanted. Your partner will then tell the group about that situation and whether they think that your alternative actions would have the desired effect.

2 'The Tyranny of failed actions'.
Work individually.

The Duke of Northumberland tried and failed to make Lady Jane Grey queen of England.

a. Write down three ways that Northumberland could have acted differently in that situation.

b. Now imagine that you are Northumberland. Write a defence of your actions. Try to think about the things that you would have known about at the time and make sure that you do not use the benefit of hindsight.

3 'Arguments'.
For questions 3–5 work in groups of between four and six.

In turn, each group member will read out their defence. Other group members suggest ways to reassure the reader that they were not a failure and that in some ways what happened was a good outcome.

4 Think about Mary Tudor and her defeat of Northumberland in 1553.

a. In what ways were the consequences of Mary's victory over Northumberland not anticipated by Mary herself?

b. In what ways did Mary's seizure of the throne turn out better for her than their intended consequences?

5 Think about the decision of Edward VI and Northumberland to change the line of succession in favour of Lady Jane Grey.

a. In what ways were the consequences of changing the line of succession not anticipated by Edward and Northumberland?

b. In what ways did changing the line of succession turn out worse for Edward and Northumberland than their intended consequences?

6 Work individually.
To what extent are historical individuals in control of the history they helped to create? Explain your answer with reference to specific historical examples from this topic and others you have studied.

The only time that a woman, Queen Matilda, had inherited the throne and attempted to rule in 1135, she had been challenged by her male cousin Stephen and the result was 18 years of civil war. The anarchy was only resolved by an agreement that allowed Matilda's son Henry to rule after Stephen's death, but not Matilda herself. Similarly, in the 15th century, Henry VII had become king, even though his mother, Margaret Beaufort, from whom he had inherited his claim, was still alive. However, in 1553, the circumstances were different in that there was no alternative male Tudor heir. Even Edward VI and Northumberland had accepted this fact in 1553 when they created the 'device' that was to put Lady Jane Grey on the throne.

SOURCE 4 John Knox, *First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* (1558)

> ... to promote a woman to bear rule, superiority, dominion or empire above any realm, nature or city is repugnant to nature, contumely to God, a thing most contrarious to his revealed will and approved ordinance, and finally it is the subversion of good order, of all equity and justice.

In the age of personal monarchy, the king and queen had clearly defined roles. The king was supposed to rule his country, dispense justice and defend the realm by leading his troops into battle. The queen consort's role was to be his wife, to intercede with king for peace and mercy, and to provide him with a son and heir. When first Mary then Elizabeth came to the throne, it was expected that they would need a husband to take on the traditional kingly functions, which it was thought a woman could not perform. As the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V wrote to his ambassadors in England: 'You will point out to her that it will be necessary, in order to be supported in the labour of governing and assisted in matters that are not of ladies' capacity, that she soon contract matrimony with the person who shall appear to her most fit from the above point of view.' Mary also took this view as she began negotiations for a marriage to Charles' son, Philip. At 37, Mary would need to marry quickly if she was to stand any chance of bearing a son and heir to carry on the Catholic reformation she was planning.

How did Mary approach the issue of marriage?

Mary's decision to marry Philip was driven by a combination of dynastic and religious considerations. In many ways he was the obvious choice. If she were to marry a member of the English nobility, such as her distant relative Edward Courtenay, there was the potential for jealousy and rivalry at court. Choosing a foreign husband who was already a king would avoid these internal tensions and meant that she would be marrying her equal in rank. In addition, Philip, the heir to the Spanish throne, was an obvious choice. Mary was half Spanish herself and Philip was her cousin. In foreign policy, England tended naturally to look to Spain as an ally because Spanish power in Europe was a useful counterbalance to French dominance. Spain also controlled the Netherlands, which was a vital partner in the English cloth trade. In addition, Philip was a devout Catholic who would help Mary to restore Roman Catholicism to England. Although Mary was determined to marry Philip, she faced opposition both from within her Council, especially from Gardiner, who supported the Courtenay marriage, and also from her own parliament. When parliament met in 1553, the Speaker expressed the concerns about the marriage to Philip, which demonstrates the particular difficulties faced by Mary as a female ruler. Attitudes of the time concerning the role and capabilities of women led to the assumption in parliament that if Mary married a foreigner, her husband would automatically rule England and might even decide to take Mary abroad. Mary and her Council attempted to calm these fears by drawing up a marriage treaty (in 1554) that protected her power in England. The terms stated that:

- Philip would have the title of king, but he would not rule. He would only be allowed to assist Mary.
- If Mary were to die first, Philip would not be able to rule as king of England on his own. Philip's son by an earlier marriage, Don Carlos, would also have no claim to the English throne.
- Any children of the marriage would inherit the English throne.
- Philip was not allowed to appoint foreigners to positions in the English government.
- England would not be drawn into wars between Spain and France.

However, popular fears about the Spanish marriage were partly responsible for a rebellion led by Sir Thomas Wyatt in January 1554. The concerns raised by parliament, the Council and the rebels, as well as the terms of the marriage treaty, were brought about entirely because Mary was a woman. While suspicion of foreigners might lead to general opposition to a foreign marriage for any monarch, there would have been no fears about a queen consort taking over power in the way that there was for Philip as king consort.

How did Elizabeth I approach the issue of marriage?

Unfortunately for Mary, her marriage to Philip did not produce any children and she was succeeded by her half-sister Elizabeth in 1558. At 25, Elizabeth was young enough to have children and, like Mary before her, it was expected that she would marry in order to produce an heir and also so that she could have a husband to help her govern. There was extra pressure on Elizabeth as she was the last of the Tudor dynasty, which would end with her unless she produced an heir. The political instability that this would cause was brought home to her councillors when Elizabeth fell dangerously ill with smallpox in 1562.

Unlike Mary, Elizabeth seems to have been more than wary of marriage because of the problems it presented to a female ruler. In 1566, she angrily berated a parliamentary delegation who had requested that she marry. Elizabeth could have married Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester (the son of the Duke of Northumberland), but this would have created tensions at court. She also had foreign suitors, including her former brother-in-law Philip of Spain, Archduke Charles of the Holy Roman Empire, and the French prince, Henry, Duke of Anjou. The Anjou marriage was given serious consideration as late as 1581, when Elizabeth was already in her late forties and too old to bear children, but it, like all the previous negotiations, came to nothing. Elizabeth was not prepared to marry, but the prospect of marriage was a useful tool in diplomatic negotiations.

Instead, Elizabeth remained single. As a woman in a man's world, Elizabeth used her gender to her advantage. In particular, she encouraged the notion of courtly love and the development of the image of the 'Virgin Queen' from the late 1570s. Ambitious young courtiers could attract Elizabeth's attention through personal attraction and flirtation. These 'male favourites' included Robert Dudley, Sir Christopher Hatton and Sir Walter Raleigh. However, these relationships were managed carefully. As the 'Virgin Queen',

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Elizabeth was able to pose as desirable, yet beyond reach, and so control her male courtiers who might otherwise have controlled her. She also employed clever rhetoric in order to rally support and present herself as a leader of men, even if she could not fight herself. The best example of this is her famous speech at Tilbury in 1588 when, as England faced the threat of a Spanish invasion, she addressed her army, wearing a silver breastplate over her dress. Elizabeth and Mary both made use of the idea of that, as queens, they were 'married' to their country. In her speech at the London Guildhall in 1554, Mary rallied the Londoners against the threat of Wyatt's rebellion using this image, and Elizabeth used a similar analogy in her response to parliament's request for her to marry in 1559.

