**Spartacus Educational Classroom Activity**

# Was Henry VIII's son, Henry FitzRoy, murdered? (Questions & Answers)

<http://spartacus-educational.com/ExAnTEU20.htm>

**Q1**: Read sources 2, 3 and 4. (a) Who was Elizabeth Blount? (b) Why did Henry VIII call his son "Henry FitzRoy"? (c) Why did Henry VIII want people to know he was the father of an illegitimate child?

**A1**: (a) Elizabeth Blount was maid of honour to Queen Catherine and later became Henry VIII's mistress. (source 2) (b) The old Norman-French surname FitzRoy, means "son of the King". (source 4) (c) Henry believed that by producing a healthy boy was a sign of his virility. Therefore the lack of a "strong son" could be blamed on Catherine of Aragon. (sources 3 and 4)

**Q2**: Why was Catherine of Aragon concerned by Henry VIII's actions in 1525?

**A2**: John Guy, the author of source 5, points out that in 1525 Henry VIII had no legitimate male heir and therefore the "Tudor dynasty was at risk". He did have a daughter, Mary, and Henry's wife, Catherine of Aragon, expected her to inherit the throne. By giving Henry FitzRoy the royal title of the Duke of Richmond and bringing him to the Royal Court, he gave the impression he was considering the "possibility of legitimising his legitimate son" (source 6) and "grooming his bastard for the succession" (source 7) Henry enjoyed a good relationship with his son who had the right qualities to be king (source 9). David Starkey (source 8) argues that by 1525 "Henry VIII had decided that gender was more important than legitimacy" and that Catherine of Aragon now "feared that he would recognize Richmond as his heir, and would exclude Mary from her rightful inheritance".

**Q3**: Use the information in the sources to explain the death of Henry FitzRoy on 22nd July 1536.

**A3**: [Kelly Hart](http://www.kellyharthistory.com/about.html) (source 12) believes that Henry FitzRoy died of consumption or some form of lung condition. She points out that the Tudor family had a history of lung disease. However, these lung diseases such as tuberculosis usually takes several years to kill people. Yet the evidence we have is that he was a healthy young man until shortly before his death.

[Alison Weir](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alison_Weir) (source 10) mentions the story of Henry VIII telling Henry FitzRoy that Anne Boleyn had tried to poison him. Weir goes on to argue: "There was no evidence for this, but Henry was prepared to believe that no crime was too monstrous to have been committed by Anne. And when Richmond died of consumption the following July, Henry and most other people would believe that Anne had administered a slow-working poison which caused his death."

[Philippa Jones](http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/2865193.Philippa_Jones) (source 11) admits that most historians believe that Henry FitzRoy died of tuberculosis. However, it is possible that "the secrecy and speed of his burial might be due to the fact that he died, or was suspected of having died of pneumonic plague". Jones (source 13) raises the possibility that Henry VIII arranged FitzRoy's death because he was part of a conspiracy to overthrow him. Jones claims that FitzRoy would have been upset when he heard the rumours that Jane Seymour was pregnant and realised that the chances of him becoming king. Jones points out that a few weeks after FitzRoy's death, a rebellion against Henry VIII, the Pilgrimage of Grace, took place. Several friends and relatives of FitzRoy took part in this rebellion.