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Tinder: Tudor Times

Esta actividad está dirigida a estudiantes de la asignatura *Historia y Civilización de las Islas Británicas*, en el Grado de Estudios Ingleses y el Doble Grado en Educación Primaria y Estudios Ingleses. El objetivo es analizar y comprender la vida de las seis esposas de Enrique VIII desde una perspectiva crítica y creativa. Para ello, los estudiantes trabajarán en pequeños grupos de 2 a 4 personas, leyendo los breves perfiles biográficos incluidos en el Apéndice 1 y utilizando esta información para completar un perfil de Tinder de la reina asignada. La actividad permite explorar la personalidad, los intereses y las estrategias de cada esposa, así como fomentar la reflexión sobre su autonomía y capacidad de decisión frente al rey.

Los perfiles deberán incluir los siguientes elementos: nombre y edad, breve descripción personal o biografía, intereses y aficiones, artistas musicales favoritos (Spotify), características o comportamientos que constituirían “banderas rojas” y lo que cada reina buscaría en un posible marido (o, en su caso, por qué podría rechazar a Enrique VIII). La actividad requiere discusión y colaboración dentro del grupo, combinando rigor histórico y creatividad, y pretende que los estudiantes valoren a las esposas de Enrique VIII no solo como figuras pasivas, sino como mujeres con agencia y poder para tomar decisiones sobre sus vidas.

A continuación se muestran las instrucciones en inglés para usar en clase, junto con los materiales necesarios para realizar la actividad.



♥️ Tinder: Tudor Times ♥️

Henry VIII might think he's the one doing the swiping... but not this time. It's the queens who get to decide if *they* want to waste their time on this smelly, ulcer-legged tyrant. Spoiler: probably not.

Your Mission:

1. **Get into small groups** (2–4 people).
2. **Read the short biographies** of Henry VIII's six wives (Appendix 1).
3. Each group chooses (or is assigned) **one wife**.
4. Fill in the **Tinder profile template** from HER perspective – this is her chance to stand out, speak up, and swipe *left* on Henry if she wants!

Details to include in the profile:

- ✨ Name + age
- 💬 Bio: a bold, witty self-introduction (she's not just "Henry's wife")
- 🎵 Top Spotify artists (what would she jam to?)
- ❤️ Interests & hobbies
- 🚩 Red flags / deal-breakers (hint: big ego, smelly ulcers, a thing for beheadings...)
- 🎯 What SHE is looking for (and yes, it might be "literally anyone but Henry")

Tips:

- Keep it sharp, sassy, and historical – the wives finally get to tell THEIR side of the story.
- Imagine each queen giving Henry the side-eye and setting her own standards.
- You're not just making profiles, you're rewriting history to show how powerful, witty, and independent these women actually were.

Goal: By the end, you'll have six feminist, hilarious, and historically savvy Tudor Tinder profiles. The question isn't "Who will Henry swipe right on?" – it's "Who would swipe left on HIM first?" 👑 🤔 🔥



Katherine of Aragon _____

 Lives in _____

 _____ kilometres away

Looking for:

About me:



My top Spotify artists



Anne Boleyn _____



Lives in _____



_____ kilometres away

Looking for:

About me:



My top Spotify artists



Jane Seymour _____



Lives in _____



_____ kilometres away

Looking for:

About me:



My top
Spotify artists



Anne of Cleves _____



Lives in _____



_____ kilometres away

Looking for:

About me:



My top Spotify artists



Catherine Howard _____



Lives in _____



_____ kilometres away

Looking for:

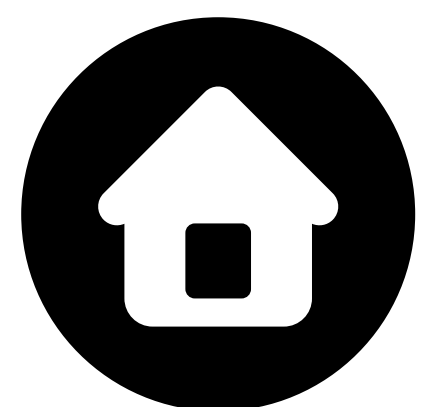
About me:



