

# Was Henry VIII a happy monarch?

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**AGE RANGE:** Secondary



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**KEY CONCEPT:**

Happiness

**KEY WORDS:**

Happiness, contentment, pleasure, gladness, cheerfulness, joy, glee, bliss, delight, guilt, love, politics, religion, Reformation, Renaissance, legitimacy, honesty, justification, ambiguity, empathy, spirituality, manipulation, power, conscience, Catholicism, Protestantism, succession, gender equality and chronology.

**SUBJECT AREA RELEVANCE:**

History

**USEFUL PRIOR LEARNING:**

It would be of great advantage if your students had some prior knowledge of Henry VIII and the historical context surrounding his reign.

**LEARNING INTENTION:**

To be able to judge and interpret the emotions of Henry VIII.

**SUCCESS CRITERIA:**

We can

- Discuss and explore the concept of happiness.
- Analyse and interpret the actions, events and emotions surrounding Henry VIII.
- Consider and evaluate the impact of happiness and sadness upon Henry VIII.
- Decide if Henry VIII was a happy monarch by analysing the pattern of information presented by the graph.

**STRATEGY USED:**

Fortune Line

## 1. Identify Important Concepts:

Some of the key areas to investigate within and around the concept of 'happiness' are the following:

- The definition of happiness
- The subjective nature of happiness
- Sadness
- Self-awareness
- Happiness over time
- Happiness across cultures
- Age and maturity
- Line of succession
- Gender equality
- Religion
- Egotism
- Greed
- Wealth

## 2. Challenge Students' Understanding Of The Concept:

**Here are some examples of cognitive conflict that we expect your students to experience:**

| Opinion                                       | Conflicting opinion                                  |
|---|--|
| You can tell when someone is happy.           | People often pretend to be happy when they are not.  |
| Happiness is a choice.                        | Happiness is a spontaneous response.                 |
| Happiness comes from within.                  | External factors influence your happiness.           |
| The pursuit of happiness is a good thing.     | Continually pursuing happiness can make you unhappy. |
| You are either a happy person or you are not. | Happiness is a temporary state.                      |
| Good people are happy people.                 | Happy people are not always good people.             |

## Questions for challenge

- What is happiness?
- How do you know if you are happy?
- What makes us happy?
- Is it possible to be happy and sad at the same time?
- When is happiness a bad emotion?
- Who decides what happiness is?
- What is the difference between happiness and contentment?
- How could happiness be measured?
- How can people assess their own happiness?
- How can you tell that a person is happy?
- Can you always tell if a person is happy?
- What is the difference between shared and personal happiness?
- Is happiness always temporary?
- What conditions favour happiness?
- How would you define true happiness?
- Is it possible to experience happiness if you never experience sadness?
- How much influence can you have over your own happiness and sadness?
- Can we influence other people's happiness and sadness?
- What would a recipe for happiness contain?
- What is the cost of happiness?
- Does everyone want to be happy?
- Is the pursuit of happiness a worthwhile endeavour?
- Is it ever pointless to pursue happiness?
- To what extent are we responsible for our emotions?
- Should happiness be promoted as a good thing?
- What if our happiness makes another person sad?
- Is happiness contagious?
- Which emotion is stronger, happiness or sadness?
- Is there any evidence that we are born happy?
- What could make happiness a habit?
- Are happy people always more successful?
- Do you make better decisions when you are happy?
- Can you make yourself happy?
- Do people or possessions make you happy?
- Can happiness last forever?
- Can power make you happy?
- What reasons would a powerful ruler have for being or not being happy?

### 3. Construct Understanding:

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#### Activity 1: Fortune Line



#### Was Henry VIII a happy monarch?

Students are inquiring into the fortunes of Henry VIII (1491-1547). Through exploring the concept of happiness, students are beginning to examine the impact this emotion might have had upon the monarch. By plotting key events and actions on a graph, students are challenged to make logical inferences from the text and to reach substantiated conclusions.