Although Tudor attitudes to female rulers made it harder for both Mary and Elizabeth to assert their authority, ultimately both were able to do so. Both faced challenges to their rule – Mary faced rebellion in 1554, and Elizabeth faced both rebellion and plots against her life – but both survived, even though the problematic issue of marriage and the succession created enormous difficulties especially in the 1590s.

SOURCE 5 Mary's speech to her troops at the London Guildhall, 1554. In this speech, she was rallying her troops against a rebellion by Thomas Wyatt.

> I am your queen, to whom at my coronation, when I was wedded to the realm and laws of the same (the spousal ring whereof I have on my finger, which never hitherto was, not hereafter shall be, left off), you promised your allegiance and obedience unto me.

SOURCE 6 Elizabeth's reply to parliament, 1559, following a request that she marry.

> Now that the public care of governing the kingdom is laid upon me, to draw upon me also the cares of marriage may seem a point of inconsiderate folly. Yea, to satisfy you, I have already joined myself to an husband, namely, the Kingdom of England.

SOURCE 7 Elizabeth's speech to her troops at Tilbury before the attempted invasion by the Spanish Armada, 1588.

> I know that I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England, too.

ACTIVITY KNOWLEDGE

Female rulers

1 Read Source 4. What were John Knox's arguments against female rulers?

2 Read Sources 5–7. How did Mary and Elizabeth use language and ideas to enhance their power as queen?

3 Write down three problems facing Mary and Elizabeth as queens.

4 Discuss with a partner how they tried to solve these problems. How successful do you think they were?

Fill in the following table to show the main strengths and weaknesses of the Tudor monarchs.

	Strengths	Weaknesses	Overall judgement
Henry VIII			
Edward VI			
Mary I			
Elizabeth I			

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HOW DID THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENT CHANGE BETWEEN 1509 AND 1588?

The power of parliament

Parliament was an ancient medieval institution that had gained important powers by the Tudor period. These included the sole right to grant taxation, and the sole right to pass laws (Acts of Parliament). When a monarch needed taxation to supplement their income (usually for war or another emergency), it was usual for them to summon parliament. However, monarchs also retained the right to veto any laws they did not like, and to summon and dismiss parliament at will. In fact, there were long periods when parliament did not meet at all, and unlike parliament today, it was not involved in day-to-day government. Nevertheless, most monarchs would call parliament periodically. It was an important opportunity for them to test the mood of the country and to communicate their policies to the Members of Parliament (MPs) and thus to the localities.

How was parliament organised?

Parliament had two chambers, the unelected House of Lords, where hereditary peers and bishops sat, and the House of Commons, which was filled with elected MPs. Two MPs were elected to represent each county of England, and some boroughs (towns) also had the right to send MPs to parliament. To vote in a county, it was necessary to own property that brought in an income of at least 40 shillings (£2) per year. This meant that voting, when it happened, was restricted to those wealthy enough to own property outright. In many cases, however, MPs were elected uncontested – there was no competition for the seat. It was also common for members of the nobility to exercise patronage to ensure their clients were elected. The powerful dukes of Norfolk could usually influence the return of MPs in up to eight boroughs. In 1584, the Earl of Leicester wrote to the town of Andover: 'I make so bold heartily to pray you that you would give me the nomination of one of your burgesses [members of the town]'. parliament, therefore, tended to represent the interests of the landed gentry and nobility. To pass an Act of Parliament, a bill had to be heard in both the Commons and Lords before being given royal assent by the monarch. While parliament was usually on the same side as the monarch, this did not mean that it could always be relied upon to do what the monarch wanted, and, as the century progressed, the Commons became more confident and needed careful managing.

Henry VIII's parliaments before 1529

Under Henry VII, parliament met just seven times in a reign lasting 24 years. This trend continued under Henry VIII. Parliament met only four times between 1509 and 1529: in 1510, 1512–14, 1515 and 1523. Its role in this period was mainly to grant taxation to fund the king's wars. When the wars were going well, especially in 1513, it was usually not too difficult to persuade parliament to grant taxation for the defence of the realm. However, by 1517 Henry's foreign policy had become costly and ineffective. As the burden of taxation increased, with little to show for it, parliament became less keen to grant increasing amounts of money. This was partly because, as landowners, the MPs feared that too much taxation would lead to rebellion. As members of local society, they were well aware of the amount of grumbling and resistance. In 1523, this led to Wolsey meeting stiff opposition from the Commons to extract the amount of taxation he wanted. By this date, £288,814 had been raised in taxation, not to mention the 'loans' raised totalling £260,000. Given this burden, it is not surprising that when Wolsey tried to persuade the MPs by addressing them personally he was met with silence.

Although it is dangerous to judge later events with the benefit of hindsight, the parliament of 1512–14 showed some **anticlerical** feeling. In 1512, it passed an Act to limit '**benefit of clergy**'. This anticlerical feeling re-emerged in the 1515 parliament when it was exacerbated by the Hunne affair, in which a rich London merchant accused of heresy had been found dead while in the Bishop of London's prison. The Church claimed that he had committed suicide, but murder was rumoured. This anticlerical feeling would later be exploited by Thomas Cromwell.

KEY TERMS

Benefit of clergy
This allowed churchmen charged with a serious crime to be tried in the Church courts rather than in secular courts. Church courts gave more lenient sentences than the secular courts – clergymen (or those who claimed to be clergymen) could thus avoid the death penalty.

Anticlericalism
Criticism of the Church, often aimed at its apparent corruption and wealth. It also helped to fuel reformer demands for radical change, but not all those who were anticlerical supported Protestantism.

EXTEND YOUR KNOWLEDGE

The Hunne affair
Richard Hunne was a London merchant. In 1511, his infant son died, and the local parish priest asked for the usual mortuary fee (payment for burial). Hunne refused to pay and was sued in the Church courts, which found against him. Hunne was then accused of heresy and sent to the Bishop of London's prison. In December 1514, Hunne was found hanged in his cell. The Church claimed it was a case of suicide. Despite his death, Hunne was still put on trial for heresy. He was found guilty and his corpse was ceremonially burned. This case caused considerable anger and resentment in London and fuelled anticlericalism in parliament.

From 'king and parliament' to 'king-in-parliament'

In 1529, the parliament that became known by historians as the 'Reformation parliament' was summoned. Again, it is important to realise that in 1529 when this parliament was summoned no one knew that they were sitting in a parliament that would change the power of the monarchy and the religion of England so dramatically. Indeed, the term 'Reformation parliament' was not used before the 19th century.

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The 1529–31 sessions

When parliament met in 1529, Wolsey had fallen from power and the king was still searching for a way to achieve the annulment of his marriage. Furthermore, Cromwell had not yet risen to power. As in 1512–14 there was some anticlerical sentiment, but only three out of the 26 statutes passed in the first session of 1529–31 dealt with religious matters. Parliament met again for a second session in January 1531. By this time, Henry was threatening to use his parliament as a method to put pressure on Pope Clement VII to act. He told the pope that he planned to refer his divorce case to parliament. However, at this point, this seems to have been more of an attempt to blackmail the pope than a real threat.

The 1532 session

The third session of parliament began in January 1532 and lasted until May. By this point, Cromwell had been appointed to the king's Council, and was starting to use his power to enable Henry to divorce Catherine. Cromwell used parliament to pass laws that would reinforce the king's claim to supremacy over the Church and to make the divorce a reality. The Act in Conditional Restraint of Annates applied pressure on the Church by threatening to forbid newly appointed bishops from making customary payments to the pope. However, this was not a straightforward process as there was opposition in both the Commons and the Lords. This is why the Act was made 'conditional' (delayed for a year). Anticlericalism in the Commons was also manipulated by the production of a petition known as the Commons' Supplication against the Ordinaries, which was a list of complaints against the Church to which Convocation (the Church's version of parliament) was forced to submit.

