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Mary Dicken  
Nicholas Fellows

# ENGLAND

## 1485–1603



England 1485–1547

Mid Tudor Crises 1547–1558

Elizabethan England

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Nicholas Fellows  
Mary Dicken

# ENGLAND 1485–1603

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# 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



# Chapter 1

## The government of Henry VII and threats to his rule

This chapter focuses on the reasons why Henry VII was able to maintain his throne for over twenty years following the upheavals of the fifteenth century and establish the Tudor dynasty. It will consider why there was so much unrest, particularly at the start of his reign, and why he was successful in defeating the Yorkist and other threats, focusing on how he was able to reduce the power of the nobility. It will also examine how Henry strengthened central and local government and royal finances. The chapter will also consider how secure Henry and the Tudors were by the end of his reign. It addresses a number of key questions that relate to his survival and the establishment of the Tudor dynasty:

- Why was there so much unrest in the early years of Henry's rule?
- How serious a threat was the Yorkist challenge to Henry's rule?
- How effective was Henry VII in reducing the power of the nobility?
- How successfully did Henry VII strengthen central and local government?
- How successfully did Henry VII restore royal finances?

This chapter will also explain how to understand the wording of a question and then how to plan a response to the question. It will focus on identifying the key words within the question and then explain how to ensure that you address the key demands of the actual question, rather than simply writing all you know about a topic.

### Timeline

1485	August	Battle of Bosworth
	October	Henry VII crowned king
1486	January	Marriage of Henry VII to Elizabeth of York
	July	Conspiracy of Lovell and Stafford
	September	Birth of Prince Arthur
		Act of Resumption passed
1487	June	Simnel's Rebellion and Battle of Stoke
1489		Yorkshire Rebellion
1491–99		Warbeck's Rebellion
1491	June	Birth of Prince Henry
1497	May	Cornish Rebellion
1497	October	Warbeck surrenders
1499	November	Warbeck hanged
1502	April	Death of Prince Arthur
1503	February	Death of Queen Elizabeth
1506	April	Edmund de la Pole imprisoned in the Tower
1509	April	Death of Henry VII

## Overview

Henry Tudor defeated the Yorkist king, Richard III, at the Battle of Bosworth in August 1485. Despite his weak claim to the throne he went on to rule England until his death in 1509 and was able to pass the throne on securely to his son, who became Henry VIII. Henry VII faced many challenges, most notably from Yorkist families who had been defeated, but also from other powerful nobles. Royal authority was weak as a result of civil war in the preceding years and royal finances were limited.

Henry soon faced challenges to his position as king. In his first year he faced a conspiracy from Lovell and Stafford, who were Yorkist supporters, and was forced into battle against Lambert Simnel in 1487. In 1486 Henry also married Elizabeth of York in an attempt to unite the two warring houses. However, despite his victory over Simnel and his marriage, unrest continued with opposition from Yorkshire (1489) and Cornwall (1497) over taxation and from the Yorkist **Pretender** Perkin Warbeck, which lasted for nine years from 1491 and was also rumoured to have included Henry's close advisor, Sir William Stanley, who was executed in 1495.

The power of the nobility was attacked through Acts of Parliament against illegal retaining in 1487 and 1504. Furthermore many nobles were placed under strict conditions of behaviour and loyalty with the prospect of heavy fines or the loss of their lands if they broke the terms and conditions. The fines helped to build up the

crown's financial strength, which was further enhanced by Henry regaining crown lands which had been lost during the civil wars, through an Act of Resumption in 1486.

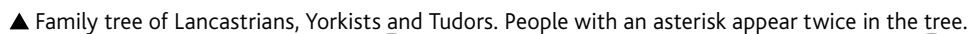
The problem of royal authority in the localities furthest from London was tackled through the use of the Council of the North, the re-establishment of the Council in Wales and the Marches in 1493 and the appointment of Sir Edward Poynings as Lord Deputy in Ireland in 1494. At the same time, the role of Justices of the Peace (local officials) was also enhanced so that law and order in the counties was addressed.

The birth of two sons, Arthur in 1486 and Henry in 1491, provided Henry with heirs to the throne. However, the deaths of Arthur in 1502 and Henry's wife in 1503 weakened his position and meant the succession was dependent upon the survival of Henry's second son. Open rebellion declined after the defeat of Warbeck but Henry was not secure until 1506 when the Earl of Suffolk, the nearest Yorkist claimant to the throne, was handed over by Philip of Burgundy and imprisoned in the Tower of London. However, even as late as 1508 Lord Abergavenny was fined heavily for raising a large army and starting a riot in Kent.

Although Henry became ill in 1508 he survived until April 1509 when he was succeeded by his son, the first uncontested succession since Henry V inherited the crown from his father, Henry IV, in 1413.

## Why was there so much unrest in the early years of Henry's rule?

Although Henry Tudor won the Battle of Bosworth it does not mean that he had the support of the country. He had gained the throne only through battle, killing the previous king, Richard III. However, even during the battle many nobles had remained neutral suggesting that, although they disliked the rule of Richard, they did not actively support Henry. Henry's claim to the throne was also very weak, being largely through his mother, Margaret Beaufort, who was a descendant of Edward III by the marriage of his third son, John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, to Catherine Swynford. However, the children of the marriage had been born when Catherine was John's mistress and had been legitimised later by parliament during the reign of Richard II. Henry Tudor also had some royal blood as his father's mother was a French princess who had been married to Henry V before marrying Owen Tudor, Henry's grandfather (see family tree on page 8). Therefore, although Henry was the male Lancastrian claimant to the throne, his claim was weak and was likely to be challenged by Yorkist claimants who had seen their king (Richard of York) killed at Bosworth.





## How did Henry attempt to secure his position?

Henry recognised his weak position and quickly took action to secure his position. One of his first acts was to date the start of his reign from the day before Bosworth; this meant that any who fought against him were traitors and could have their estates seized, which would also add to the king's wealth. Second, Henry arranged his coronation for 30 October, which was before parliament met, so that it could not be claimed that he was king only because of parliament. Lastly, Henry asked for **papal dispensation** to allow him to marry Elizabeth of York, a distant cousin, and unite the houses of Lancaster and York. The marriage took place in January 1486, after Henry had been crowned, so that it could not be claimed that he owed the crown to his wife.

