

SIX



Digital Resource Pack



HIPPODROME
EDUCATION
NETWORK

Key Stage 3+

Six The Musical

Six The Musical is a modern **retelling** of the lives of **Henry VIII's six wives** presented as a pop concert, with each Queen singing their heart out to prove who suffered the most while married to the King. The Queen with the most sympathy points will become the group's lead singer... that is until they realise, they don't need Henry's love to feel validated - they can **rewrite** their stories beyond the limits of being "a King's wife".

Written by **Toby Marlow** and **Lucy Moss**, this fresh perspective tells **a new side of history**, one within which the wives are at the centre. It introduces the importance of **gender** in regards to historical analysis and how this **feminist perspective** can shape our understanding of the past. **Who are the Queens beyond the confines of the King?**

Retelling History

"We're taking back the microphone" – Marlow and Moss, say that this lyric **"encapsulates the whole message of the show"**. (As stated in video *Lyric by Lyric* which can be viewed [here](#).) ★ ★

British Historian, **Lucy Worsley**, in her TV series ***Secrets of the Six Wives*** explores a **feminist** stance on the wives of **King Henry VIII**.

"She (Lucy Worsley) presents **Catherine of Aragon** as a **ferocious warrior queen**, **Anne Boleyn** as a **victim** of her own ambitions, and **Jane Seymour** as a canner **political force** than usually imagined (...) Rather than being **"the ugly one," Anne of Cleves** is **charming** and wily survivor. Worsley takes **Catherine Howard's** [promiscuous] persona and examines it through a modern lens – suggesting that she was really more of a victim of **sexual abuse**" [Meghan O'Keefe](#).

But how has history **traditionally** portrayed the Queens? And how does this **differ** in **Six The Musical**?

Catherine of Aragon

(1485-1536) DIVORCED



Lyrics -



My name's **Catherine Of Aragon**

Was married 24 years, I'm a paragon

Of **royalty**, my loyalty is to the Vatican

So if you try to dump me
You won't try that again



History's portrayal:

·Married in **1509** and after **multiple pregnancies** and several births, the only child to survive was Henry and Catherine's daughter, **Mary**, born in **February 1516**.

·“Henry viewed her as a model wife in every respect bar one... **her failure to give him a son**,” says Tudor historian **Tracy Borman**. Frustrated at the lack of a male heir, Henry's eyes wandered to **Anne Boleyn**.

Catherine of Aragon

Six The Musical Portrayal

Costume

Catherine of Aragon wears gold in the show to represent **prestige** and **power**. It presents her as a **dynamic woman** and portrays an accurate sense of **royalty** as she was a **Queen for over 20 years**. You can learn more about the costume design process and inspiration from the video link [here](#).



Questions for students

In *Six The Musical*, each queen is linked to a **pop artist** with Catherine of Aragon's inspiration being **Beyonce**, who would you pick to inspire your own character? What costume might the character wear? Can you think of other ways power/royalty can be presented through costume?



Performance

In an interview with [Broadway World](#), Jarneia Richard-Noel, who played Aragon in the **West End**, describes the Queen in **six words**; **sassy, strong, powerful, leader, resilient** and **courageous**. Does this differ from the traditional historical view of the Queen?

Anne Boleyn

(1501-1536) BEHEADED



Lyrics -

Why did I lose my **head**?
Well, my sleeves may
be **green**
But my lipstick's **red**!

History's portrayal:

·In **January 1533**, Henry and Anne Boleyn were **married** and by September of the same year, Anne had given birth to their **first child, Elizabeth**. Henry wanted nothing more than for Anne to provide him with **a male heir** but after a series of stillborn births, the King had given up hope and began to lose interest in his wife.

·Desperate to end the relationship, Henry accused her of **adultery and treason** and had the marriage annulled.

Anne Boleyn

Six The Musical Portrayal

Performance

In the same interview with Broadway World **Millie O'Connell** describes her portrayal and understanding of Anne Boleyn as **"fun, witty, and quirky"** she says what she thinks and enjoys bringing **light and laughter**". This is also true of the character's musical inspirations such as **Miley Cyrus, Lily Allen and Kate Nash** – all of whom are **powerful singers** that have covered **feminist themes** in some of their music.