Divide the students into pairs or small groups for this task. Present them with the **Activity 1 resource cards**. Each card displays an event, action and emotion relating to Henry VIII's life. Also present them with a blank Fortune Line. The x axis of the Fortune Line relates to time. The y axis relates to emotions. The students' task is to identify where on the Fortune Line each card should be placed – if they can place them on the graph at all. A blank Fortune Line can be found at the end of the lesson for copying purposes. For each card placed, students must provide critical reasoning for their decisions. It is often useful to provide post-it notes for students to annotate their ideas and thinking.

Once all the cards have been plotted on the graph and each card has been analysed, ask your students to discuss the pattern that has emerged and what this tells us about how happy Henry VIII was. Invite groups to share their analysis with the whole class. Encourage each group to provide critical and constructive feedback.

#### Questions to promote further dialogue

- Was Henry VIII spoilt? Was does spoilt mean?
- Did Henry like himself?
- Is it okay to like yourself?
- Catherine of Aragon was a loyal and much-loved Queen of England. Do you think Henry loved her?
- Who do you think Henry loved?
- Is it important for a king and queen to love each other?
- Why did Henry marry Anne Boleyn?

- Why did Henry betray Anne and send her to the Tower of London?
- What qualities do you think Henry most valued in others?
- Why was Henry not content with his two healthy daughters?
- Was Henry wrong to desire a son?
- Was Henry wrong to pursue his dream of securing the Tudor dynasty?
- Is there a difference between contentment and happiness?
- Were Henry's queens happy?
- Without the reformation would Catherine of Aragon have remained Queen of England and Anne Boleyn kept her head?
- If Catherine of Aragon had had a healthy boy would England have remained with Rome?
- What were the reasons for Henry making himself head of the Church of England?
- Henry was regarded as intelligent and cultured. Do you think this was the case? How do you judge a person as intelligent?
- Was there benefit for Henry in the dissolution of the monasteries?
- Was Henry responsible for the executions of Anne Boleyn and her cousin Katherine Howard?
- Is it important that Henry never fully converted to Protestantism?
- Consider the idea of 'to what extent' Henry VIII was happy.
- Is there ever a simple yes or no answer in history?
- Even if you were present at the event, would you know the truth about that event?

### **Adaptation**

Reduce and personalise the cards for the Fortune Line activity.

Take away the chronological dimension by getting students to use the cards with an 'agree' and 'disagree' chart, e.g., evidence that proves Henry was happy vs. evidence that proves Henry was not happy.

Encourage students to group the resource cards into categories. This could be around central themes such as the Reformation or line of succession, the six wives, irrelevant information, etc. Then, only plot one of the category sets.

Ask your students to analyse a shorter period of Henry VIII's reign.

### **Extension**

Ask your students to find their own evidence for the Fortune Line activity or provide a smaller selection of resource cards.

Add resource cards that reflect the perspective of others from the period, for example, Henry's wives, Thomas More and so on.

Use several written primary sources such as comments from Henry regarding his wives, the testimonies of those on trial (Anne Boleyn, Katherine Howard, Thomas More etc.), or include more complex concepts such as reformation throughout Europe or Henry VIII's foreign policy.

Encourage your students to focus on the ambiguous pieces of information and ask them to put together a case in support of the proposition that we can never really know the happiness of a person, particularly when related to a historical character.

Having explored this concept, you could ask your students to plan and write an essay in response to the key question.

## 4. Consider The Learning Journey:

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At the end of the activity it is usual to encourage your students to review their learning journey and the thinking process they have engaged in throughout the session.

This can include reflection on the thinking that has taken place to this point and a summary and conclusion of the new understanding reached.

Explicit reference to Learning Intentions and Success Criteria is a good starting point for this reflection, but it is also helpful to return to and re-examine some key questions:

- What is happiness?
- Do you have a deeper or better understanding of the concept of happiness?
- Which parts of the lesson helped you to decide and/or change your knowledge and understanding of happiness?
- What questions do you still have?
- What would you like to investigate further?
- What reasons would a powerful ruler have for being or not being happy?
- Have you been able to apply your deeper understanding of the concept of happiness to be able to judge and interpret the emotions of Henry VIII?
- Was Henry VIII a happy monarch?