### Elizabeth of York, 1466–1503

She was the eldest daughter of Edward IV and therefore a possible Yorkist claimant to the throne. Negotiations for Henry to marry her had begun while he was in exile, but on taking the throne he delayed first the marriage and then her coronation so that opponents could not say his right to rule depended upon his wife.



▲ Henry VII and his wife, Elizabeth of York.

These actions did not mean that Henry's position was secure. Although the Wars of the Roses had killed some who had a better claim to the throne, there were still a number of Yorkists alive who had at least as strong a claim to the throne as Henry. The most important of these Yorkist claimants were two of Richard's nephews, Edward, Earl of Warwick, and John de la Pole, Earl of Lincoln. Warwick was successfully removed by being sent to the Tower, but Lincoln professed his loyalty and was invited to join the **King's Council**. There were still other Yorkists who had supported Richard at Bosworth, but Henry was willing to give them a second chance. The Earl of Surrey was kept in prison until 1489, but the Duke of Northumberland was released at the end of 1485 and restored to his old position in control of the north. Despite these actions, there were still other Yorkists who did not accept Henry as king and were willing to challenge his position.

Henry's position was further weakened by his years in exile. When he won at Bosworth he was largely unknown in England, having spent fourteen years in exile in France after the Lancastrian defeat at Tewkesbury in 1471, during the Wars of the Roses. It is therefore likely that many thought that, given his weak claim and lack of knowledge of the country, his reign was unlikely to last. However, Henry did have some advantages. It could be argued that the country was weary of war and would support a king who could offer peace and stability, even if his claim was weak. Moreover, as Christine Carpenter has argued, not only was Henry replacing an unpopular king, but also a king who was dead. Finally, Henry, unlike Edward IV, had not been dependent upon a powerful noble to make him king and therefore was not beholden to another noble family.

### Activity

- 1 Make a list of the measures taken by Henry to secure his position. Award each a mark out of six depending upon its effectiveness. Which do you think was the most effective measure? Explain your choice in a paragraph.
- 2 Use a chart like the one below to show the challenges Henry faced.

Challenge faced by Henry	Explain the challenge	How serious was the challenge/6	Explain the seriousness
Weak claim to the throne			

- 3 Make a list of the factors that might help Henry secure his position on the throne. Explain how each would help.

### How serious a challenge was the Lovell conspiracy?

However, despite these advantages, Henry faced rebellion within a year of taking the throne. Although the unrest was not serious, that fact was probably not apparent at the time. There was trouble in the Midlands, the north and Wales as Henry embarked on a **royal progress** to the north, where Yorkist support was strong. The unrest came from dissatisfied Yorkists who had supported Richard. The rebellion in the Midlands and north involved Lord Lovell and the Stafford brothers, all of whom had been loyal supporters of Richard. However, the co-ordinated plan failed because Henry heard of the plot and sent an armed force to offer the rebels the choice of pardon and reconciliation or **excommunication** and death. The rebels dispersed, but Lovell fled to Flanders and the Staffords sought sanctuary. However, the Staffords were arrested, Humphrey was executed, but Thomas was pardoned and remained loyal. In Wales the rebellion was led by the Yorkist families of the Herberts and Vaughans. There the rebellion was put down by Rhys ap Thomas, who had supported Henry at Bosworth. Neither rebellion prevented the royal progress and his visit to the north helped to win loyalty and obedience.

## Why did Yorkshire and Cornwall rise?

A more serious challenge came later in 1486, this time from Lambert Simnel (see page 13). However, dynastic challenges were not the only cause of unrest in the early years and Henry was to face two taxation rebellions, the Yorkshire rising in 1489 and the Cornish rising in 1497. These rebellions, although geographically a long way apart, had much in common.

### The Yorkshire Rebellion

The Yorkshire rising was the result of Henry's attempts to raise money to aid Brittany in its struggle against France (see Chapter 2). Although parliament had granted Henry a subsidy of £100,000, very little was actually raised. Yorkshire was particularly annoyed as not only had they suffered from a bad harvest in 1488, but other northern counties had been exempted from the tax because they were expected to defend the northern border against Scottish attacks. The area was also less concerned about the problem of France than more southerly counties which might be invaded or attacked, an indication of the localism and regionalism, rather than national feeling, that affected politics at this time.

Despite the complaints, Henry refused to negotiate, but when the Earl of Northumberland tried to collect the tax he was murdered. His death might have been the result of his apparent support for the tax, but there is also some evidence that the unrest was orchestrated by Yorkists. The rebellion was led by Sir John Egremont, a Yorkist supporter and an illegitimate member of the Percy family. However, the murder of a royal official trying to implement an unpopular policy was not unusual as it was often the only way for protestors to vent their feelings. Although the rising was easily crushed by a royal army, the money was not collected. It was a clear sign that ruling the north required compromise as royal authority was weak and could soon be challenged. This was recognised by Henry as he appointed the Earl of Surrey as his representative in the north, a man with no vested interest there and whose loyalty was secure because the restoration of his own estates depended upon his success in the region.

### The Cornish Rebellion

The Cornish rising of 1497 was more serious, but was caused by the same factors as the Yorkshire rising: Henry's need for money and the subsequent parliamentary vote. This time the threat was from Scotland as James IV sought to aid Perkin Warbeck (see pages 14–15) and invade the north of England. However, as in Yorkshire, the Cornish had little interest in events so geographically remote and saw little reason why they should pay taxes to fund a war on England's northern border. The rebels assembled at the Cornish county town of Bodmin in May 1497 and their numbers swelled as they marched through the county. As the rebellion continued into Devon, though, it attracted little support due to the antagonism between the two counties and it was only when they reached Somerset that the numbers increased again.

The rebellion attracted some 15,000 supporters, a sign of the unpopularity of the tax, but also that there was some cross-class support for the rising among minor gentry, although it attracted only one noble, the impoverished Lord Audley. Numbers did decline as the rebels approached London, perhaps fearful of facing a large royal force. The rebels made it clear that their complaints were against 'evil counsellors', such as Morton and Bray, who were blamed for the tax demands, rather than the king. Henry took no chances and assembled a royal army of 25,000 men which easily crushed the rebel force at Blackheath in June 1497.

