



# The Tudors

*Rupert Matthews*

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## **The Tudors** Rupert Matthews

Everything you need to know about the Tudors is broken down in 50 bite sized chunks. Go back in time to Tudor England, to meet Henry VIII and learn about the Spanish Armada. Find out why Henry VIII had six wives, or see how ferocious battles were fought and won. The period is brought to life through facts, diagrams, infographics, photos and illustrations.

## **The Tudors Details**

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## From Reader Review *The Tudors* for online ebook

### Jill says

Like the analogously named books about World War I and World War II, this small book on the Tudors is replete with excellent pictures, entertaining fact-boxes, and reader-friendly infographics.

I was eager to read this book. I didn't make it through Hilary Mantel's acclaimed book *Wolf Hall* because I couldn't tell all the Thomases apart. Or the Catherines, Elizabeths, Henrys, or Richards. Who can keep them straight? So I was excited for any new enlightenment I could get from this new entry in the "50 Things You Should Know" series.

The era of Tudor monarchs in England lasted from 1485 to 1603. This book provides nice background on the wars between branches of the royal family: the Lancasters (which included the Tudors) and the Yorks.

I would have liked to see more on the 1485 Battle of Bosworth, one of the most interesting battles in British history, in my opinion. This is where Richard III was betrayed and hacked up by supporters of Henry Tudor. Richard, as you may know, is the one who (allegedly) arranged for the murder of his two nephews (aged 9 and 12) in the Tower of London. Richard was supposed to be their "protector." [Shakespeare's depiction of Richard III as a monster, albeit one with great lines ("Now is the winter of our discontent made glorious summer by this sun of York..."), and his fingering of Richard for the crime had a great influence on the historical record.]

How Henry Tudor managed this battlefield victory is a riveting story of greed for power and land, insecurity, fear, paranoia and bribery, and goes far to illustrate the nature of political life in this period. (Historian Desmond Seward goes into great detail on these issues in a number of books on the Tudors. Another good resource is *Richard III: The Malignant King* by Annette Carson.)

Henry VIII gets a lot of play in this book. There is, for example, a spread entitled "Marriage Troubles." [One of those troubles probably would *not* have been getting the names wrong of his wives, since there were two Annes and three Catherines (albeit spelled differently). One additional wife, Jane Seymour, might have worked out since she actually produced an heir for Henry, but she died soon after childbirth.]

Henry's attitude toward marriage was never without repercussions. He declared war on Scotland to force agreement to a marriage between his son Edward and the infant Mary, Queen of Scots. (Since Edward himself was only nine when he became king, there wasn't much of an age difference...)

There were also a number of religious wars, initiated after Parliament - at Henry VIII's instigation - made him head of the Church of England, so he could carry on with his annulments and remarriages.

And religious turmoil was not only related to Henry VIII's interest in serial marriages. This was also the era of the Reformation and Martin Luther, as well as a considerable ruckus over a new Book of Common Prayer. Then there was the religious see-sawing. When the Catholic Mary I came into power in 1553, she decided to bring back Catholicism, and ordered hundreds of executions, earning the nickname "Bloody Mary." Her successor, Elizabeth I, was a Protestant. Now *Catholic* services were outlawed, and this time it was the Catholics' turn to be drawn and quartered.

When Elizabeth died in 1603, King James VI of Scotland came to London to rule as King James I and the

Tudor period was said to be at an end. Even though James VI was the great-grandson of Margaret Tudor, he was thus a Tudor by virtue of his *female* descendants, which didn't seem to count. He was descended in the male line from the House of Stuart. The author does not explain, however, how consideration of this fact made James a "Stuart" rather than a "Tudor." But the book makes up for brevity by all the fascinating trivia and factoids it includes.

For what it's worth, after reading this book, I still couldn't tell you which Henry or Edward was which, in spite of the inclusion of a "Who's Who Family Tree." But that is my own failing, or perhaps that of all these historical parents: couldn't they come up with different names? Thank heavens for the 20th and 21st centuries, when we have more distinctive names for kids like Apple and North and so on. [It's too bad no one we know of before 2015 (Lil' Kim, we're looking at you), came up with the potentially great Tudor name for a baby, "Royal Reign."]

**Evaluation:** There is good reason for the continuing popularity of books and television series and movies about the Tudors - between the political machinations, religious turmoil, sex, violence, assassinations, plotting, jealousies and betrayals, there is really never a dull moment. The author found many ways to include engrossing aspects of a huge subject. I don't think anyone is going to be bored by the history lessons in this book.

**Rating:** 3.5/5

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## Cheryl says

First off, there is way too much content for this to be a kid's book. Just because there's loads of pictures and colors doesn't mean this is something a kid is going to be able to choke down.

Second, the 50 "things" that we're supposed to learn about were more like random sentences. It made for a very cool title, but you can tell that's definitely not the focus inside the book.

Third, the format inside is a little funky and made the reading more difficult than it had to be. Too many font sizes on one page. It comes off as a bit rattlebrained and loud.

Fourth, my very favorite thing about the book has to be the physical feel of it. The quasi-paperback, pseudo-hardcover feel? My favorite.

As for the content itself, it's been very well researched and I didn't find a single error in it. Totally worth the read, but I'm left feeling ripped off afterwards.

At first glance, it's 5 stars. But once you delve in deeper, the chaos brings it down.

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