The 1533–34 sessions

When parliament met again in February 1533, it was with some urgency. Henry VIII had married Anne Boleyn, who was already pregnant, but any annulment from Catherine could still be challenged in Rome. Henry needed to ensure that the new baby, which he hoped would be his longed-for son, would be legitimate and that his marriage and the succession would be unchallengeable under English parliamentary law. At this point, Cromwell drafted the Act in Restraint of Appeals, which would cut off any attempt by Catherine of Aragon to appeal her case in Rome. Cromwell took particular care in the drafting of this bill and referred specifically to the idea of England as an empire, independent from foreign intervention, and of which the king was in sole charge. This Act allowed Thomas Cranmer, the Archbishop of Canterbury, to declare Henry's first marriage void under English law.

In 1534, parliament was used once again to confirm and enhance the new royal supremacy and the break with Rome. The Act of Annates was made permanent. However, the original plans to transfer these payments from the pope to Henry faced serious opposition in the Lords and had to be changed so that they were stopped completely. The Act of Succession made Princess Mary illegitimate and confirmed Princess Elizabeth as the new heir and included an oath, which meant that Henry and Cromwell could monitor carefully any opposition to the new order. The Act of Supremacy confirmed Henry's new position as supreme head of the Church, and the Treason Act widened the definition of treason. Under this Act, treason could be committed not only by deeds against the king or his family, but also by words.

The use of parliament from 1536 to 1547

Once the break with Rome was completed, Henry and Cromwell continued to use parliament throughout the 1530s. The smaller monasteries were dissolved by an Act of Parliament in 1536 and a second Act in 1539 dissolved the larger monasteries as well. parliament was also used to pass Acts that dictated religious belief. The Act of Ten Articles (1536) promoted a more 'reformed' version of faith, while the Act of Six Articles (1539) reflected Henry's reversion to a more conservative doctrine. Meanwhile, the second and third Acts of Succession (1536 and 1544) rewrote the line of succession twice more.

The consequences of the Reformation parliament

Although Henry was always careful to say that parliament was only acknowledging his supremacy rather than granting it to him, the use of parliament in this way set a precedent that would have unforeseen consequences. Once parliament had been used to create the royal supremacy and break with Rome, subsequent monarchs were forced to return to it whenever they wanted to alter the religious and political settlement enforced in the 1530s.

The events of the 1530s also created the notion of 'king-in-parliament'. This was the idea that the most powerful institution in the country was the king acting in conjunction with parliament rather than without it. The 'king-in-parliament' also had authority over the Church, but the king alone did not. Again, Cromwell seems to have been behind this idea. The theory was that God had granted Henry the royal supremacy, but the people had given Henry VIII the authority to assume the supremacy through parliament. The reigns of Mary and Elizabeth reinforced this idea. Mary had to repeal the supremacy through parliament and Elizabeth reasserted it again through another Act of Parliament. Each time this happened, parliament gained more power, though it was never more powerful than the monarch.

These new powers also meant that monarchs were forced to call parliament more frequently. Before 1529, parliament had met just four times in 20 years. Between 1526 and 1536, there were sessions nearly every year. As Extract 1 shows, the Reformation parliament in some ways marked a turning point in the frequency with which parliament met. The result of this was that the Commons in particular became increasingly confident. More frequent meetings meant that groups with particular agendas, such as the Puritans under Elizabeth, began to use parliament as a means of achieving their aims. More meetings also meant that local MPs became more confident in expressing their views, and were less easily intimidated by the presence of their monarch. These developments meant that the later Tudor monarchs, especially Elizabeth, had to develop new tactics for managing parliament.

EXTRACT 1

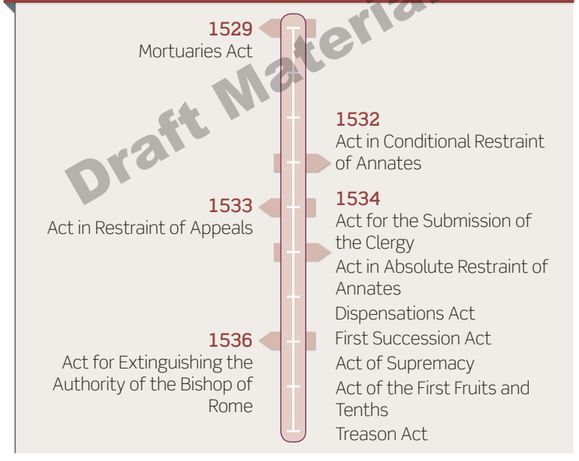
Parliamentary sessions under the Tudor monarchs, 1509–88, J. Loach *Parliament under the Tudors* (1991).

Monarch	Number of parliamentary sessions held	Dates of sessions
Henry VIII	9	1510, 1512–14, 1515, 1523, 1529–36, 1536, 1539–40, 1542–44, 1545–47
Edward VI	2	1547–52, 1553
Mary I	5	1553, 1554, 1554–55, 1555, 1558
Elizabeth I	6	1559, 1563–67, 1571, 1572–81 (only called in 1572, 1576, 1581),1584–85, 1586–67

Parliament and freedom of speech

One privilege claimed by the Commons was freedom of speech within parliament. MPs feared that without the guarantee that they would be able to speak freely while debating, they could face arrest and imprisonment. Before Elizabeth's reign, the privilege of parliamentary freedom of speech was usually respected by the government. But this did not mean that parliament could choose its subject for debate; usually, it had to wait for the topic to be introduced by the Crown. This settlement was usually effective in promoting harmony between Crown and parliament, but there were occasions when the Tudors faced opposition from their parliaments. For example, supporters of Catherine of Aragon attempted to stop the parliamentary process that would lead to the break with Rome. In 1532, opposition to the Annates bill forced Henry to come to parliament himself so that his presence would intimidate the Commons to support the legislation.

TIMELINE – KEY ACTS OF THE REFORMATION PARLIAMENT



Parliament under Edward and Mary

Under Edward, parliament was used to continue and accelerate the Protestant reformation. Mary's parliaments of 1553–54 reversed the religious changes seen under Edward and Henry, and returned England to Rome. It used to be thought by historians such as Sir John Neale that Mary's parliaments saw a growth in an organised Protestant opposition led by independent MPs in the Commons. Certainly, Mary's parliaments were less easy to manage. For example, in 1555 there was serious opposition to two proposed bills. The first bill proposed that payments to the Church known as 'First Fruits and Tenths', which had been seized by Henry VIII, should be returned to the Church. This bill caused such opposition in the Commons that it was only passed by the queen's supporters keeping the House sitting until 3pm, which was unusually late for parliamentary business. By this time, the bill's opponents seem to have given up and gone to lunch. The second bill, known as the 'Exiles bill', proposed that the lands and property of Englishmen who had gone into exile and refused to return could be seized. This bill was defeated in a very unusual incident in which Sir Anthony Kingston, MP for Gloucestershire, locked the doors of the House and forced the Speaker to put the bill to a vote before its supporters could arrive.

