

# Title: How far down the 'road to parliamentary democracy' did Henry VIII take England?

Date: Tuesday, 26 January 2021





There are many different interpretations of King Henry VIII.

*No English king has been more praised and more hated than Henry VIII. Some historians regard him as a good king, ready to help the poor and be friendly with men of all kinds. Other historians see Henry as a brutal man, unfit to mix with decent people, who should have been shut up as mad long before he died.*

**Ladybird History of the Kings and Queens of England (1972)**

In your own words, explain what the Ladybird Book says about Henry VIII.

What do you know already that might support the two different arguments mentioned here?

How can we, as historians, work out which of these arguments is correct?

In 1902, A.F. Pollard wrote that Henry VIII was *“The most remarkable man that ever sat on the English throne...a king and statesman who, whatever his personal failings, led England down the road to parliamentary democracy.”*



Albert Frederick Pollard was a British historian who specialised in the Tudor Period. He studied Henry VIII and other Tudor monarchs for many years!

In today's lesson we are going to evaluate Pollard's **interpretation** of Henry VIII and, as historians, create our own!

# How far do historians agree that Henry VIII 'led England down the road to Parliamentary Democracy'?

## Interpretation A:

Who wrote this interpretation:

In your own words, what is this historians interpretation of Henry VIII's reign?

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How far does this historian support Pollard's interpretation? (Make sure you use a scale of support phrase!)

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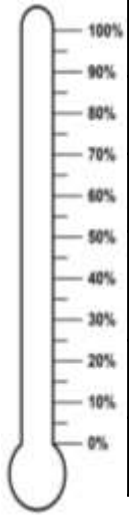
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Scale of support.
Strongly corroborates
Partially corroborates
Neither corroborates nor contradicts
Partially contradicts
Strongly contradicts

## Interpretation B:

Who wrote this interpretation:

In your own words, what is this historians interpretation of Henry VIII's reign?

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How far does this historian support Pollard's interpretation? (Make sure you use a scale of support phrase!)

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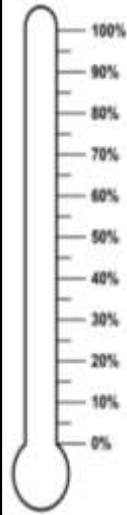
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Scale of support.
Strongly corroborates
Partially corroborates
Neither corroborates nor contradicts
Partially contradicts
Strongly contradicts

## Interpretation C:

Who wrote this interpretation:

In your own words, what is this historians interpretation of Henry VIII's reign?

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How far does this historian support Pollard's interpretation? (Make sure you use a scale of support phrase!)

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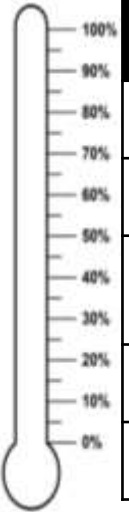
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Scale of support.
Strongly corroborates
Partially corroborates
Neither corroborates nor contradicts
Partially contradicts
Strongly contradicts

## Interpretation D:

Who wrote this interpretation:

In your own words, what is this historians interpretation of Henry VIII's reign?

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How far does this historian support Pollard's interpretation? (Make sure you use a scale of support phrase!)

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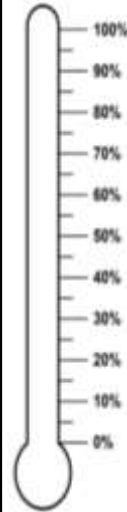
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Scale of support.
Strongly corroborates
Partially corroborates
Neither corroborates nor contradicts
Partially contradicts
Strongly contradicts

From your study of a variety of different Tudor historians, what is **your** interpretation of Henry VIII?

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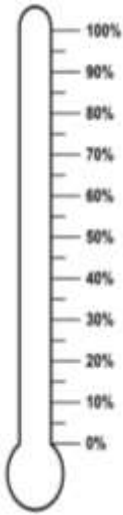
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# How far do historians agree that Henry VIII 'led England down the road to Parliamentary Democracy'?

### Interpretation A:

Who wrote this interpretation:

How far does this historian support Pollard's interpretation?  
(Make sure you use a scale of support phrase and at least one quote from the interpretation.)



Scale of support.
Strongly corroborates
Partially corroborates
Neither corroborates nor contradicts
Partially contradicts
Strongly contradicts

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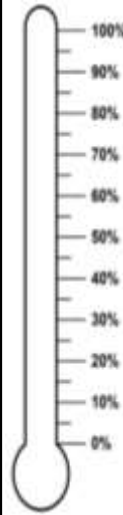
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### Interpretation B:

Who wrote this interpretation:

How far does this historian support Pollard's interpretation?  
(Make sure you use a scale of support phrase and at least one quote from the interpretation.)



Scale of support.
Strongly corroborates
Partially corroborates
Neither corroborates nor contradicts
Partially contradicts
Strongly contradicts

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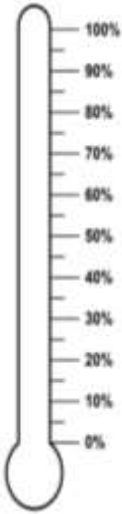
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### Interpretation C:

Who wrote this interpretation:

How far does this historian support Pollard's interpretation?  
(Make sure you use a scale of support phrase and at least one quote from the interpretation.)