#### Percy family

The largest landowners in the north of England who ruled the area as virtual kings. Their authority was more important than that of the king's.

#### Earl of Surrey, 1443–1524

The son of the Duke of Norfolk who had fought for Richard at Bosworth and was therefore a Yorkist. Although he was imprisoned after the battle and his lands confiscated, he was soon released and some of his lands restored. He was sent to the north following the murder of Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland, in 1489 and proved his loyalty to the Tudors, successfully running the Council of the North before returning to London in 1499 and becoming Lord Treasurer in 1503.

#### Morton and Bray

John Morton (c1420–1500) had resisted Richard's usurpation and been a leading figure in Buckingham's failed rebellion. After that he fled to join Henry in exile. When Henry became king he became Lord Chancellor and in 1486 Archbishop of Canterbury. He was a leading councillor until his death, but was best known for his harsh taxation policies, particularly benevolences.

Sir Reginald Bray (c1440–1503) was appointed to Henry's Council in 1492 as his chief financial advisor, having been a member of Henry's mother's household. As Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster he was responsible for the successful exploitation of the revenues of the lands held by the Duchy. As a result, he was entrusted with introducing new auditing methods.



The rebellion was never a serious threat to Henry, only reaching London because he was more concerned by the threat from Warbeck. However, Henry's actions, unlike those against Simnel (see page 13), show that he was not prepared to give them a second chance as the leaders were tortured and executed, while others were heavily fined. The two taxation rebellions did show that the country was not prepared to fund campaigns to defend the Tudor monarchy. More recent work by historians such as J.P.D. Cooper has suggested that the protests were more complex and also involved complaints against local government officials in the region who were corrupt and failing in their administrative duties, therefore creating resentment against the government. More importantly, the Cornish Rebellion also suggested that twelve years into his reign loyalty to Henry was still limited.

### Margaret of Burgundy

Margaret was the widow of Charles the Bold, ruler of Burgundy, but more importantly the sister of Edward IV and Richard III. She wanted to restore Yorkist rule in England and was central to most of the early plots in Henry's reign. She gave shelter at her court in Burgundy to Lovell, Lincoln and Warbeck and acknowledged Simnel as her nephew.

## How serious a threat was the Yorkist challenge to Henry's rule?

Henry was king only because he had defeated the Yorkist king, Richard III, at Bosworth. The early years of his reign had revealed that risings from Yorkist supporters were almost inevitable, as seen in the Lovell, Stafford and Vaughan incidents in 1486. The Yorkist challenge was serious because Margaret of Burgundy, the sister of Edward IV and Richard III, offered safe haven for Yorkist exiles and was willing to fund enterprises and provide mercenaries to fight against the Tudor state. The lack of Yorkist claimants to the throne should have increased Henry's security, but instead suitable candidates who could impersonate one of the Yorkist 'Princes in the Tower' were found and this resulted in Simnel's rebellion of 1486–87 and Warbeck's of 1491–99.

Although it is unlikely that the supporters of these 'Pretenders' ever genuinely believed they were who they claimed, they were still able to raise support from Yorkist supporters and also from foreign powers who wanted to destabilise the country.

## How successfully did Henry deal with the Simnel rebellion?

The challenge of Lambert Simnel, who claimed to be the Earl of Warwick, was a serious threat as it came within a year of Henry seizing the throne. Simnel was able to raise support, first in the Yorkist stronghold of Oxford, and then in Ireland, where he was crowned Edward VI. Moreover, he also received support from Margaret of Burgundy who sent money and a force of 2000 mercenaries. Although the conspiracy began in the autumn of 1486, Henry was not aware of the rising until early 1487, a further indication of his vulnerable position. Fearful of the support the rebellion might receive in England, Henry offered the rebels a pardon, and also paraded the real Earl of Warwick in London to show Simnel was an impostor. However, this did not stop the rebellion, which became more dangerous following the flight of another Yorkist, the Earl of Lincoln, to join the rebels.

The Simnel rising became more serious in June when the rebels landed in Lancashire and began to march south; it failed to gain widespread support, but still numbered some 8000 men. There are a number of possible reasons for the lack of popular support. Ordinary people may have been fed up with

the chaos of the Wars of the Roses or may have disliked the Irish force which accompanied Simnel and its reputation for brutality. This did not prevent the rebel army facing Henry at Stoke, near Newark, in June 1487. Although Henry won the battle, it should be viewed in a similar light to Bosworth. A weak claimant to the throne had been able to attract widespread support and bring the king to battle. Just as at Bosworth, many of Henry's men held back from fighting until the outcome appeared clear and at first that had not been obvious as the royal front line had been put under severe pressure by the experienced mercenaries. Victory took three hours and, even then, the fate of the monarchy had been decided by a battle whose result could just have easily been reversed.

### Why did the Warbeck rising last so long?

There is much debate over the origins of the Warbeck conspiracy. However, as S.B. Chrimes argued, it is likely that Warbeck's arrival in Ireland in 1491 was not an accident, but the result of a plan in which Charles VIII of France and Margaret of Burgundy were involved. It was the international dimension to the plot which made it so dangerous as Henry's relations with France and Scotland were poor and both countries could use Warbeck to undermine the king's position and exert diplomatic pressure on him not to become too anti-French over their wish to annex Brittany (see Chapter 2).

As with Simnel, the Yorkist element behind the conspiracy was strong. First, Lincoln appeared in the Yorkist stronghold of Ireland. Second, despite the assumption among some Irish that he was the Earl of Warwick, he claimed to be Richard, Duke of York, who had supposedly been murdered in the Tower. This claim added to Henry's difficulties – he could not parade the real Richard as he was already dead.

Warbeck was unable to win large-scale support in Ireland, but he was welcomed at the French court where he was joined by about 100 Yorkist supporters. The signing of the Treaty of Étaples (see pages 36–37) between England and France in 1492 forced Warbeck to move to Flanders where he had the support of Margaret. In response, Henry broke off the lucrative cloth trade; his willingness to sacrifice a considerable income showed just how concerned he was.

