Life in Tudor Times with Ellie the Elephant

Learning objective: To understand key features of life in the Tudor period and identify how people lived.

Read the passage carefully with Ellie the Elephant, then answer the questions below to test your historical knowledge.

Ellie the Elephant loves to remember the past. She often thinks about the Tudor period, which began in 1485 when Henry VII became King. During this time, England changed a lot. Most people lived in the countryside and worked as farmers, while others lived in towns as busy merchants. Tudor houses were very distinctive, built with 'half-timbered' frames made of dark wood and filled with white plaster. Many poorer families lived in small cottages with roofs made of dried reeds called thatch.

What did they eat? Most families ate a thick soup called pottage, usually made from vegetables, oats, and sometimes a little bit of bacon if they were lucky. Meat was expensive, often costing several pounds for a small joint, so it was a rare treat for ordinary people. Children in the Tudor era did not have many toys like we do today. They played with simple wooden dolls or played games like skipping and hoop-rolling in the streets. Even though life was hard work, the Tudors loved music, dancing, and grand celebrations whenever a monarch visited their town.

Word bank: Tudor · monarch · half-timbered · thatch · pottage · merchants

1. What materials were used to build the roofs of many Tudor cottages? (2 marks)

2. According to the text, what was the main ingredient of pottage? (1 mark)

3. Why do you think meat was a rare treat for most Tudor families? (2 marks)

4. How can you tell that Tudor children enjoyed active play? (2 marks)

5. If you could visit a Tudor town for one day, would you rather be a merchant or a farmer? Give a reason for your answer. (3 marks)

Draw: Draw a Tudor house with a half-timbered frame and a thatched roof, and add a picture of a Tudor child playing with a wooden hoop.

Extension challenge: Research what clothes Tudor children wore and write three sentences describing their outfits compared to the clothes you wear today.