My top
Spotify artists



Katherine Parr _____



Lives in _____



_____ kilometres away

Looking for:

About me:



My top
Spotify artists

Appendix 1: Biographies of Henry VIII's six wives (Source: Adapted from *Historyextra.com*)

1. Katherine of Aragon

Catherine of Aragon was born in Spain in 1485, the youngest daughter of King Ferdinand II of Aragon and Queen Isabella of Castile, whose union had created a powerful kingdom on the Iberian Peninsula. In 1509, Catherine married King Henry VIII of England, with whom she had a daughter, the future Mary I of England. Although remembered primarily as Henry VIII's first wife, Catherine had already been married once before, albeit briefly, to his elder brother, Prince Arthur. Their marriage was arranged by Arthur's father, Henry VII, who recognized the immense influence wielded by Ferdinand and Isabella across Europe. Historian Sean Cunningham observes that the match was "manipulated for maximum public impact on an international scale." The wedding took place on 14 November 1501, after Catherine and Arthur had been formally betrothed for twelve years.

Arthur's early death left Catherine in a difficult position. Historian John Edwards notes: "Overnight, [Catherine] had been downgraded from next English queen to 'spare' Spanish princess, her political and monetary value greatly diminished. The English now began to refer to Catherine by a name that endured for centuries – 'Catherine of Aragon,' a minor princess from what was then viewed as a peripheral corner of the Iberian peninsula."

With Henry VII's death in 1509, plans for Catherine to marry the new king, Henry VIII, advanced quickly. To the 18-year-old Henry, she was a magnificent prize: a royal daughter of mighty Spain who came with a rich dowry and promised international prestige for the young Tudor dynasty. According to author Alison Weir, Henry adored her, declaring her "the most beautiful creature in the world." Their marriage lasted for 24 years, and much of it was described as loving and harmonious. Yet in May 1533 their marriage was annulled, by which time Henry had already married Anne Boleyn, who had once served as Catherine's lady-in-waiting.

Throughout their years together, Catherine endured multiple pregnancies. She gave birth to six children in total, including two sons, but only one survived infancy: her daughter Mary Tudor. Mary later became Queen of England and was remembered as "Bloody Mary" for her zealous persecution of English Protestants. Catherine's repeated miscarriages and stillbirths caused great personal sorrow. On New Year's Day 1511, she gave birth to a healthy son, Prince Henry, and the entire kingdom erupted in celebration. Bonfires burned in London, songs rang out, and wine flowed freely. Yet within weeks the infant died, and grief struck both king and queen. Henry VIII ordered an elaborate funeral, and young Prince Henry was buried with honor in Westminster Abbey, according to Alison Weir.

The absence of a surviving male heir remained the central problem of the marriage and fed Henry's growing frustration. His longing for a son became one of the main reasons he sought to dissolve his marriage to Catherine. To secure an annulment, Henry needed the pope's approval. He turned to the Bible, citing Leviticus: "If a man takes his brother's wife it is impurity; he has uncovered his brother's nakedness, they shall be childless." Catherine firmly denied the accusation. She insisted her marriage to Arthur had never been consummated and that she had remained a virgin until her wedding with Henry, declaring she was "as intact and uncorrupted as the day she left her mother's womb."

Pope Clement VII refused Henry's petition, creating a deadlock. Frustrated, Henry took a dramatic step: he severed ties with Rome. By 1534, the English Reformation was underway, and Henry proclaimed himself Supreme Head of the Church of England. By then, he had already married Anne Boleyn in order to secure legitimacy for her unborn child, confident he no longer needed papal approval.

2. Anne Boleyn

Henry had another motive for ending his marriage to Catherine of Aragon: he had fallen deeply in love. The woman who won his affection was the clever and ambitious Anne Boleyn, who had come back to England in 1522 after almost seven years at the French court. According to Tudor ideals, fair hair and pale features were most admired, and Anne, with her dark eyes and brunette hair, was not considered a classic beauty. Yet her wit, elegance, and French sophistication distinguished her from the other court ladies and ultimately enchanted Henry. For four years Anne served at court before any suggestion of romance arose, but by 1526 the king was openly pursuing her.