Warbeck also gained the support of the influential Holy Roman Emperor, Maximilian, who recognised him as Richard IV. However, Maximilian lacked the financial resources to support Warbeck's plans and, with France more concerned about Italy, Henry was able to act without fear of European intervention. At first, Henry, having obtained knowledge of the conspiracy through his spy network, struck at home and parliament passed a series of **attainders** against those implicated in the plot. Perhaps most worryingly, one of those implicated was Sir William Stanley, a leading courtier and Lord Chamberlain of the king's household, who had helped Henry at Bosworth, indicating that the conspiracy went right to the heart of Henry's court. As a result, when Warbeck landed at Deal in 1495 the **local militia** was easily able to defeat the invaders without the use of a royal army. Warbeck fled to Ireland, where he failed to capture Waterford. Despite this apparent lack of support, Warbeck was welcomed in Scotland and was married to James IV's cousin. Once again, foreign support prolonged the challenge and James provided Warbeck with 1500 troops to invade the northern counties of England. As with the fiasco at Deal and the failure at Waterford, there was a lack of support in northern England for Warbeck and he was soon forced

#### Cloth trade

The trade in wool and woollen cloth was the most important for England, and Antwerp in Burgundy was the most important centre for the trade in Europe. This meant that good relations with Burgundy were crucial for England's economy.



back to Scotland. This time, however, James abandoned him, preferring the offer of marriage between himself and Henry's daughter, Margaret.

Despite his previous failure to raise support in Ireland, Warbeck returned there in 1497, but found even less support this time. As a result, Warbeck sailed for England, to capitalise on the Cornish Rebellion, but was driven from both Exeter and Taunton and forced to seek sanctuary. Finally, in November 1497, he was persuaded to give himself up. As a foreigner it would have been difficult to convict him of treason, so Henry allowed him to remain at court, but in 1498 he tried to run away. This time Henry put him in the Tower. While there it was rumoured he plotted with the Earl of Warwick and both were subsequently executed.

The plot was finally over. Although it had never gained much support in England and was never able to force Henry into a pitched battle, unlike Simnel, suggesting that Henry's position was more secure than in 1487, it also revealed the desperate situation of the Yorkists in that they were willing to support a Pretender. It had dragged on for so long only because of foreign support, but it was an expensive nuisance and embarrassment as the king had been unable to capture Warbeck.

### Was Henry ever secure from the Yorkist threat?

It might be assumed that the defeat of Warbeck signalled the end of the Yorkist challenge, but this was not the case. Although the Earl of Warwick was executed soon after Warbeck there still remained Edmund de la Pole, who was now the nearest Yorkist claimant. Despite appearing loyal, he was dissatisfied as Henry refused to make him Duke of Suffolk as his father had been. As a result, he fled to France in 1499, and although he was persuaded to return, he fled again in 1501 to the court of the Holy Roman Emperor, where he was joined by other Yorkists.

The situation for Henry soon deteriorated further as in 1500 his third son, Edmund died, then in 1502 his heir, Arthur, died, and finally in 1503 his wife also died. This meant that the future of the dynasty was dependent entirely upon the survival of the ten-year-old Prince Henry. It was therefore not surprising that the king imprisoned the Suffolk family that remained in England and parliament in 1504 passed 51 Acts of Attainder, many against those with Suffolk connections. This was the largest number passed by any parliament in his reign, suggesting that, far from Henry's security increasing, it was on the decrease. His concern for the security of the dynasty was given further credence by a reported conversation at Calais in which the succession was discussed: 'Some of them spoke of my Lord of Buckingham, saying that he was a noble man and would be royal ruler. Others who were there spoke in a similar manner about your traitor, Edmund de la Pole, but none of them spoke of my lord prince Henry.'

It was only in 1506 that it can be argued Henry felt secure. In that year storms forced Philip of Burgundy to land in England and Henry was able to persuade him to hand over Suffolk on the condition his life was spared. As a result, there were few Yorkists left and Henry's methods of government (see pages 15–18) ensured that they remained loyal.

Although Henry was not secure until the last years of his reign, it can be argued that after Simnel he was never seriously challenged. However, at the time, it was not obvious that the Battle of Stoke signified the end of the Wars of the Roses and that the Tudor dynasty would survive for over one hundred years. A Pretender had been able to raise enough support to force the king into battle and even the Cornish tax rebellion had been able to move across

the whole country and reach London before being defeated. This unrest was largely the result of his seizure of the throne by force and a realisation that his claim was weak: if he could take the throne by force, so could others, particularly with foreign help.

### Activity

- 1 Use the information in this section (pages 13–15) to help you to copy and complete the chart below. In the last column you should decide, in light of your evidence in columns three and four, whether you think the rebellion was serious and explain your decision.

Rebellion	Date	Evidence it was a threat	Evidence it was not a threat	Judgement
Lovell				
Simnel				
Yorkshire				
Warbeck				
Cornish				
De la Pole				

- 2 Which rebellion was the most serious? Write a paragraph explaining your decision.

## How effective was Henry VII in reducing the power of the nobility?

### How great a problem were the nobility for Henry?

There were a number of reasons why the nobility were a problem. Henry was a usurper and there was nothing preventing a powerful noble from attempting to overthrow him. The problems of the 1450s and 1460s had been caused, at least in part, by the power of the nobility who had been able to exploit a weak king (see page 5). Many nobles still owned large tracts of land, for example the Earl of Northumberland in the north-east, the Duke of Norfolk in East Anglia and the Stanleys in the north-west; as land equalled power, it was vital that Henry was able to control their authority. Moreover, as Henry had spent much of his life in exile he needed their help and advice to govern; they would be crucial in filling key offices and ensuring that the royal will was enforced in the localities. The need for their loyalty was made more difficult because many of them had supported Richard III as they had gained rewards from him. Lastly, they were the group that could provide the leadership and sufficient force for a rebellion, which, as was seen on page 10, did happen.