To encourage the students to review their learning journey and their thinking progress, students provide a case and reasoning for the key question. They could start with:

### **Henry VIII was a happy/unhappy monarch because ...**

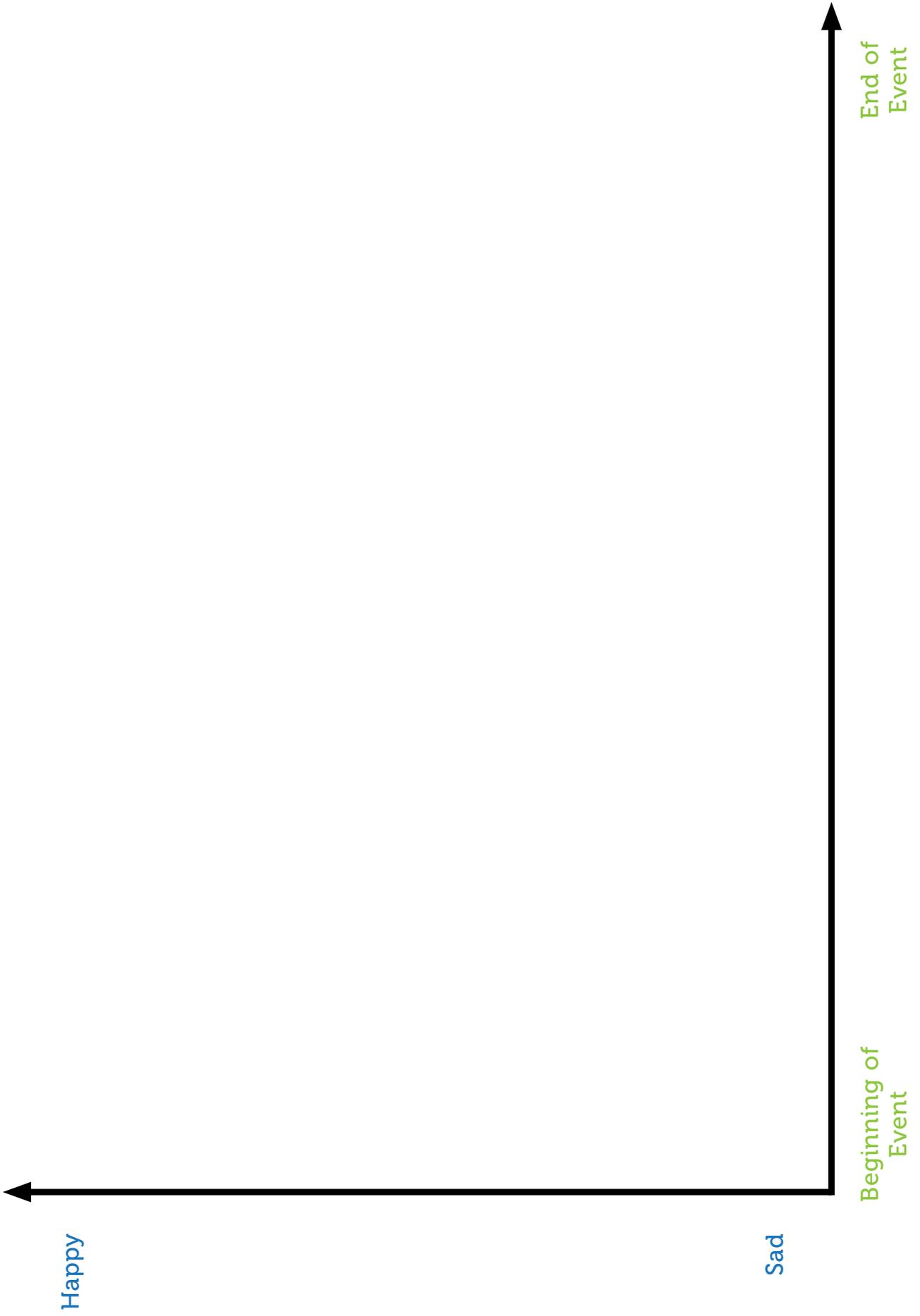
Each student or group presents an argument to the rest of the class on their choice. They could be asked to support their argument with 3 key reasons that can be supported by evidence. The other groups could have opportunities to question the reasoning given.

### **Ideas for transfer**

Ask your students to research other monarchs from the past or present and challenge them to create a Fortune Line to analyse and interpret their happiness over time.