Neale used these incidents to argue for an organised Protestant opposition, which would become more apparent in Elizabeth's reign. However, Loach has shown that both of these incidents were the result of fears surrounding property rights, something that would have particularly concerned the representatives of the land owning elites in parliament. If the Crown gave up its income from the First Fruits and Tenths, then the level of taxation might have to be raised, something that was never popular. Similarly, although many of those who had gone abroad in Mary's reign had Protestant leanings and wanted to avoid persecution, the Commons were more concerned about protecting property rights in general, especially for anyone who simply happened to go abroad and might face confiscation of their property through no fault of their own.

The growing confidence of parliament under Elizabeth I, 1558–88

Like Mary and Edward, Elizabeth was forced by precedent to use her parliament to reverse the changes undertaken by Mary and to restore the royal supremacy. In 1559, however, she faced some difficulties in achieving this, mainly because of religiously conservative peers and bishops in the House of Lords. This opposition may have led to more of a compromise than Elizabeth had originally intended. However, the problems that Elizabeth encountered from her parliaments were more the result of an increasingly confident Commons.

The Puritan choir

Neale argued for the existence of a '**Puritan** choir' in Elizabeth's parliament. This 'choir', Neale argued, consisted of a small group of religiously radical Protestants who had returned from exile under Mary and were determined to use parliament to create a more extreme religious settlement than Elizabeth wanted. However, Neale's argument does not fit the available evidence. Norman Jones has shown that there were at most 25 Puritan MPs and that only four of these had returned to England in time for the 1559 parliament. Michael Graves' research on some of the

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key individuals of the choir has shown that most were not religious radicals at all and nor were they as organised as Neale claimed. For example, the supposed leader, Thomas Norton, was a moderate Puritan who had close links to William Cecil as well as other Protestants on the Council such as Francis Walsingham. Research has shown that Norton was actually acting as a parliamentary manager for Cecil. As Norton himself said, 'All that I have done I did by commandment of the House, and specially of the queen's Council there, and my chiefest care was in all things to be directed by the Council.'

KEY TERM

Puritan
Described by the historian Patrick Collinson as 'the hotter sort of Protestant', the term 'puritan' was originally a term of abuse. Puritans saw the reformation as incomplete and wanted further reform. They tended to emphasise the importance of preaching and the Bible.

Developments in parliament under Elizabeth

Even without a determined and organised opposition to Elizabeth, led by a group of Puritans, the role of parliament did change under Elizabeth. For example, the number of MPs in the House of Commons had grown from 302 in 1512 to 402 in 1559 and 462 by 1586. This growth in numbers helps to explain why the Council felt the need to 'manage' parliamentary business more. In some areas of policy, parliament was also growing more assertive. Encouraged by the Council, in 1563 and 1566 the Commons dared to raise the issue of marriage and the succession with the queen, something that would have been unimaginable in Henry VIII's reign. This led to some conflict between the queen and her parliaments concerning their right to freedom of speech. Elizabeth argued that parliament was free to discuss matters of the 'commonweal' (concerning the common good of the country), such as poverty, but that it did not have the right to discuss 'matters of state', such as her marriage, the succession and religious policy. The parliamentary Commons tended to ignore Elizabeth's wishes and this led to tensions. For example, in 1566 the Council was forced to allow parliament time to debate marriage and succession. In return, parliament agreed to discuss a grant of taxation, which it had threatened to withhold. There were also attempts by a minority of religious radicals, such as Anthony Cope, to introduce more radical Puritanism via parliament, but Cope and his allies were promptly imprisoned in the Tower of London by the Speaker.

KEY TERM

Royal prerogative
The customary rights and privileges claimed by the Crown. These included rights as a landlord and rights to claim traditional feudal payments. Monarchs exploited the prerogative to raise money, such as the right to sell monopolies.

Although there were some areas of dispute, it should be emphasised that Elizabeth and parliament were on the same side. Elizabeth did try to restrict parliament's claims to freedom of speech in 1566 and 1576, but this was as much to do with her views on her **royal prerogative** as an attempt to reduce parliament's powers. Where parliamentary pressure was apparently brought to bear on Elizabeth, such as the discussions about the succession and her marriage in 1563 and 1566 or debates over the fate of Mary, Queen of Scots in 1572 and 1586–87, these were the result of the Council having used parliament to force the indecisive Elizabeth into making a decision. However, in the 1590s, the relationship between monarch and parliament did become strained as a result of the political tensions of the last decade of Elizabeth's reign.

Exam-style question A Level, Section A

How accurate is it to say that there were major changes in the role of parliament in the years 1529–88? (20 marks)

Tip

You will need to consider what the role of parliament was in this period in order to decide whether there were major changes to it. Are there certain periods in which there was more change?

ACTIVITY
KNOWLEDGE

Powers of parliament

1 Make a graph to show the changing powers of parliament from 1509 to 1588. Write on the key events.

2 Choose the three events that you think show the most significant changes to parliamentary powers. Explain why you have chosen these events.

3 Make a list of ways in which you think the powers of parliament had not changed by 1588.

THE PRINCIPAL SERVANTS OF THE CROWN, 1509–88

The role of Wolsey, Cromwell and Cecil in Tudor government

Thomas Wolsey (c1472–1530), Thomas Cromwell (c1485–1540) and William Cecil (1520–98) all played a crucial role in Tudor government as the 'chief ministers' of Henry VIII and Elizabeth. All three men were responsible for enhancing the power of the monarchs they served, but there were crucial differences in their relationship with the Tudor rulers they served, which ultimately had very different effects on their careers.

Both Wolsey and Cromwell rose from humble beginnings. This meant that they were both reliant on Henry VIII for their promotion and for their power, especially because they lacked the traditional landed estates, wealth and rank that other servants of the Crown possessed.

Wolsey was the son of an Ipswich butcher. He was clearly a clever boy since he was sent to Magdalen College, Oxford and then embarked on a career in the Church. In this period, advancement through the Church structure was a common method used by those from the lower ranks in society to rise. Wolsey did just this. By 1509, he became almoner (someone who distributed money to the poor) to Henry VIII, and under the patronage of Richard Fox he became a member of the king's Council in the same year. Wolsey was a clever administrator and rapidly rose further because he pleased the king by co-ordinating the war effort against France in 1512–14. In 1514, he was made Archbishop of York, in 1515 the pope made Wolsey a cardinal, and in the same year he became Lord Chancellor of England, which meant he was in charge of the judicial system. In 1518, he received the title from the pope of ***legate a latere***. However, Wolsey's career and rise were entirely dependent on the king's will. From 1525, his relationship with Henry began to unravel, especially once he was unable to secure the annulment of Henry's marriage to Catherine. Wolsey's fall was as dramatic as his rise had been meteoric. By 1529, he had outlived his usefulness to the king. Wolsey was accused of **praemunire**, stripped of his possessions and banished from court. A year later, on his way to trial, Wolsey died.

KEY TERMS

Legate a latere
A representative of the pope who was given full powers to act on the pope's behalf.

Praemunire
A legal charge used against those who were suspected of appealing to a foreign power outside the English monarch's authority. In particular, it could be used against those who attempted to appeal to the pope. The charge was used against Wolsey in 1529 and against all the English clergy in 1530.

Cromwell's career path and final fate closely mirrored Wolsey's. Cromwell was a self-made man. His background is shadowy, but he was born in London in about 1485 and was the son of a cloth maker. He left England in his teens and served as a soldier in the French army. He learned about accountancy and the law, though he had no formal training as a lawyer. By 1516, he was working for Wolsey and in 1523 he became an MP. Cromwell was highly intelligent, hard-working and almost entirely self-taught. He was also a political survivor. When Wolsey fell from power, Cromwell was able to recover quickly and by 1531 he had become a member of Henry's Council. Influenced by reformer ideas, he also developed strong religious convictions. Working with the faction that formed around Anne Boleyn, Cromwell was able to manipulate proceedings in a way that allowed Henry to achieve his annulment from Catherine of Aragon but also steered England towards a reformed Church.