There is much debate among historians as to how great a threat the nobility posed. There is little doubt that during the earlier fifteenth century they had gained in power to become 'over-mighty' subjects or, as A. Grant described them, 'super nobles' (*Henry VII*, 1985). However, some have suggested that the Wars of the Roses killed off many and that Henry did not have much of a nobility to deal with. Despite this, it appears that, even if nobles were killed off, they were quickly replaced by new families, suggesting that they continued to be important.

**Table 1** Number of peers in the reigns of Edward IV and Henry VII.

	Number of peers		Number of major peers (dukes, marquises, earls)	
	Start of reign	End of reign	Start of reign	End of reign
Edward IV	42	46	7	12
Henry VII	50	35	16	10

## How effective were Henry VII's policies in controlling the nobility?

Although there was not a dramatic reduction in the number of nobles, Henry did make the task of controlling the nobility easier by limiting the number he created, with only three new earls created during his reign compared with nine under Edward IV. This policy also meant that elevation to the peerage was highly valued when it happened. Henry used two distinct methods to control the nobility, what we would refer to today as 'the carrot' and 'the stick' – inducements and sanctions. Henry was willing to give many of the nobles, even those who fought against him at Bosworth, the opportunity to prove their loyalty, as was seen with the Duke of Northumberland (see page 9).

In the past monarchs had often rewarded noble service through the grants of land, but this had created the 'over-mighty subject', which had helped to cause the Wars of the Roses. It had also diminished the wealth of the crown as it gave away royal lands. Henry largely abandoned this system and used other methods of reward, the most famous of which was the re-establishment of the Order of the Garter. Henry created 37 Knights of the Garter. It was seen to be a great honour for the recipient and was reserved for those who had given excellent service, but it was also effective because although it gave prestige it did not give power or land. Henry also continued to use the traditional forms of patronage, but changed the relationship. Instead of being rewarded by the king in the hope that service would be given to him, patronage was now the result of loyal service. It was granted to men who had been loyal both before and at Bosworth, such as the Earl of Oxford, and to those who provided good service during the reign, such as Lord Daubeney, who led the royal forces against the Cornish rebels. However, it was not just the nobility who gained from this; men such as Reginald Bray and Edmund Dudley were rewarded. By limiting the amount given out, patronage became highly valued as it was realised that Henry did not dispense it lightly. The final reward was a summons to either the **King's Council** or **Great Council**. Membership of the King's Council was a sign of trust, and five of his key councillors had supported him before Bosworth. Meanwhile, a summons to the Great Council was a very clever way to ensure noble support for measures. Once a policy had been agreed, and the nobility had supported it, it was very difficult for them to criticise the decision.

The two most notorious methods of sanction used by Henry were Acts of Attainder and **bonds and recognisances**. Acts of Attainder were damaging to families as they lost the right to possess their land, which spelt social and economic ruin, unless the acts were reversed. Although Acts of Attainder were not a new way of controlling the nobility, Henry was more severe in their use, often attaching special conditions to any reversals. Henry passed nine Attainders against nobles, reversed five, but attached conditions to four of them. He also increased the number of Attainders in the later years of his reign, as Table 2 on page 17 shows.

### Order of the Garter

This was an order of knighthood introduced by Edward III in the fourteenth century and became England's highest order of chivalry and was therefore much prized.

### Edmund Dudley (c1462–1510)

Trained as a lawyer, Dudley became a member of the Royal Council and the Council Learned in Law. It was his work with Richard Empson in overseeing the enforcement of bonds and recognisances to control many of the nobility that resulted in his removal when Henry VIII came to the throne as the new king sought noble support.

**Table 2** The number of Attainders passed during the reign of Henry VII.

Years	Number of Attainders
1485–86	28
1487	28
1489–90	8
1495	24
1497–1500	0
1504–09	51

The use of Attainders was effective because good behaviour could result in their reversal and therefore encouraged loyalty as those attainted sought to reverse their social and economic decline.

In order to guarantee good behaviour Henry also used bonds and recognisances. These were written agreements whereby nobles who offended the king either paid for their offence or paid money as security for future good behaviour. This was particularly effective in discouraging potentially disloyal nobles as the sums involved reached £10,000 for a peer; for example, the Marquess of Dorset. As with Attainders, this policy became more severe as the reign progressed, to the extent that, between 1485 and 1509, 36 out of 62 noble families were involved in such agreements, described by Lander as ‘a terrifying system of suspended penalties’.

Perhaps the greatest threat from the nobility came from their practice of recruiting followers who formed local fighting forces. When these forces were used on behalf of the king they strengthened the monarchy, but if deployed against him they were a serious threat as the king did not possess his own standing army. Henry viewed these **retainers** as a threat to his own power and made two attempts, in 1485 and 1504, to tackle the problem. Although he did not intend to abolish retaining, in 1485 Henry made the Lords and Commons swear not to retain illegally and in 1504 issued **proclamations** that ensured nobles needed a licence to retain, underpinned by the threat of heavy fines if this was not followed. The penalties were severe, with a fine of £5 per month for each illegal retainer; when applied to Lord Burgavenny in 1506, it cost him over £70,000. Although Henry was unable to abolish retaining, the absence from records of any illegal retaining suggests that the policy was at least partially successful and, as with bonds and recognisances, also helped the king’s financial position by raising some significant sums of money.

Henry also asserted his power over the nobility by insisting on his feudal rights. This can be seen in a number of areas:

- Marriage: the king exploited this so as to profit from arranged marriages of heirs.
- Wardship: the estates of minors were placed under royal control until the minor came of age, but in the meantime the estate was exploited to maximise the income for the crown.
- Relief: this was a payment to the king when land was inherited.
- Livery: this was a payment to the king to recover land from wardship.

The final method used to control the nobility was the regaining of former crown land from nobles. The most notable measure in this area was the 1486 Act of Resumption, which recovered land granted away since before the Wars of the Roses. When land was used to reward nobles, Henry, wherever possible, granted it from estates that had been taken by attainder from other nobles so that the crown retained its land. As a result of this policy, Steven Gunn has

#### Feudal rights

The feudal system placed the king at the head of the social ladder and all land was held directly from him by tenants-in-chief, often nobles. In return for this land they had various obligations, in the same way that their tenants had obligations to them.

estimated that the crown had five times more land by the end of Henry VII's reign than in the reign of Henry VI (*Early Tudor Government, 1485–1558*, 1995, page 114). Where land equated to power this was a very valuable development and ensured that the monarch was much more powerful than any noble, unlike in the preceding period.