Challenge your students to research the science of happiness. They could research and track their own happiness over a week and conduct a survey in their own educational setting.

Ask students to change the key question. Instead of questioning whether Henry was a happy king they could ask whether he was successful or whether he can be regarded England's most misunderstood king.



28th June 1491 - Henry VIII is born.

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14th November 1501 - Henry's big brother Prince Arthur marries a Spanish princess known as Catherine of Aragon.

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2nd April 1502 - Prince Arthur dies age 15.

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Papal dispensation is given so that Henry VIII can marry his late brother's wife Catherine of Aragon. The marriage takes place on 11th June 1509.

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April 21st 1509 - Henry VII dies. Henry VIII becomes King of England age 17.

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18th February 1516 - Catherine of Aragon gives birth to a daughter named Mary.

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4th March 1526 - Mary Boleyn gives birth to a son named Henry. Mary was Henry VIII's mistress and her son was widely believed to be the King's child and longed-for son.

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Henry falls madly in love with Anne Boleyn. Many believed that he was obsessed with the young woman and was desperate to make her his wife.

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Henry was desperate for a legitimate male heir to continue the Tudor line of succession. He grew tired of Catherine of Aragon and her inability to give him a son. She did give birth to three sons but not one survived.

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Henry believed his marriage to Catherine was wrong and he should never have been made to marry his late brother's wife. He believed God was unhappy with him. Henry annuls his marriage to Catherine in 1527.

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In 1529 Henry dismisses his chief advisor Chancellor Wolsey because he fails to convince the Pope to grant his divorce from Catherine of Aragon.

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1534 - Henry declares himself Head of the Church of England. This was called the Act of Supremacy.

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3rd January 1533 - Henry marries Anne Boleyn.

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25th January 1533 - Henry is excommunicated by Pope Clement VII.

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31st May 1533 - Anne Boleyn is crowned Queen.

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7th September 1533 - Anne Boleyn gives birth to a daughter named Elizabeth.

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Divorce was against the rules of the Catholic Church. Henry had broken the rules.

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Henry loved playing tennis. He was an accomplished archer. He adored horse riding and jousting.

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1535 - Bishop John Fisher and Chancellor Thomas More are executed for refusing to acknowledge Henry as Head of the English Church.

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7th January 1536 - Catherine of Aragon dies.

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15th May 1536 - Anne Boleyn is tried for treason, adultery and incest at the Tower of London.

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19th May 1536 - Anne Boleyn is executed.

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30th May 1536 - Henry VIII marries Jane Seymour.

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12th October 1537 - Jane Seymour gives birth to a prince called Edward. He is Henry VIII's only legitimate male heir.

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24th October 1537 - Jane Seymour dies following complications of childbirth.

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6th January 1540 - Henry marries Anne of Cleves.

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9th July 1540 - Henry annuls his marriage to Anne of Cleves. He did not find her attractive and said she had a foul odour.

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28th July 1540 - Thomas Cromwell is executed for treason and heresy. Henry blamed him for his marriage to Anne of Cleves. Cromwell was Henry's chief adviser.

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July 28th 1540 - Henry VIII marries Katherine Howard. Katherine was 19 and Henry was 49 years old. Henry adored Katherine and called her his 'rose without thorns'.

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13th February 1542 - Katherine Howard is executed on the grounds of adultery.

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12th July 1543 - Henry VIII marries Catherine Parr.

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28th January - King Henry VIII dies age 57.

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1532 - Hans Holbein, a German artist, is appointed the King's painter. His paintings of the Tudor period have become iconic.

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A widely believed (but completely unproven) legend is that King Henry VIII composed the music 'Green sleeves' for his lover and future queen consort Anne Boleyn.

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Many people said Anne Boleyn was a witch and had an extra finger.

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Henry gave permission for the Bible to be translated into English in 1537. Despite a break with Rome, England did not fully embrace Protestantism until Edward VI ascended to the throne.

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1536 - the "Dissolution of the Monasteries" began. The wealth and riches of the Catholic Church in England were passed directly to the Crown.

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The Third Succession Act of Henry VIII's reign was passed in July 1543, and returned both Mary and Elizabeth to the line of the succession behind their half-brother Edward.

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