Questions for students

·When asked how much she was aware of the historical period before the show, Millie accounts "only what I remember from my GCSEs. I knew about Henry's wives, but not much detail – or from their side what happened." **Why is it important we consider different perspectives of historical events? How can a person's perspective shape their understanding of history? How might gender play a part in this?**



Jane Seymour

(1508-1537) DIED



But I know

Without my son your love could disappear

*I know it isn't fair, but I don't care
'Cause my love, will still be here*



History's portrayal:

·Shortly after Anne Boleyn's execution, Henry married Jane Seymour who had served as a **lady-in-waiting** to both previous wives.

·On **October 12 1537**, Jane gave birth to **Edward VI** but unfortunately **died** from birth complications several weeks later. Jane Seymour is now buried at **St. George's Chapel** alongside Henry VI which was a direct request from the King.

Six The Musical Portrayal



Performance

·In the same interview with Broadway World **Natalie Parris**, who played Jane Seymour on the **West End**, describes the queen as **loyal, kind, motherly, geeky, strong and funny**.

Costume

In an interview with Six The Musical costume designer, **Gabriella Slade** states that Jane's design resembles a **wedding dress** to reflect the queen being Henry's "**only true love**" along with white in the middle of the dress to signify **purity**.

Anne of Cleves

(1515-1557) DIVORCED



Lyrics -

*Fill my goblet up to the
brim*

*Sippin' on mead and I **spill**
it on my dress*

*With the **gold lace trim***

***Not very prim and proper**
Can't make me stop*

History's portrayal:

·After Henry's chief minister suggested a **European alliance**, the King was faced with a choice to marry either of the **Duke of Cleves** two daughters, Anne or Amelia.

·Henry requested to see their **portraits** and after viewing both, he decided to marry **Anne of Cleves**. However, when Anne arrived in England on **January 1 1540**, the King was shocked to find that she looked **nothing like her painting**.

·Henry failed to halt the wedding and so they were **married** on **January 6** of the same year.

Anne of Cleves

Six The Musical Portrayal

Costume

Anne wears **red**, which is a colour associated with **power, passion, love desire, danger, strength and energy.**



Questions for students

·What symbolism do other colours have? What colour might you pick to represent the Queens and why? How is this similar/differ from history's portrayal of the Queens?



Performance

·In the interview with Broadway World, **Alexia McIntosh**, who played **Anne of Cleves** on the **West End**, describes the Queen as **proud, confident, sassy, funny, fierce, feisty.**



Katherine Howard

(1523-1542) BEHEADED



Lyrics -

Prick up your ears, I'm the
Katherine **who lost her**
head

For my **promiscuity** outside
of wed

Lock up your husbands,
lock up your sons

K Howard is here, and the
fun's begun

History's portrayal:

•Katherine Howard was a **lady-in waiting** to Anne of Cleves and was just **17 years old** when she **married Henry in 1540**.

•The king was quick to shower Katherine with gifts and even called her his '**rose without a thorn**'.

•However, less than a year into their marriage, rumours of **infidelity** spread and on **February 13 1542** Catherine was **executed for adultery** and **treason**.

Katherine Howard

Six The Musical Portrayal

Costume

•Katherine Howard wears a **transparent skirt** which could convey history's view that men saw her for her **promiscuous** appeal.

•This is contrasted in the character's song *All You Wanna Do* in which Howard's **seductive** side is introduced, but not without the criticism of **the men that took advantage of her**.



•The lyric "*All you wanna do, baby is touch me, when will enough be enough?*" Was Katherine Howard in control of her own actions? Was she **manipulated/co-coerced** by older men?

In the interview with Broadway World, **Aimie Atkinson**, who played Katherine Howard on the **West End**, describes the Queen as **strong, resilient, misunderstood, charming and bright**. Perhaps the word **misunderstood** aligns with the historian **Lucy Worsley's** argument that Howard was "*really more of a victim of sexual abuse*".