It is very difficult to argue that Henry's actions were not successful in controlling the nobility. There was little noble unrest after the defeat of Simnel and the number of 'over-mighty' subjects was definitely reduced. However, Henry himself remained concerned about his own security and it might even be suggested that the increasing repressiveness of his rule would have resulted in unrest or even civil war, had he not died in 1509, as the nobility came under ever-increasing pressure.

### Activity

Use the following chart to provide a summary of the methods used by Henry to control the nobility. For each method note down the ways in which it was both effective and ineffective, award it a mark out of 6 and then make an overall judgement about the effectiveness of the method.

Method	Evidence it was effective	Evidence it was ineffective	Mark/6	Judgement
Order of the Garter				
King's or Great Council				
Bonds and recognisances				
Acts of Attainder				
Limiting retainers				
Feudal rights				
Restoration of crown lands				

### How successfully did Henry VII strengthen central and local government?

Although there had been progress in restoring 'good government' during the second reign of Edward IV (1471–83) and Richard III (1483–85), Henry was determined to ensure that law and order was firmly established after the chaos of the Wars of the Roses. The problem was made worse as Henry lacked experience of both the country and its government. However, most historians agree that Henry was able to overcome the difficulties he faced and restore government at national, regional and local levels.

### How far did Henry change central government?

It must be remembered that the king was at the centre of government. However, he could not rule on his own and needed advice and advisors. The most important element in providing this was the King's Council. The Council was chosen by the king and although there were over 200 councillors during his reign, meetings were attended by a much smaller number, and on most occasions he relied on an inner group so that the efficiency of central government was improved. This inner group was made up of: the Lord Chancellor, Morton; the Lord Privy Seal, Fox; the Lord Treasurer, Dynham; and five others. Henry also used smaller committees from within



the Council, as Richard had done, but made the practice more frequent, with the establishment of a Court of Requests, Court of General Surveyors and the Council Learned in the Law.

Although there has been some debate about the composition of the Council, it differed little from that of the Yorkists as most were either members of the nobility or the Church. However, some of the more important members did come from the gentry. One further change was that Henry did not rely on particular families, but instead drew his chief advisors from the lesser landowners, gentry or professional classes, particularly lawyers, as was seen in the rise of men such as Reginald Bray and Edmund Dudley. In order to exploit his finances the king needed experts in property law and administration and therefore needed men of ability, rather than just birth.

The most famous of the new committees was the Council Learned in the Law. This committee was hated by many because of its links with bonds and recognisances, supervising their collection. This hatred became even more pronounced after 1504 when, under the joint leadership of Empson and Dudley, it ensured that royal rights were thoroughly enforced, causing much resentment.

Although there were some changes to the Council, particularly with the establishment of committees, it was the exploitation of royal rights that was the most noticeable change and caused such hatred that Empson and Dudley were soon removed and executed by Henry VIII on his accession.

## To what extent did Henry restore royal authority in the regions?

In order to ensure that the authority of central government was upheld in the outlying regions of the country, Henry developed the Yorkist use of regional councils in the north, Wales and Ireland. These were the peripheral regions of the country where royal authority had been traditionally limited.

At first, Henry had used the Earl of Northumberland to act as his deputy in the north, but following his death during the Yorkshire rising (see page 11) Henry appointed the Earl of Surrey. The Council of the North not only had responsibility to defend the northern border, but also had administrative and judicial power so that the law could be enforced quickly. However, the major change was in practical terms as the Council in London closely watched the Council of the North's activities and Henry ensured that the members of the Council were appointed by him, rather than Surrey, thus ensuring greater loyalty and enforcement of royal will.

Wales had been a particularly unruly area during the Wars of the Roses due to the absence of continuous and effective rule from London. Although Edward IV had established the Council of Wales and the Marches in 1472, no attempt had been made to create a single system of counties and lordships, or abolish the privileges of Marcher lords, though it had brought some improvement in restoring a degree of law and order. Henry revived the Council in 1493, under the nominal head of his son Arthur, and with the king's Welsh connections and the death and loss of lands by a number of Marcher lords he was able to increase his control.

Ireland, as Yorkist stronghold, was a particular problem for Henry. Direct English control in Ireland was limited to an area around Dublin, known as the Pale; outside of this area it was the influence of the major Irish families, such as the Kildares, that held sway. Although Poyning's Law was passed in 1494, stipulating that Irish parliaments could only be called and pass laws

### Court of Requests

This was part of the Royal Council and dealt with individual requests from ordinary people and hence gained the nickname 'Court for Poor Men's Causes'.

### Court of General Surveyors

This checked the revenue coming in from crown lands and those lands of which the king was feudal overlord.

### Council Learned in the Law

It is usually called the Council Learned and its task was to deal with problems concerning royal lands and rights. It was staffed by men with legal expertise and was important in enforcing bonds and recognisances, so that by the end of Henry's reign it was feared and hated.

with the prior approval of the king, other attempts to increase his authority were limited in their success. Sir Edward Poynings, Henry's deputy in Ireland, failed in his efforts to bring Ulster under greater control. Attempts to increase control in Ireland would be costly and therefore Henry was forced to rely on its rule through the traditional families, with the Earl of Kildare being restored as Lord Deputy.

### How effective was local government?

The Wars of the Roses had seen the breakdown of law and order in many areas and Edward IV had been forced to address this. In doing so he had relied on a number of powerful families, but this reliance had given them enormous amounts of power and influence which meant that they could, and often did, ignore royal commands. Henry wanted to ensure that his laws were obeyed by all his subjects, but faced a serious difficulty in achieving this. He lacked paid officials in the localities to enforce his laws, and instead had to rely on the support of the nobility and gentry to carry out his wishes. Henry was content with this provided they upheld the law and did not disobey it themselves, and relied on men such as the Earl of Shrewsbury in the West Midlands and Lord Hastings in the North Midlands.