In these early years, Henry displayed an unexpectedly tender side, one rarely linked to the suspicious, harsh ruler he would later become. Seventeen surviving love letters from Henry to Anne reveal his growing passion, his irritation at her refusal to yield as his mistress, and his urgent desire to end his marriage to Catherine. By late 1532 Anne finally accepted Henry's advances, and by December she was carrying his child. The king was elated, but securing an annulment from Catherine, who steadfastly refused to relinquish either marriage or crown, became his obsession.

The unborn child needed to be legitimate, so on 25 January 1533 Henry and Anne wed in secret. With the Pope still resisting Henry's petition, the king chose to cast aside papal authority entirely. On 23 May, Archbishop Thomas Cranmer pronounced Henry's marriage to Catherine invalid, and only days later Anne was crowned in a splendid ceremony on 1 June. After seven long years of waiting, Anne now had both the king and the crown.

Henry, who had altered the religious and political order of England for her sake, was certain Anne's pregnancy would produce a boy. The arrival of a daughter, Elizabeth, on 7 September 1533, was a harsh disappointment and likely a source of deep anxiety for Anne, who knew Catherine had been set aside for failing to give Henry a son. Their marriage was marked by fiery clashes and passionate reconciliations, described by one historian as "a tumultuous relationship of sunshine and storms."

Though Anne's sister, Mary Boleyn, is well known as one of Henry's mistresses, gossip claimed the king had also slept with their mother, Elizabeth Howard. In 1533 Elizabeth Amadas, the wife of a goldsmith, accused Thomas Boleyn of acting as "bawd both to his wife and his two daughters," while Sir George Throckmorton bluntly told Henry that "it is thought you have meddled both with the mother and the sister."

Anne experienced several failed pregnancies. She miscarried at least twice, the last time in January 1536, when she lost a son. Despite this, many believe Henry still remained attached to her. Yet political scheming and court whispers eroded his loyalty. Anne herself noticed Henry's growing attraction to her maid, Jane Seymour, in early 1536. As he once had with Anne, Henry presented Jane with his miniature portrait, which she wore around her neck. When Anne discovered it, she snatched it off with such force that she injured her hand. Jane Dormer, later a companion of Princess Mary, reported that heated quarrels, even physical scuffles, took place between Anne and Jane.

Anne's downfall was largely the product of dangerous intrigue and deliberate slander meant to strip her of power. Rumors of adultery spread after one of her ladies-in-waiting compared her own misconduct to that of the queen, claiming hers was minor in comparison. Henry, who demanded purity above all in his wives, commanded his minister, Thomas Cromwell, to investigate, warning him that "if it turns out that your report, which I do not wish to believe, is untrue, you will receive pain of death in place of [the accused]." By May 1536 Cromwell had produced charges of adultery, incest, and plotting against the king's life.

On 19 May 1536, Anne Boleyn was executed by a French swordsman. Her death marked not only the violent end of a queen but also a defining moment in Henry VIII's reign, shaping the course of Tudor history.

3. Jane Seymour

As Anne Boleyn met her brutal fate, Henry VIII, then 45 years old and still desperate for a surviving male heir, had already chosen his next bride – Jane Seymour, one of Anne’s own ladies-in-waiting. Quiet, obedient, and mild in character, the 27-year-old Jane was the complete opposite of Anne in both appearance and temperament. Within a single day of Anne’s execution, Henry and Jane were formally betrothed.

Historians have long debated the extent of Jane’s sway over the king. Though she lacked Anne’s sharp intellect and polished sophistication, Jane possessed a calm persistence and knew how to temper Henry’s explosive rages. When she became pregnant in early 1537, the king was devoted to her comfort, even importing delicacies such as quail eggs from France to satisfy her cravings. Henry showered her with care, calling her his “one true wife,” and his patience was rewarded with the arrival of a son, Edward, in October 1537. Yet joy turned to sorrow when, only 12 days later, Jane died of complications after childbirth.