However, Cromwell's power, influence and religious convictions meant that he had enemies at court. Like Wolsey, he was also entirely reliant on Henry's support, which could only be sustained by pleasing the increasingly volatile king. In 1536, Cromwell was able to survive Anne Boleyn's fall because he still had the king's support. But in 1539–40, Cromwell's attempt to create a Protestant alliance in Europe against the threat of a united Franco-Spanish invasion by negotiating a marriage with Anne of Cleves was a serious tactical error that angered Henry. Cromwell's enemies among the conservative faction at court saw their opportunity to remove Cromwell permanently by accusing him of treason and heresy. The king was angry enough at Cromwell to listen to them. Cromwell was tried and executed because his policies no longer suited Henry.

The relationship between Henry VIII and his two chief ministers was dictated by Henry's personality and style of rule. Similarly, the working relationship that formed between William Cecil, Lord Burghley and Elizabeth I was also conditioned by Elizabeth's own personality and style, but in contrast to Cromwell and Wolsey, Cecil was able to sustain his position from 1558 until his own peaceful death in 1598. Cecil came from a higher social rank than either Wolsey or Cromwell – he was a member of the gentry and had spent his entire career in royal service. Cecil had a chequered political past, serving the Duke of Somerset until his fall in 1549 and then transferring his service to the Duke of Northumberland. By 1548, Cecil was already in contact with Elizabeth.

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Despite his close connection with both Somerset and Northumberland's regime, Cecil survived under Mary and, in 1558, was perfectly placed to advise Elizabeth. Cecil's career under Elizabeth was so long and successful because they both were naturally cautious and pragmatic in their approach. As Cecil's career progressed, he did attract enemies. In 1569, there was a court-based plot in which those of the nobility with Catholic sympathies, such as the Duke of Norfolk, sought to remove Cecil from power. Ironically, Norfolk was supported by the Protestant Earl of Leicester, who also distrusted Cecil's power. Even more seriously, in 1569, the northern rebels wanted to remove him from power because he was pro-Protestant and they resented the amount of influence he had with the queen. Crucially, however, Elizabeth supported Cecil rather than his critics. She also rewarded him with the title Lord Burghley in 1571, and in return for his unwavering loyalty to her she allowed him to build up a network of supporters through patronage. This meant that Cecil never became politically isolated and was not completely dependent on the queen's whims for political survival, unlike Wolsey and Cromwell. This does not mean that Cecil was more powerful than the queen, however; their working relationship was built on trust and understanding that was mutually beneficial.

Wolsey's successes

Wolsey's main contributions were in his organisational abilities, which allowed Henry first to afford foreign war and then to play international peacemaker. He introduced a new form of taxation, the subsidy, which allowed the king to collect more taxation from his subjects. In his role as chancellor, Wolsey also attempted legal, social and economic reform. He attempted to improve the administration of justice by prosecuting in Star Chamber local officials who were accused of corruption. For example, in 1519, he prosecuted a prominent member of the Cheshire gentry, Sir John Savage, on suspicion that he had been using his local influence to protect his son from murder charges. Wolsey's aim was to teach Savage 'the new law of Star Chamber'. Savage was pardoned, but he lost many of his local offices and had to pay a fine of 4,000 marks to the Crown. More generally, Wolsey used Star Chamber and the court of Chancery to encourage ordinary men to seek justice for their grievances, which led to a huge increase in the workload of these courts. Wolsey also launched a national enquiry in 1517–18 to investigate the practice of illegal **enclosure** by landlords. On the basis of this enquiry, 264 landlords were prosecuted and 188 verdicts were reached.

KEY TERM

Enclosure
This was a social and economic trend, common in the 15th and 16th centuries. It involved landlords taking over areas of common land and enclosing them with hedges or fences. This was often associated with the move away from arable farming to sheep farming. Tudor theorists often blamed enclosure for poverty, unemployment and vagrancy.

Wolsey's failures

Wolsey's personality and ambition led to criticism. He held multiple church offices – he was not only Archbishop of York, but also the Bishop of Lincoln and Tournai. He used the profits of his office to live in a grand style. His household numbered 500 men, nearly as big as the king's, and his building at Hampton Court was so magnificent that contemporaries called him an 'alter rex' – another king. Wolsey's grand schemes were too ambitious. Although he encouraged cases to be brought into Star Chamber, this led to a backlog that Wolsey, distracted by war and diplomacy, failed to clear. He also used his power and position to prosecute personal feuds: Sir Robert Sheffield, who, as Speaker of the House of Commons in 1512 had been critical of Wolsey, was sent to the Tower and fined £5,333 for 'opprobrious words'. Wolsey also managed to upset the support of the very group he needed, the landed nobility and gentry. In 1523, he had to reverse his policy on enclosure as part of a deal with parliament, which tended to represent the interests of the landed elites. He also mismanaged the financial crisis of 1522–23, haranguing parliament in an attempt to get a higher rate of taxation from them, before turning to the non-parliamentary Amicable Grant.

The relationship between Wolsey and Henry VIII

As long as Wolsey was able to fulfil the king's wishes, he remained in power. As John Guy has argued, Wolsey did not usurp power from Henry; he was only allowed to wield it for as long as he was useful. Wolsey's contemporary critics used his social background to accuse him of undermining the power of members of the traditional nobility and gentry, such as the Duke of Buckingham, merely because he resented them. In fact, Buckingham was executed because he appeared to be plotting treason and raising a private army. It was the king who wrote to Wolsey: 'I would you should make good watch… on the duke of Buckingham… and on others which you think suspect.' In addition, Wolsey had rivals for his power, particularly from the gentlemen of the Privy Chamber. In 1519, Wolsey expelled the 'minions' (the young men friendly with Henry) from the household who had too much influence with the king. The Eltham Ordinances in 1526 can also be seen as attempt to control the Chamber as a rival source of power. Ultimately, however, it was only from 1527 when Wolsey was unable to give Henry his divorce from Catherine of Aragon that his position came under threat.

EXTEND YOUR KNOWLEDGE

The Duke of Buckingham
Edward Stafford, Duke of Buckingham, was descended from Edward III and so had a claim to the throne. The Stafford family were particularly powerful on the border of Wales, where they had extensive lands that they could use to raise a private army. Stafford's father had used these powers to mount a rebellion against Richard III in 1483. Buckingham saw himself as a member of the traditional nobility who based his powers on his landed estates, not at court through service to the king; he resented what he saw as attempts to restrain his traditional powers. Buckingham's servant, Sir William Bulmer, was prosecuted in Star Chamber in 1519 for wearing the duke's livery (uniform) in the presence of the king. In 1521, Buckingham requested a licence to visit his lands in Wales with 400 armed men. This alarmed Henry because his actions seemed to threaten potential rebellion. Shortly afterwards, Stafford was arrested, tried and executed for treason.

Cromwell and parliament

Cromwell's genius was to realise that he could use parliament to give the king his annulment. By using parliament, Cromwell and Henry were able to present the laws that were made as the will of the people (since parliament represented them). By passing Acts of Parliament, the break with Rome was made legal under English law and anyone who broke the law could be punished. It also created a precedent. Any further changes to these laws would also need to be passed by parliament, as happened under Edward, Mary and Elizabeth.