#### Justices of the Peace

JPs were the workhorses of the administration. Between 30 and 60 local landowners were appointed for each county. The role was much coveted as a recognition of one's status and some of those appointed saw the position as merely honorary. JPs were magistrates and were responsible for enforcing statutes and royal proclamations.

However, Henry also developed the office of Justice of the Peace. This was not a new position, but in the past these unpaid officials had been either under the influence of larger magnates or had used the system to further their own interests. However, these problems were lessened by the system of bonds imposed on both nobles and gentry who held such offices. Justices of the Peace were appointed annually, and as under Edward IV, Henry VII continued to choose men from the second rank of landowners, meaning that their loyalty was more assured and further weakened the power of the greater nobles. The role of JPs was also widened so that it now included:

- implementing social and economic statutes
- dispensing justice and trying criminal offences
- upholding public order
- replacing suspect members of juries
- acting in cases of non-capital offences without a jury
- rewarding informers
- arresting and questioning poachers
- empowered to grant bail.

Although their power was greatly extended by Henry, JPs were still dependent on other officials bringing offenders to them. However, local officials were often reluctant to act as it made them unpopular and local offices were frequently left unfilled. As a result, Henry was heavily dependent upon goodwill to ensure justice was implemented.

### How important was parliament?

Unlike today, parliament was not a permanent feature of government. The king could summon, dissolve and **prorogue** it when he wished. It was called when the king needed money or to pass laws. As today, it was composed of two Houses, the Lords and the Commons, but the Lords were seen as the more important House and the election of members to the Commons was made by a very small, but wealthy electorate.

The fact that parliament met only seven times during Henry's reign and that four of those occasions were in his first decade is a clear indication of its limited role. However, Henry did use it to help establish and uphold law

and order. It was used to pass Acts of Attainder against nobles, to uphold Henry's claim to the throne and to define the responsibilities of JPs.

**Table 3** Meetings of parliament during Henry's reign.

Date of parliament	Length of session
1485–86	3 months
1487	1 month
1489	1.5 months
1491	0.5 months
1495	2 months
1497	2 months
1504	2.5 months

As Table 3 shows, even when parliament met, the meetings were usually brief. There were a number of reasons for this:

- Henry wanted to avoid asking the country for money as it could cause disquiet, as happened in 1489 and 1497, and therefore found other ways to raise funds (see pages 22–24).
- Henry avoided war as much as possible so needed to raise less money.
- Parliament was used to pass Acts of Attainder and much of these were either at the start or end of his reign.
- Parliament's role as a court of law was being fulfilled by other courts, such as the Council Learned in the Law (see page 19).

Henry's major concern had been to restore law and order as this would bring stability and therefore support after the unrest of the previous years. Although there were still problems, such as poor communications or the reliance on unpaid officials to implement policies at a local level, much had been done to improve the situation. Men were increasingly willing to take on roles such as JPs as it brought them social prestige and increased status. As a result, strong leadership from the king, increased central control and the careful selection of officers meant that law and order was more firmly established than it had been at the start of the reign.

### Activity

Using the information in this section, copy and complete the following balance sheet for each of the areas of government.

Area of government	Successes	Failures	Mark/6	Explanation of judgement
Central government				
Regional government				
Local government				
Parliament				

## How successfully did Henry VII restore royal finances?

Henry was aware of the importance of strong finances if he was to secure the throne. They would allow him to raise forces to put down unrest and, on his death, provide his son with the resources to fight any challenger. Henry attempted to achieve strong royal finances in three ways:

- 1 Reorganise financial administration
- 2 Exploit sources of **ordinary revenue**
- 3 Increase income from **extraordinary revenue**

However, there were difficulties associated with such policies; most notably, attempts to increase income would face opposition from those who were forced to pay, particularly as the king was expected to 'live off his own'. This difficulty had already been exposed in the Yorkshire and Cornish tax rebellions (see pages 11–12). Despite this, it was evident that changes had to be made as in the first year of his reign he received only £11,700 from his lands, whereas Richard III had received £29,000. Such was the poor financial situation that he had to take out loans to pay for his coronation and marriage and in 1487 there was not enough money to pay for celebrations at Windsor for the feast of St George.

### Feudal dues

This was money paid to the king by those who held land from him in return for avoiding military service.

### The French pension

This was negotiated as part of the Treaty of Étaples in 1492. There had been a similar agreement between the King of France and Edward IV in 1475 by which the French paid the English to remove their armies from French soil. Henry was promised £159,000 to cover the cost of the war; this was to be paid in annual amounts of about £5000.

## To what extent did Henry change financial administration?

During the Middle Ages monarchs had used the Exchequer to administer crown finance; its role had been to receive and pay out money and audit accounts. However, it was slow in both collecting money and auditing accounts. Edward IV had replaced it with the Chamber system, which was more flexible and informal and had allowed him to exert greater control over finance. When Henry came to the throne he had reverted back to the Exchequer, but by 1487 he had realised its limitations and began to restore the use of the Chamber system, so that by the 1490s it had returned to its central role of managing:

- crown lands
- feudal dues
- profits from justice
- the French pension.

This meant that it handled all income except customs duties, which remained under the Exchequer. The change also meant that the king's Privy Chamber underwent changes, with increased importance for the Treasurer of the Chamber and officials such as the Gentlemen of the Bedchamber. As a result of these developments Henry had a much closer control of his finances.

## How successfully did Henry exploit his financial resources?

Kings had two sources of income: the **ordinary and extraordinary revenue**. Ordinary revenue came in yearly from crown lands, customs and profits from justice and feudal dues, although the amounts varied. Meanwhile, extraordinary revenue was not regular and was usually raised only in times of need from taxation, or in times of emergency from borrowing.

## Ordinary revenue

The most important source of ordinary revenue was crown lands. Henry not only maximised his income from existing lands, but also increased the amount of land the crown held so that estimates have suggested it was five times larger at the end of his reign than under Henry VI. This was achieved through the 1486 Act of Resumption and seizure of land from those declared traitors (attainted). As a result, income from crown lands rose from £29,000 on the death of Richard to £42,000 by 1509. However, in order to avoid antagonising the nobility, Henry did not take back all the land to which he was entitled. Perhaps the greatest success in this area was the Duchy of Lancaster as Henry was able to use skilful management to increase the income from its lands ten-fold.