Jane Seymour is often remembered as Henry’s dearest love, the woman who finally bore him the long-sought heir. Tudor historian Tracy Borman, however, offers a different view. Speaking to *BBC History Revealed*, she argued that Henry regarded Jane less as a passion and more as a safe choice:

“I think Jane’s role has been overstated. She was the opposite of fiery Anne Boleyn, and that’s exactly what Henry craved. But only weeks into their marriage he was already saying that there were prettier women at court he might have chosen. It was simply her giving him a son that raised her status above the other wives.”

Our picture of Jane comes from a range of sources, including Henry VIII’s letters and papers, reports from ambassadors, and of course her own actions. From these, we can see she had a sense of principle and was willing to show courage in defending what she valued. Twice, in fact, she openly confronted the king.

Her first intervention concerned Henry’s eldest daughter, Mary. Declared illegitimate after her parents’ marriage was dissolved, Mary had sided with her mother, Catherine of Aragon, and resisted Henry’s reforms. Banished from court, she lived in disgrace until Jane, a devout Catholic who had once served Catherine, persuaded Henry to restore Mary to his affection. Contemporary accounts make it clear Jane’s influence was key in this reconciliation.

Her second act of defiance came during the suppression of England’s monasteries. Jane, who was distressed at the closures, pleaded with Henry to halt the policy. Falling on her knees before him, she begged for clemency. This time, however, her boldness was harshly rejected. Henry reminded her that his previous queen had died for meddling in politics, and Jane wisely never interfered again.

These incidents reveal a woman of conviction and moral strength. She also played a role in the faction at court that worked against Anne Boleyn. As a staunch supporter of Catherine of Aragon, Jane likely never recognized Anne’s marriage to Henry as valid and, according to sources, she allowed criticism of Anne to reach the king’s ears. This does not necessarily mean she plotted Anne’s downfall directly; rather, she may have hoped Henry would annul the marriage. The queen’s shocking execution probably came as a surprise to her.

Had Jane survived longer, or had her son Edward lived into adulthood, her legacy might have been far grander. She could perhaps have been celebrated as the matriarch of the Tudor dynasty. Instead, she is too often reduced to caricature: a meek girl, a scheming opportunist, or the woman who replaced Anne. In truth, Jane was a more complex and proactive figure, deserving recognition as more than the submissive consort she is often made out to be.

4. Anne of Cleves

Anne of Cleves is sadly remembered in popular history as Henry VIII's "ugly wife." According to legend, the king was so appalled when he first laid eyes on her that he instantly ordered his lawyers to free him from the marriage. The tale continues that his unfortunate fourth queen slipped quietly into obscurity, shamed by her supposed looks, while Henry happily married the far more attractive Catherine Howard.

In truth, Anne – born five centuries ago – was Henry's consort for only six months, the briefest tenure of all his six wives. For this reason, she has often been dismissed as a mere footnote in the story of England's most famously wedded monarch. Yet the reality of her life could not be more different from the humiliating fiction. Though Henry may not have found her appealing, Anne's response to her situation shows she was no powerless victim. Indeed, she has a strong claim to being the most successful of all Henry's queens.

Anne was the daughter of Johann III, Duke of Juliers-Cleves, and the sister of his successor Wilhelm. Her name was first suggested as a possible match for Henry late in 1537, shortly after the death of Jane Seymour, the king's beloved third wife. At that time, Anne was 22 and had already been used as a diplomatic bargaining chip. A decade earlier, in 1527, she had been betrothed to François, heir to the duchy of Lorraine, but the engagement had been broken off, leaving her free once more.

The idea of pairing Anne with Henry originated with John Hutton, ambassador to Mary of Hungary, who admitted he had heard little praise of Anne's looks. Unsurprisingly, Henry did not pursue the matter further then. But by early 1539, with England in need of strong alliances, the scheme was revived.