By 1531, all attempts to persuade the pope to grant a divorce had failed, largely because the pope was under the control of Charles V, Catherine of Aragon's nephew. In 1532, Cromwell exploited the **anticlerical** feeling in parliament, which led to the first steps in breaking from the pope and Rome. In 1533, he drafted the Act in Restraint of Appeals, which created the mechanism that would stop Catherine appealing to the pope over Henry's head. This Act is particularly famous because of its preamble, which defined Cromwell and Henry's vision of the Royal Supremacy for the first time.

Cromwell further extended his role in government when he was named Vicegerent (deputy) in Spirituals by Henry in late 1534. Although Cromwell was not a churchman, this unprecedented role gave him power to shape the religion of the country. As vicegerent, Cromwell used propaganda and a preaching campaign in churches to introduce reformer ideas more widely across England. He was also the architect of the dissolution of the monasteries in the period 1536–39.

KEY TERM

Anticlericalism
Criticism of the Church, often aimed at its apparent corruption and wealth. It also helped to fuel reformer demands for radical change, but not all those who were anticlerical supported Protestantism.

SOURCE 8 Preamble to the Act in Restraint of Appeals, 1533. This introduction to the Act may have been written by Cromwell himself.

Where by divers[e] sundry old authentic histories and chronicles, it is manifestly declared and expressed that this realm of England is an Empire, and so hath been accepted in the world, governed by one Supreme Head and king having the dignity and royal estate of the imperial Crown of the same, unto whom a body politic compact of all sorts and degrees of people divided in terms and by names of Spirituality and Temporalty, be bounden and owe to bear next to God a natural and humble obedience: he being also institute and furnished, by the goodness and sufferance of Almighty God, with plenary, whole, and entire power, pre-eminence, authority...

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Cromwell's role in government and fall from power

Alongside these religious reforms, Cromwell also enhanced royal power in 1536 through changes to the government of England and Wales, although most historians now agree that he should not be credited with creating a 'Tudor revolution in government'. The changes to the Privy Council happened despite not because of him, and the Council that emerged in 1537 was full of his political enemies such as the Duke of Norfolk. Like Wolsey, Cromwell was only able to act while he had the king's support. From 1532 to 1536, their interests converged: Henry wanted a divorce and Cromwell, who was a convinced religious reformer, wanted to advance changes to the Catholic Church. But in 1536, the dissolution of the smaller monasteries created the most serious rebellion of the reign, with some 30,000 rebels involved who named Cromwell personally in their complaints. Henry himself was also no religious reformer, and by 1538, Cromwell was forced to end his preaching campaign.

Cromwell eventually fell from power in 1540 for two main reasons. First, he had arranged Henry's fourth marriage to the Protestant Anne of Cleves. Henry disliked Anne on sight, calling her 'the Flanders mare' and only went through with the marriage reluctantly. By this point the king had already fallen for the young and pretty Katherine Howard, the niece of the conservative Duke of Norfolk. Norfolk and the conservative faction took advantage of this and the Cleves marriage to influence Henry against Cromwell. The final nail in Cromwell's coffin was the accusation that he had been protecting Protestants who had been accused of heresy. All these circumstances conspired against Cromwell, and on 10 June 1540 Cromwell was arrested. On 28 July he was executed for treason.

William Cecil's role in government and relationship with Elizabeth

Elizabeth and Cecil had a close partnership that lasted until his death in 1598. Until 1572, Cecil held the position of Secretary of State, which meant he had great influence because it gave him access to Elizabeth and her correspondence. When he was created Lord Burghley in 1571, he was able to sit in the House of Lords, from where he could influence events in the Commons. In 1572, he became Lord Treasurer, a post he retained to his death.

Cecil was one of the most active members of Elizabeth's government. As treasurer, he organised the Council, managed parliament, controlled the exchequer, and was a Justice of the Peace (JP) in five counties. Like Elizabeth herself, Cecil was a politique. They both recognised the need for stability and compromise, and this formed the basis of their political relationship. Cecil was probably behind the document produced in 1559, the 'Device for the Alteration of Religion', which set out the religious problems faced by Elizabeth and proposed a settlement as soon as possible.

He was also responsible for negotiating a peace treaty with Scotland in 1560, which removed the presence of French troops (and therefore the threat of a hostile invasion from the north), and for setting up a Protestant government in Scotland, thus neutralising the threat from England's traditional enemy. Cecil achieved this despite Elizabeth's initial reluctance to intervene in foreign affairs – he even threatened to resign to persuade her to change her mind.

Cecil remained dominant in government from this time. A committed Protestant, in the 1570s and 1580s he was one of the chief architects of attempts to tighten controls on English Catholics, despite Elizabeth's reluctance to follow this policy. In 1587, he supported the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots and was in disgrace for weeks, but he recovered. However, he was also cautious regarding religion and, unlike his fellow councillor Francis Walsingham, he did not wish to see the establishment of a more radical religious settlement.

ACTIVITY KNOWLEDGE

Royal Supremacy

1 Read Source 8. How did Cromwell justify the Royal Supremacy? Why was his use of an Act of Parliament to do this significant?

2 Use the section on the servants of the Crown to help you complete the following table.

	Thomas Wolsey	Thomas Cromwell	William Cecil
Background			
Position in government			
Successes			
Failures			
Extent to which he increased royal power			

3 In your opinion, which minister did the most to enhance royal power? Write a paragraph justifying your view.

4 Discuss with a partner: why did both Wolsey and Cromwell fall from power when Cecil did not?

Changes to the structure of government

By the Tudor period, a complex system of government had evolved that could both help and hinder monarchs in their rule. These systems included formal institutions such as the Council, and financial and judicial systems. During the period 1509–88, the chief ministers of the Crown, especially Wolsey and Cromwell, sought to change the structure of Tudor government in order to increase its efficiency and extend its power. While some of these changes were more permanent, others were temporary, or frustrated by the monarchs or parliament. Above all, Tudor government remained personal and was dependent on the whims of the monarchs and the informal structures that evolved to serve them, such as the court, the household and the privy chamber. This meant that the chief ministers found that their powers were limited and were reliant ultimately on the will of the monarch, and that any changes they made would only succeed with the Crown's support.

EXTEND YOUR KNOWLEDGE

The court, the household and the privy chamber

Not to be confused with the legal Courts of Justice, the royal court served the monarch; wherever the monarch was, the court would follow. The court was important for display and entertainment and was an informal source of power. Under the Tudors, those who wanted power or influence would tend to come to the court in search of patronage. Those who succeeded in gaining patronage at court could then build up enormous power and wealth, though they remained dependent on access to the court in order to secure this. The court was also important for display. It was important for the Tudor monarchs to emphasise their power and wealth to important visitors, and the court allowed them to do this through elaborate and expensive displays such as tournaments and plays.

The household was usually responsible for the ruler's domestic needs. Monarchs and their families were served by a wide range of people who moved about the country with them. Hundreds of people were employed in the kitchens, laundries and gardens and were mostly menial servants, though they were controlled by high-level officials known as the Board of the Green Cloth. The household could grow or shrink according to the personal needs of the monarchs and their families.

The privy (private) chamber was actually a series of rooms where the royal family lived. David Starkey's work has shown that under Henry VIII, the privy chamber became an important political hub. The chamber had its own staff – the Gentlemen of the Privy Chamber. The most important of these was the Groom of the Stool, in charge of the royal commode or toilet. Under Henry VIII, these positions were filled by Henry's most trusted friends, who were usually men from the nobility or gentry. These men were not simply servants. Because of their intimate and daily physical contact with Henry, they also became his advisers and were often employed in more formal areas of government. For example, between 1520 and 1525, Gentlemen of the Privy Chamber were sent on diplomatic missions to France and on a military expedition against the Scots.

