

Life in Tudor England with Ellie the Elephant

Learning objective: To understand key aspects of daily life, fashion, and social hierarchy during the Tudor period.

Read the text carefully and answer the questions below using full sentences.

Ellie the elephant loves exploring history, especially the colourful Tudor period. The Tudors ruled England from 1485 to 1603. Life was very different depending on your status. The monarch and the wealthy nobles lived in grand houses with chimneys and large glass windows, which were a sign of great riches. They wore elaborate clothes made of velvet and silk, often decorated with expensive jewels. A popular fashion for both men and women was the 'ruff', a stiff, pleated collar worn around the neck.

In contrast, most people were farmers or labourers. They lived in small, timber-framed cottages with thatched roofs and dirt floors. Their diet was simple, consisting mostly of pottage, a thick vegetable soup, and dark bread. While the rich feasted on roasted meats and exotic spices, commoners had to work from sunrise to sunset just to afford the basics. Even a loaf of bread could cost a few pennies. Despite these differences, everyone enjoyed local festivals and community markets, where music and dancing brought the village together under the watchful eye of the local church.

Word bank: Monarch · Hierarchy · Tudor · Sumptuary laws · Ruff · Peasant

1. What are two specific materials that wealthy Tudors used to make their clothing? (2 marks)

2. According to the text, what was a 'ruff' and who wore it? (2 marks)

3. Why do you think glass windows were considered a sign of wealth in Tudor times? (2 marks)

4. How can we tell that there was a large gap between the lives of the rich and the poor? (2 marks)

5. If you lived in the Tudor period, would you rather be a wealthy noble or a farmer? Explain your reasons. (2 marks)

Draw: Draw a scene showing a Tudor village, including a grand house with a chimney on one side and a small timber-framed cottage with a thatched roof on the other.



Extension challenge: Research what 'pottage' was. Write a short recipe for what might be in a typical Tudor vegetable soup, ensuring you only use ingredients that were available in England in the 1500s.