Not all of Henry's financial policies were a success. Under Edward IV custom duties had brought in about £70,000 per annum and, although by the end of his reign they were still providing a third of the ordinary revenue, the average income had dropped to £40,000. Henry did try to imitate Edward's methods, but smuggling was a problem and the income from trade depended heavily upon the relationship between European powers, which Henry was unable to control.

The profits from justice varied from year to year, but Henry certainly did his best to exploit the system, causing some to claim after his death that he charged some subjects with crimes merely to be able to fine them. However, even if this was not true, the king often punished by fines rather than imprisonment, as in the case of the Cornish rebels or the Earl of Northumberland, who was fined £10,000 for raping a royal ward.

Income from feudal dues rose dramatically during Henry's reign. He was determined to enforce these rights and fully exploited income from wardship and marriage, livery and the fine of 'relief'. The consequence was that income rose from under £350 per annum in 1487 to over £6000 in 1507. The final area of ordinary income were bonds and recognisances, which were also exploited to their full (see page 16).

### Wardship

When a child or person under the age of majority (fourteen) inherited land they were placed under the protection of the monarch until they came of age. During this period the crown or its agents ran the estates and took the income.

## Extraordinary revenue

The most frequent source of extraordinary income came from parliamentary taxation and although Henry was determined to increase his revenue he did not misuse this source or means of raising money. The Yorkshire and Cornish Rebellions showed how unpopular taxation was and Henry was therefore cautious in his demands. He asked for money from parliament only in exceptional circumstances, such as for defeating Simnel or resisting the Scottish invasion in support of Warbeck. However, the amount collected varied and, because the sums levied were based on out of date assessments of wealth, they did not bring in the amounts they should have done. As a result, Henry never successfully tapped the wealth of the country.

In times of emergency Henry could ask his wealthy subjects for loans and, although it is estimated that this brought in £203,000 during his reign, he had little choice but to repay those who he owed. However, benevolences were slightly different as these were forced loans where there was no repayment. On these occasions subjects were asked to help the king as a sign of their support at a time of crisis and was used in 1491 to raise money for an expedition against France, bringing in £48,500. Although it was effective, the method could not be used on a regular basis as it would provoke resentment.



## Activity

- 1 In light of passages 1 and 2 and further research, do you think that Henry VII was ever secure? Explain your answer
- 2 Using the information in this chapter, find information to support the two views:
  - Henry VII was secure
  - Henry VII was never secure
 Which view do you find more convincing, and why?
- 3 If you think Henry was secure, when do you think this was achieved and why? If you think that Henry was never secure, why?

## Passage 1

*Henry VII never felt entirely secure on his throne. Even after the capture of Edmund de la Pole in 1506, his brother, Richard, was still roaming Europe, although with little success. The king's only direct male heir was the young Prince Henry. He faced rebellions from his own subjects over demands for money, which showed that he could only rely on their loyalty to a limited extent. The challenge from former Yorkists, particularly the Earl of Suffolk, was unnerving, especially since they had sworn loyalty to Henry. Worse still was the threat from the pretenders, Simnel and Warbeck, because of their entanglements with foreign powers and the consequent fear of invasion. It is easy to overlook how great these dangers were when reviewing the successful policies Henry pursued in other areas of government.*

Caroline Rogers and Roger Turvey, *Henry VII*, 2005

## Passage 2

*Although it was not until the latter years of his reign that Henry VII could feel secure, he was never seriously challenged. However, it is the benefit of hindsight that allows historians to see that the Battle of Bosworth was the end of the Wars of the Roses and not the start of another series of struggles for the throne of England. The Yorkists were not reconciled to his rule, however it is important not to exaggerate the dynastic threat facing Henry. He was fortunate in that there was an absence of males of royal blood, unlike the situation under Edward IV, with the result that there was no obvious focus for political discontent. Fortunately for Henry, many of the potential claimants to the throne had been killed either during the Wars of the Roses or early in his reign. The Earl of Warwick had been executed a week after Warbeck, and so the nearest Yorkist claimant was now the Earl of Suffolk.*

Nicholas Fellows, *Disorder and Rebellion in Tudor England*, 2001

## Further research

- C. Carpenter, *The Wars of the Roses, Politics and the Constitution in England 1437–1509*, 1997
- S.B. Chrimes, *Henry VII*, 1972
- C.S.L. Davies, *Peace, Print and Protestantism*, 1995
- N. Fellows, *Disorder and Rebellion in Tudor England*, 2001
- A. Grant, *Henry VII*, 1985
- J.R. Lander, *Government and Community*, 1980

# Revise, Review, Reflect

## Revision for the Period Studies Essay

It is important, and will be more productive, if you make your revision **active** rather than simply try to learn large amounts of factual material about either the Early Tudors or Elizabethan England. In revising the material you should **keep on developing** the skills that you need for this element of the paper:

- focusing on the issue in the question
- analysing the issues
- evaluating the relative importance of the issues and factors
- reaching supported judgements about the issue in the question.

Having studied all four key topics, you will also be able to see the whole period in its broader context, rather than seeing each key topic in isolation.

**This is a good time to review** some of the judgements you made about the issues and questions raised in the earlier chapters.

**A good starting point** is to consider the **key issues** listed at the start of each chapter. When you first studied the chapter you may have noted down your view of each question; it would be valuable to revisit that view and decide in light of further study whether you want to change that view. It would be a good idea to plan an answer to each of these **key issues**. This will not only ensure that you have sufficient material available when you reach the examination room, but also ensure you have thought about issues around which examination questions are likely to be set.

Remember when planning answers:

- What is your overall view about the question?
- What issues do you need to cover?
- What would be your opening sentences for each paragraph?
- What evidence would you use to support or challenge the idea you have raised in each sentence?

A planning sheet, such as the one below, can provide a structure to help with this:

Essay title		
View about question:		
Key ideas:		
Opening sentence	Evidence to support	Evidence to challenge
Judgement		