What was the role of the Council?

The Council was a more formal body that had existed since medieval times to advise ('counsel') the monarch. The monarch chose who should be on the Council and did not have to take their advice, though it was often in the king or queen's best interests to at least listen to the Council's views. It also helped the monarch with the day-to-day running of the country and could act as a judicial court. The Council could also be divided by faction, especially in the 1540s and 1550s when the Crown was in the hands first of the aging Henry VIII, then his young son Edward. The political importance of the Council varied depending on the style of rule adopted by different monarchs. However, the role of the Council changed during the Tudor period, becoming increasingly formal and 'professional'.

The role of the Council under Henry VIII

Until the 1530s, the Council was still a fairly large institution of perhaps 40 members, most of whom would not attend on a regular basis. In 1526, Wolsey was planning the **Eltham Ordinances** to reduce this to 20 men who would meet daily. Although Wolsey's plans initially came to nothing, by 1537 a council such as the one he had planned for had emerged. This became known as the 'Privy Council', and by Elizabeth's reign it was responsible for much of the daily running of the country, especially administration and legal matters. The Privy Council that emerged by 1537 did so without Cromwell's planning. Initially, the new-style Privy Council appeared as an unplanned response to the political crisis of 1536 when Henry VIII was faced with serious rebellion and needed a small council of trusted men to give rapid and clear advice.

KEY TERM

Eltham Ordinances

These were a series of reforms introduced by Wolsey in 1526. They included plans for the council and household, as well as a reduction of the number of men serving in the privy chamber. Wolsey claimed that these reforms were an attempt to improve royal finances, but in reality they were an excuse for him to purge the chamber of men whom he considered to be his enemies.

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EXTEND YOUR KNOWLEDGE

The Tudor revolution in government

The historian Geoffrey Elton has argued for a Tudor revolution in government. Elton argues that the changes in the 1530s were the result of a deliberate policy by Henry VIII's minister, Thomas Cromwell, who, as part of the Tudor revolution in government created a Council that was more bureaucratic and would be able to function regardless of the personality and abilities of the monarch. Elton's theory has now largely been disproved.

SOURCE 9 The size of the Council, 1509–88.

1509–29 (under Wolsey): 120

1536–37: 19

1540: 19

1548: 22

1552: 31

1553–58: 50

1559: 19

1586: 19

The role of the Council, 1547–88

Under Edward VI, the Council became less important politically as government and politics were dominated by the king's protectors who used control of the privy chamber to achieve this. Mary's Council continued the trend seen in Henry's reign. Although she had 50 named councillors, only 19 of these were 'working' councillors who were meeting three or four times a week. Mary's councillors were particularly involved in advising her over her marriage and the return to Catholicism, although they did not always agree on these issues. Under Elizabeth, the role of the Privy Council reached its peak. Its membership was honed down to about a dozen key individuals, and by the 1590s these men were meeting nearly every day, sometimes in both the morning and afternoon. By this period, the Council had become an essential part of government, which handled much of the day-to-day business of the realm. This did not mean that the monarch was sidelined, because he or she appointed the councillors and could dismiss them at will.

Changes to the Crown's finances

A constant theme of the Tudor period was the tension between the Crown's income and expenditure. Both Wolsey and Cromwell attempted to put the Crown's finances on a more secure footing, but they were only partially successful. In theory, the monarch was supposed to be financially independent, 'to live of their own' as contemporaries put it. The Crown had two main sources of income: 'ordinary revenue', which came from the royal lands and the monarch's status as a landlord, and 'extraordinary revenue', which was usually taxation granted by parliament for the monarch's special needs, usually the costs of war. 'Ordinary' income could come from rents or the sale of lands. But even with some considerable boosts to the Crown's income, the monarchy rarely had enough money and was often reliant on parliamentary taxation and other more legally dubious source of income. In 1521, for example, royal officials were so short of money that they had to resort to loans to pay the royal servants. The situation was not helped by extravagant expenditure. Henry VIII spent more than £100,000 on building at Hampton Court and Whitehall, while the royal household in the 1550s was costing £75,000 a year to run. Even Elizabeth, who avoided the costs of war until 1585, found it difficult to balance the royal books and died owing £350,000.

KEY TERMS

Subsidy
The subsidy, introduced in 1513, was a more flexible form of taxation than Fifteenths and Tenths because it was based on an assessment of each individual's wealth by local officials.

Fifteenths and Tenths
Introduced in 1334, Fifteenths and Tenths were the traditional medieval form of taxation, which raised a fixed sum of money.

Changes to royal finance under Henry VIII

Financial policy under Henry VIII was driven by the king's desire to go to war and the costs that this entailed. It has been estimated that the income from Crown lands in 1515 was £25,000 per annum, but Henry's war against France in 1512–14 cost about £1 million. The king's chief ministers, Wolsey and Cromwell, were responsible for funding the Henry's ambitions. Wolsey was prepared to try new methods to achieve this, such as the introduction of a **subsidy**, a new form of parliamentary taxation in 1513 that was based on an assessment of each individual's wealth. This raised £322,099 between 1513 and 1523. A further £117,936 was raised through the traditional form of taxation, the **Fifteenths and Tenths**. However, this was still not enough to fund Henry's wars and Wolsey was forced to resort to less legal methods, in particular the Amicable Grant (1525), which was in effect a forced loan from his taxpayers. As this loan was on top of the high levels of taxation already demanded and 'loans' extracted in 1522–23 that had raised £260,000 but had not been repaid, the result was rebellion. Wolsey was forced to take full responsibility and withdraw the grant, while Henry claimed no knowledge of his minister's plans.

In the 1530s, Cromwell tried to solve these problems by the acquisition of former monastery lands for the Crown. This temporarily raised Crown income to a peak of £126,296 in 1541, but this did not last, as by the end of Henry's reign two-thirds of these lands had been sold off. Cromwell also created four specialised **financial courts** to handle the increased flow of money to the Crown. These were the Courts of Augmentation, First Fruits and Tenths, Wards and Liveries, and General Surveyors. However, of these innovations, only the Court of Wards and Liveries lasted beyond the end of the Tudor period. The other three courts were all amalgamated into the **Exchequer** under Edward and Mary.

KEY TERMS

Financial courts
The Court of Wards and Liveries was set up to deal with the estates and heirs of tenants of the monarch. Under Elizabeth I it was run by William Cecil; the position allowed him to build up enormous personal wealth. The Courts of Augmentations, First Fruits and Tenths, and General Surveyors were set up to deal with the estates and incomes acquired by the Crown as a result of the break with Rome and the dissolution of the monasteries.

Exchequer
This was the institution responsible for collecting the Crown's income. It was medieval in origin and by the Tudor period it had become increasingly slow, but reforms under Edward and Mary meant that it became more efficient.

Financial developments under Edward, Mary and Elizabeth

Under the protectorate of Northumberland and then the rule of Mary, some attempts were made to put the Crown on a more sound financial footing. More Crown lands were sold off to reduce debt, and under Mary, Crown income from customs, which had remained the same since 1507, was reformed, increasing income from duties on imports and exports from £25,900 in 1550–51 to £82,797 in 1558–59. Elizabeth reaped the benefits of these reforms but did little to change the financial system. Her main contribution was to end the **debasement of the coinage**, which had begun under Mary. Elizabeth's natural caution also meant that she avoided costly warfare before 1585, but after this, war with Spain led to high levels of taxation. The situation was made worse because Elizabeth and her advisers did nothing to reform the system of taxation. The result was decreasing returns – a subsidy yielded £140,000 in 1558 but only £80,000 by 1603. This in turn led to Elizabeth's controversial exploitation of her royal prerogative, which soured the last years of her reign.

