

Gateway to England 1485–1547

You may not have studied the Tudors since Key Stage 3; the Gateway below introduces some of the key issues that you will encounter in the early part of this book. The aim of the Gateway is to provide you with a basic understanding of these issues so that when you first come across them you will have some background knowledge from which to develop your understanding.

England's position in Europe

- Had lost lands in France throughout the fifteenth century
- Still ruled over Calais
- Main threat was France as the most powerful nation in Europe
- The Netherlands was important to England because of the cloth trade
- Scotland was allied to France and could threaten England's northern border
- Spain was becoming a major power

The government of England

- The personality of the king was very important; he made all the decisions
- The royal household looked after the domestic needs of the king
- The Court moved with the king, entertained and tried to influence him
- Law and order in the localities was maintained by Justices of the Peace
- Parliament was not a regular feature of government, but called when the king needed money
- The king relied on nobles for advice and along with senior churchmen made up the Privy Council

The Wars of the Roses

- England had been unstable since 1399 with the throne regularly changing hands
- These wars began in 1455 and lasted until 1485/7
- They were fought between two families who had claims to the throne of England: the Yorkists and Lancastrians
- The struggle started because of instability; Henry VI was a weak king and the nobles were powerful
- Most of the fighting was in the periods 1459–64, 1469–71 and 1483–7

What was England like in 1485?

The economy and finance

- England's main export was cloth, sold in the Netherlands
- The income of English kings was much less than that of the French monarchs
- Lands owned by the Crown provided the king with regular income, but had been in decline
- Income from customs had declined

Henry Tudor

- Had a weak claim to the throne of England
- Had been in exile in France for 14 years
- He hardly knew England
- His invasion was aided by the French

Monarchy in England

- The throne had changed hands regularly since 1399
- Henry VI ruled from 1422 to 1461 and again from 1470 to 1471
- Edward IV overthrew Henry in 1461, but was himself removed in 1470 only to regain the throne in 1471
- Richard III usurped the throne in 1483 on the death of Edward IV
- Richard may have murdered his nephews, the sons of Edward IV
- The Buckingham Rebellion attempted to remove Richard before Henry Tudor's invasion