That March, Henry authorized negotiations. Thomas Cromwell eagerly reported glowing descriptions of Anne's beauty, insisting: "Every man praiseth the beauty of the same lady as well for the face as for the whole body... she excelleth as far the duchess [of Milan] as the golden sun excelleth the silver moon." Still cautious, Henry dispatched Hans Holbein, the celebrated portraitist, to Cleves to capture Anne's likeness. The resulting image showed a demure young woman with pale hair, soft features, delicate lips and chin, and a modest expression. Henry was pleased, and the marriage treaty was signed on 4 October 1539. By the year's end, Anne set out for her new life in England.

On 31 December, she reached Rochester Castle in Kent amid stormy weather. The following day Henry, adopting a chivalric disguise, hurried to greet her in secret. What he saw horrified him. "I like her not! I like her not!" he exclaimed to Cromwell afterward. In person, Anne did not resemble the dainty figure of Holbein's portrait. Unlike Henry's earlier wives, she was tall, broad-shouldered, and sturdily built. Her prominent nose, cleverly minimized by Holbein's angle, was striking in real life, and her skin bore marks left by smallpox.

To Anne's credit, no serious criticisms of her appearance existed before Henry voiced his own. The infamous label "Flanders Mare" was not coined until more than a century later, by Bishop Gilbert Burnet. Contemporary reports were generally positive, and even Henry conceded that Anne was "well and semelye [seemly]." Nonetheless, the king's disgust ensured that she would forever be remembered as his unattractive bride.

Anne, however, chose pragmatism over defiance. The marriage was annulled on 9 July 1540, with parliament confirming the decision three days later. She wrote humbly to the king, referring to "your majesty's clean and pure living with me," and declared herself his "most humble servant."

5. Catherine Howard

By the time he was almost 50, Henry had once again fallen under the spell of love, this time with another young attendant at court: 19-year-old Catherine Howard. To the ageing and infirm king, Catherine seemed the perfect consort – obedient, virtuous, and capable of bearing children. Henry was captivated; she revived his spirits, making him feel youthful despite the constant torment of his diseased legs. “The King is so enamoured of her that he cannot treat her with enough affection, and dotes on her more than on the others,” reported the French ambassador. How Catherine felt about marrying a man old enough to be her grandfather remains unclear, but sources suggest she accepted her fate politely, eager to advance her ambitious kin.

Catherine first encountered Henry during his short-lived marriage to Anne of Cleves. The attractive young Catherine served as maid of honour to Anne, Henry’s fourth wife. That marriage lasted a mere six months – the briefest reign of any of his queens – before collapsing, after which Henry was determined to select his next bride himself. Historian Josephine Wilkinson notes: “Henry became infatuated with [Anne’s] new attendant. In only weeks – a dazzling leap from obscurity to the throne – Catherine Howard had become his fifth consort.”

At the time of their union, Henry was approaching fifty, at least three decades older than his new bride, and his health was declining. “Crippled by an old jousting injury that had ulcerated, Henry’s waistline had expanded alarmingly,” says historian Tracy Borman. “As king he had once boasted a trim 32-inch waist; by the time he wed Anne of Cleves it had swollen to about 52 inches.” Yet Wilkinson adds that Catherine “restored in him the youth and energy he believed gone forever. After a long honeymoon they settled into married life, and Catherine appeared every inch the suitable queen.”

Catherine’s gravest blunder, many believe, was to continue her romance with Thomas Culpeper after her marriage to Henry VIII. It is thought her lady-in-waiting, Jane Boleyn, Lady Rochford – infamous for testifying against her own husband, George Boleyn, and her sister-in-law, Anne Boleyn – assisted Catherine in arranging clandestine meetings with Culpeper while Henry was absent from court.

Yet it was her earlier relationships that ultimately doomed her. During the summer of 1541, when the royal household travelled north on progress, “whispers of Catherine’s former misconduct dogged her, and she was compelled to grant favours and posts to keep people quiet,” writes Philippa Gregory.

These rumours eventually reached Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury and Henry’s close ally. Cranmer learned that Catherine’s former music tutor, Henry Mannock, had boasted of knowing her “privates from all others by a secret mark,” while another suitor, Francis Dereham, claimed to have lain with her “a hundred nights in the year, in his doublet and hose, abed between the sheets.”