Scale of support.
Strongly corroborates
Partially corroborates
Neither corroborates nor contradicts
Partially contradicts
Strongly contradicts

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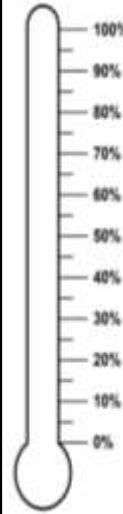
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### Interpretation D:

Who wrote this interpretation:

How far does this historian support Pollard's interpretation?  
(Make sure you use a scale of support phrase and at least one quote from the interpretation.)



Scale of support.
Strongly corroborates
Partially corroborates
Neither corroborates nor contradicts
Partially contradicts
Strongly contradicts

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From your study of a variety of different Tudor historians, what is **your** interpretation of Henry VIII?

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In 1902, A.F. Pollard wrote that Henry VIII was *“The most remarkable man that ever sat on the English throne...a king and statesman who, whatever his personal failings, led England down the road to parliamentary democracy.”*



From your work today, what evidence and interpretations have you seen that would **corroborate** Pollard's claim?

From your work today, what evidence and interpretations have you seen that would **contradict** Pollard's claim?

What is your own **interpretation** of Henry VIII?  
How would you describe his reign?

# How far down the 'road to parliamentary democracy' did Henry VIII take England?

**Task 1:** Answer today's question on your post-it note in a full sentence using your knowledge of Henry VIII.

**Task 2:** Place your post-it on the road according to where you think Henry had taken England by the end of his reign.

**Challenge:** Add in the work of a historian to support your point – include a quotation from your work from earlier in the lesson.



Absolute  
Monarchy

Parliamentary  
Democracy

# Interpretations of King Henry VIII written by Tudor Historians.



Written by Jasmine De Mearns in her article 'The changing nature of Henry VIII'

"If he did not get his own way almost immediately, those discussing issues with him were in danger of their own well-being. When he was younger however, Henry was always willing to participate in arguments and allowed his ministers to make their thoughts plain.

Written by Susan Doran, Tudor historian in 2008.

"In just a few short years, parliament – under the direction of King Henry VIII – made laws affecting all aspects of national life which had previously been under the authority (power) of the Church alone. With the ground breaking statutes (laws) of the 1530s, Parliament became omniscient, that is, the government had authority in all areas of the realm."

Written by Alison Weir in her book 'The Six Wives of Henry VIII' (1991)

"Today, historians recognise that his reign contributed an extraordinary legacy – modern Britain. Henry began his reign in a mediaeval kingdom, he ended it in what was effectively a modern state. We are still living in the England of Henry VIII"

Written by Sarah Pruitt in her article 'Was Henry VIII the worst monarch of all time' for History.com

"Henry's government seemed always to be on the verge of going bankrupt, thanks to his outrageous spending. Henry's court was one of the most lavish in History, not to mention his many expensive continental wars. Despite advice from parliament, Henry continued to spend vast amounts of money and died in debt."

Written C.N. Trueman in his article 'Henry VIII and Government'

"Henry VIII took a very different approach (to his father Henry VII). He believed that government could be left to trusted men once they knew the king's wishes. Henry believed that his men were honourable and that loyalty would be their guiding star. He did not need to involve himself in government as his trusted and loyal ministers would do it for him. Success was likely to be rewarded. Most, if not all, knew what failure meant."



## Challenge: Interpretations of King Henry VIII written by Tudor Historians.

Written by Peter Ackroyd, Tudor historian in 2012.

“A parliament was summoned at the beginning of November (1529) as a way of informing the nation of the King’s will. The members of the Commons, in large part lawyers and country gentlemen, were quite at ease with the royal prerogative; their role was to register the king’s decrees and to shield him from blame and unpopular measure. When Thomas Cromwell was first nominated as a member of parliament, he was told to consult with the Duke of Norfolk ‘to know the king’s pleasure how you shall order yourself in the parliament house’.

Another Parliament was called in 1536. The King came with a declaration about the state of the monasteries that was unpopular with the ministers. According to one report the king summoned members of the Commons to the royal gallery. ‘I hear,’ he said, ‘that my bill will not pass, but I will have it pass or I will have some of your heads.’



Written by David Starkey, a famous Tudor Historian, in 2012.

“This is the King who reinvented England, presided over the remaking of English as a language and literature...he carried the powers of the English monarchy to their peak.”

Written by Eric Ives in his book “Henry VIII” written in 2007.

“One of the most important developments of the time concerned parliament. In the first place it was called more frequently. From 1509 to 1531 there were only 11 sessions, from 1532 to 1540 there were 10. Government departments were created from scratch, law changes became a frequent item. In all, the last twelve parliamentary meetings of Henry’s reign produced upwards of 500 bills which received royal assent, and many other which did not. This growth of parliament’s authority, capacity, and power in no way overtook the power of the king, but parliament’s power definitely expanded during this time.”