Questions for students

•You can view the lyrics to *All You Wanna Do* [here](#). What do you think this song implies about Catherine Howard? Was she the promiscuous adulterer that a traditional historical perspective might claim? Why is it important to re-examine these events through a feminist viewpoint?

Catherine Parr

(1512-1548) SURVIVED

Five down, I'm the **final wife**
I saw him to the **end of his life**
I'm the **survivor**, Catherine Parr
I bet you wanna know how I got this
far



History's portrayal:

- Catherine Parr was an **educated widow** who married Henry in **July 1543**. She brought **peace to the court** and served as a **caring stepmother** to Henry's children.
- Of all Henry's wives, Catherine Parr had the **most influence** upon the widest variety of areas including **court culture, religion, the role of women and the education of Henry's children**.

Six The Musical Portrayal



Costume

- Catherine Parr wears a **royal blue jumpsuit** to reflect her **regal influence and wisdom**. She wears trousers as her commitment to **female empowerment** - she wears and does as she pleases.

Performance

- In the interview with Broadway World **Maiya Quansah-Breed**, who played Parr on the **West End**, describes the Queen as **sassy, strong, intelligent, driven and beyond her years**.

The Fishbowl Activity

Retelling stories is a great way of learning about historical events from **perspectives** we might not have previously heard from. The following activity aims to help students express their **creativity through drama**, while learning more about the Queens in the process.

Our **Six The Musical** version of this activity can be found below but more detailed instructions on **fishbowl discussions** can be found [here](#).

- 1) Select a **focus or theme** for the Queens to discuss, such as marriage, children, politics or the King himself.
- 2) Assign each student to **represent** one of the six Queens. There will be more than one student representing each Queen.
- 3) Provide a selection of **historical sources**, such as letters written by the Queens (sources can be found [here](#)) so the students get a deeper sense of their **voice/inner thoughts** and feelings. Ask the students to highlight **key information** which might influence their perspective.
- 4) Ask students to consider how their Queen would **respond** to the chosen theme. For example, what is Anne Boleyn's experience of marriage in comparison to Jane Seymour's? Would Katherine Howard's age affect her perspective of the King?
- 5) The students representing the same Queen will **form groups** and **share** their highlighted points and ideas.

The Fishbowl Activity



6) Set up the room for a **fishbowl discussion** by making a circle of **six chairs** facing each other. Label each chair after each Queen and ask the students to line up behind their corresponding Queen.

7) One person from each group is nominated to take a seat and begin a **discussion** surrounding the chosen theme with the other Queens. **How might the Queens interact? How would you characterise your Queen?** It's important that students change their **body language, posture, facial expressions, tone and pitch**, to show how the Queens might react.



8) At the end of the fishbowl discussion, ask students to **reflect** and **summarise** the different perspectives.

Song Writing Activity



Song writing is another **creative** way of exploring the **inner thoughts** and **feelings** of the Queens. It is a great form of **story telling** and conveying **fresh perspectives**. Students can listen [here](#) for **inspiration** directly from the Musical or the full soundtrack can be found on Spotify.

Begin by deciding what you want your song to be about! **Is it a feeling? A sequence of events?** Choose **one word** that describes your topic and create **a mind map** of associated words.



Challenge your pupils to see how many **rhyming words** they can come up with for each word!

Scaffold with poetry. Instruct your pupils to use their rhyming words to **create a short poem**. Ask them to reflect '**can I use these words to create a simile or metaphor?**'

Put the poems to **music**! Allow your pupils time to **experiment** with **rhythm** and **melody**.

Other Resources...

Broadway Education Pack - Includes further details of the musical and other educational activities

Behind the Scenes - Backstage tour and interviews with technical team

The Royal Roundtable - Discussion with cast and writers on the journey to success of Six The Musical

Six The Musical Performance at the Tower of London - Examples of dancing and performance style

BBC Documentary - Clips from Six Wives with Lucy Worsley or full episodes can be found on Amazon Prime

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