KEY TERM

Debasement of the coinage
From the 1540s, the Tudor regime began melting down the gold and silver coinage and mixing it with other metals. This was to create more ready money for Henry VIII to spend on warfare. This practice had serious effects for the economy, causing price rises (inflation), and it was reversed under Mary and Elizabeth.

Changes to the legal system by Wolsey and Cromwell

The Tudor legal system was comprised of a series of national and local courts of law where most cases were heard. However, there were also 'special' courts of equity, which were used to try cases where there was no legal precedent or where circumstances surrounding the case made it difficult to get a fair hearing in one of the main courts. Examples of these equitable courts included the court of Star Chamber, Chancery (run by the Lord Chancellor) and the king's Council. They had the advantage of being much more flexible than the common law courts. Under Wolsey, the role of Star Chamber expanded considerably. In comparison to the reign of Henry VII where on average 12 cases per year were heard in Star Chamber, under Wolsey this grew to 120 cases per year. Wolsey used Star Chamber to prosecute over-powerful members of the nobility and to pursue his campaign against illegal enclosure, but he faced considerable opposition from parliament and this use of Star Chamber did not outlast his fall. By Elizabeth's reign, Star Chamber was used as a convenient court for trying cases of riot and abuses of the judicial system.

Further changes to the legal system were carried out by Cromwell in the 1530s. In 1536, an Act of Parliament abolished **franchises**. Also in 1536, parliament passed an Act that brought Wales into line with the English judicial system. These permanent changes helped to enhance royal power because they meant that the monarchs now had more control over the legal system in the more remote areas of England and Wales, and there were fewer opportunities for the nobility to build up power bases where they could rival the Crown. Coupled with the changes to the Marcher Councils (see page 63) these developments meant that the local and legal power of the Tudor monarchy was more extensive by 1588.

KEY TERM

Franchise
Franchises were regions where the local lord had complete control over the law courts. These had developed in the Middle Ages and meant that there were areas of the country where the monarchy could not intervene in legal cases, giving the local lord enormous power. An example of a franchise was that controlled by the Bishop of Durham, who since 1066 had only implemented royal laws in the region under his control when he agreed with them.

Draft Material – Subject to Edexcel Review

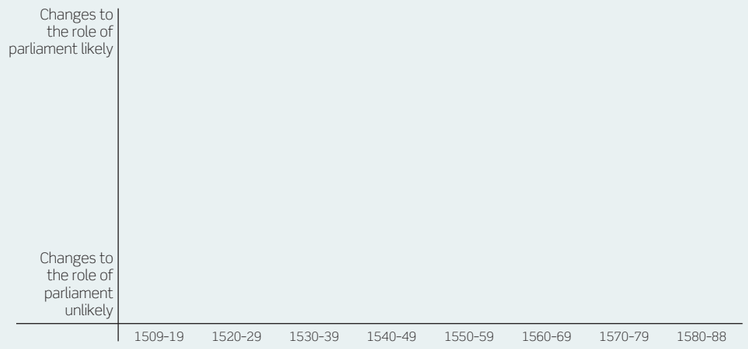
THINKING HISTORICALLY Change (5a)

How did the role of parliament change in the period 1509–88?

Changes leading to the increasing role of parliament

Strands	Explanation of how the strand links to the increasing role of parliament, 1509–88
Henry VIII's desire for a son and heir	Henry's marriage to Catherine of Aragon had produced no male heir. By the 1520s she was too old to have more children. The belief that a woman could not rule in her own right meant it was thought Mary Tudor would not be able to rule. Henry was desperate for a son due to the fear of challenges to the Tudor dynasty from rival claimants. Anne Boleyn refused to become Henry's mistress. She was young enough to have children and Henry was determined to marry her. The international situation between 1529 and 1532 meant that Henry was not able to persuade the pope to grant an annulment, so he needed another way to end his marriage to Catherine, which parliament provided.
The role of Thomas Cromwell as the king's minister, 1532–40	Cromwell recognised the role that parliament could play in securing the annulment. He manipulated anticlerical feeling in the Commons to put pressure on the papacy. He was the first to use parliament to define the powers of the monarchy (Act in Restraint of Appeals) and to legalise the royal supremacy (Act of Supremacy, 1534). This created a precedent for future monarchs because they would need to use parliament to make religious change. Cromwell helped to introduce the idea of the 'king-in-parliament', which enhanced parliament's role.
The use of parliament by Mary, Edward and Elizabeth to enforce religious change	Edward's advisers used parliament to create a Protestant Reformation in the Acts of Uniformity (1549, 1552). Mary reversed the break with Rome via parliament. Elizabeth created her religious settlement through parliament (Acts of Uniformity and Supremacy, 1559).
The increasing frequency with which parliament was called and the growing confidence of MPs	Parliament sat with increasing frequency from the 1530s and 1540s. MPs became more confident in challenging the monarch's prerogative and policies, e.g. opposition to the Exiles bill (1555) under Mary; attempts to introduce a more radical religious settlement under Elizabeth; parliament's determination to discuss matters of state such as the queen's marriage and succession (1563, 1566) and the fate of Mary, Queen of Scots (1572, 1586–87).

Make two copies of the graph below. On the first, plot the individual strands from the first column of the table against the *y*-axis. Use a different colour for each. You do not need to label it with the events in the second column. On the second graph plot a single line that is a combination of all four strands (for example, at a given point two of the four strands are plotted high up on the *y*-axis while two are plotted lower; the combined strand would have to be plotted somewhere in the middle to represent a summary of those four individual strands).



Answer the following questions:

1 How have the strands combined to make change less or more likely?

2 Why did the role of parliament change so much by Elizabeth's reign but not before?

AS Level Exam-Style Question Section B

William Cecil was Elizabeth's most powerful minister in the years 1559–88. To what extent did royal power grow in that period? (20 marks)

Tip

Make sure that you cover ways in which royal power increased and decreased.

ACTIVITIES SUMMARY

1 Draw a graph showing the changing power of the monarchy, 1509–88. Mark on it the key events that strengthened or weakened its power.

2 Create your own spider diagram called 'Why did the power of the monarchy change, 1509–88?' Use the following headings: role of individual monarchs; role of chief ministers; role of parliament. Use two colours to highlight changes that increased and decreased the power of the monarchy.

3 Use the information in this chapter to complete the following table.

	Situation in 1509	Situation in 1588
Role and powers of the monarch		
Role of parliament		
Financial position of the monarchy		
Role of the nobility		

4 Write a summary paragraph to answer the question: To what extent had the power of the Tudor monarchy grown by 1588?

WIDER READING

Castor, H.R. *She-Wolves*, Faber & Faber (2011)

Graves, M.A.R. *Tudor Parliaments, the Crown, Lords and Commons, 1485–1603*, Longman (1985)

Randell, K. and Turvey, R. *Henry VIII to Mary I: Government and Religion, 1509–1558*, Hodder Education (2008)

Starkey, D. 'Wolsey and Cromwell: continuity or contrast?', *History Today*, Volume 35, 1985

Warren, J. *Elizabeth I: Meeting the Challenge: England 1541–1603*, Hodder Education (2008)

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