Her connection to Dereham was especially damaging. Catherine had once addressed him as her ‘husband’ and been sexually involved with him, which, under canon law, could constitute a valid marriage, thereby invalidating her union with the king. Cranmer compiled these damaging claims into a letter for Henry, reportedly leaving it in the royal pew at the Chapel so the king would discover it himself after the progress.

A swift investigation followed. Dereham was arrested and put to the rack, where he confessed and implicated Culpeper, who too was detained and tortured, according to Gregory. Mannock, however, escaped punishment.

Catherine relished the splendour of court, and Henry, infatuated, lavished her with jewels and gifts. But barely 14 months after their wedding, the shattered monarch was confronted with proof of her betrayal. On 13 February 1542, the young queen he had once called his “rose without a thorn” was executed.

6. Katherine Parr

Among the many wives of Henry VIII, perhaps the most overlooked and often misrepresented is Katherine Parr. Her tale – when it appears at all – is typically presented without the allure of Anne Boleyn or Catherine Howard, the tragic resilience of Catherine of Aragon, or the political manoeuvring tied to Jane Seymour and Anne of Cleves. The sixth queen is remembered chiefly for having “survived.” She is usually cast as the twice-widowed, scholarly matron who dutifully and rather tediously nursed an ageing, bad-tempered monarch during his final painful years, before vanishing into the margins of history. Yet the truth is far richer. In fact, Katherine was arguably the most intelligent, pious, and – surprisingly – passionate of Henry’s consorts.

The first thing to stress is that Katherine Parr, also known as Lady Latimer, was personally selected by the king himself. Henry’s earlier brides had been pushed upon him by factions of courtiers, diplomats, and powerful families – the Boleyns, the Howards, the Seymours, or even Cromwell – each hoping to advance their own interests. In Katherine’s case, however, there is no sign that any clique promoted her marriage. In fact, most elite observers assumed Henry would never gamble on a sixth wife after so much disappointment.

Another issue was the question of sexual compatibility. Everyone at court remembered the humiliation of the fourth marriage, when Anne of Cleves failed to satisfy the king in the bedchamber, earning mocking nicknames and crude jokes. The story of the “Flanders mare” became the stuff of gossip.

By contrast, the fifth union raised a different problem. Henry had felt reinvigorated during his marriage to the teenage Catherine Howard, whom he wed in 1540. For Katherine Parr, accepting Henry’s hand meant living up to the expectations of an overweight, restless man often kept awake at night by excruciating pain. Fortunately, she had gained useful experience from her two earlier marriages, both with vigorous husbands. Surviving records, though scarce, hint that Katherine was adept at creating an inviting atmosphere through elegant dress, scented baths, perfumes, luxurious furnishings, food, wine, and witty conversation – all carefully designed to please her husband.

Katherine’s success as queen lay in her unique combination of intellect and passion. She worked tirelessly to ensure harmony with Henry, though of course she had little choice: refusing him could have endangered her and her family, while agreeing meant navigating all the hazards that had destroyed his previous wives. Her task was to tread cautiously, enjoying the privileges of queenship without risking her position. That she was far from a passive figure is clear because, unlike any of Henry’s other wives, Katherine left behind letters and intimate writings that give a direct window into her inner thoughts and religious beliefs.

With Henry’s death, Katherine was finally free to wed the man she truly loved, Thomas Seymour, though the union brought her little joy. Their secret marriage was highly controversial and sparked bitter disputes within the Seymour clan, whose members jostled for influence. Thomas, excluded from the regency council, attempted to court favour with the boy king and undermine the authority of his brother Edward, the Lord Protector and Duke of Somerset. Katherine’s presence inflamed tensions further, especially with Edward’s wife, who viewed her as a rival.

On 30 August 1548, Katherine gave birth to a daughter, Mary, but soon contracted puerperal fever. Within a week she was dead. In her final fevered words, she accused her husband of poisoning her. Perhaps it was the illness speaking, yet Thomas’s reckless ambition makes the suspicion plausible, especially given rumours that he still hoped to rekindle his bond with the young princess Elizabeth.