



The Last Wife

Enrichment Guide

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Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre is proud to call Manitoba home. Royal MTC is located in Winnipeg on Treaty 1, the traditional territory of the Anishinaabeg, Inninewak, Anishinewak, Dakota Oyate, and Denesuline, and the National Homeland of the Red River Métis. We are thankful for the benefits sharing this land has afforded us, acknowledge the responsibilities of the Treaties, and embrace the opportunity to partner with Indigenous communities in spirit of reconciliation and collaboration.

The Role of the Audience

Theatre needs its audience! We are happy to have you here. Every staff person, actor, and crew member backstage plays an important part in your experience, and you also have a role in the experience of cast, crew and the people around you.

Arrive Early: Please make sure you give yourself enough time to find your seat before the performance starts. Latecomers may not be admitted to a performance. We ask groups to arrive at least 20-30 minutes before the show.

Cell Phones and Other Electronic Devices: Please **turn off** your cell phone/mp3 player/gaming system/camera/smart watch. Texting, surfing, and gaming during performances is very distracting for the performers and other audience members. Using cameras and recording devices during a performance is **never** allowed.

Talking During the Performance: Even when you whisper, you can be heard by performers and people around you. Unless it is a relaxed performance, disruptive patrons will be removed from the theatre. Please wait until after the performance to share your words with others.

Food/Drinks: Food and outside drinks are not allowed in the theatre. When there is an intermission, snacks and drinks may be available for purchase. There is complimentary water in the lobby.

Dress: There is no dress code at the Royal MTC, but we respectfully ask you not to wear hats in the theatre or block the view of those behind you. Please do not wear strong scents like perfume or body spray. We thank all patrons for their cooperation.

Leaving During the Performance: If you leave the theatre, you will be readmitted at the discretion of Front of House staff. If readmitted, you may be placed in an empty seat at the back of the auditorium instead of your original seat.

Being Asked to Leave: The theatre staff has, and will exercise, the right to ask any member of the audience to leave if that person is being inappropriate or disruptive including (but not limited to): talking, using devices that produce light or sound, and deliberately interfering with an actor or the performance (tripping, throwing items on or near the stage, etc.).

Talkbacks: A short question and answer period with the actors takes place after student matinees, first Tuesday evening shows, and some public matinees. While watching the show, make a mental note of questions to ask the actors about the production or life in the theatre. Our artists deserve to be treated with respect! It's okay to have a negative opinion, but this is your chance to ask questions and understand the performance or process, not to criticize. If you have a concern, see the house manager after the show and they will make sure your feedback gets to the appropriate Royal MTC staff.

Enjoy the show: Laugh, cry, gasp – responding to the performance is part of the nature of theatre! As you get involved in the story, try to balance your reactions with respecting the people around you. The curtain call is part of the performance too – it gives you a chance to thank all the artists for their hard work with applause, and for them to thank you for your attention. We all appreciate when you stay at your seat and join in the applause!

About the Playwright

Kate Hennig has been active as an actor, director, and playwright for over 40 years. She has worked for and with such institutions as Nightwood and Tarragon Theatres, Blythe, Shaw and Stratford festivals, Theatre Passe Muraille, and many more. *The Last Wife* is the first in a trilogy of plays produced between 2015 and 2019 that study power and gender through the stories surrounding the Tudor Queens – The Queenmaker Plays: *The Last Wife*, *The Virgin Trial*, and *The Mother's Daughter*. Following these plays, she continues to write, act and direct, and served as Associate Artistic Director (2017-20) and as Director of Artist Development (2020-21) at the Shaw Festival. Kate's current writing projects include: *Sex in the '80s*, a provocative comedy about how sexual ethics change with time; *The Ducking Chair*, an interactive solo show where the audience decides whether to save or drown a witch; *The Woman in White*, an adaptation of the sensational 19th century novel by Wilkie Collins; and *The Salon*, an imagined gathering of the mistresses of Charles the Second on the evening of his death. Born in England and raised in Alberta, Kate now lives and writes in Stratford, Ontario.

See the entire creative team and cast for Royal MTC's production, including their biographies, [on our website](#), where you can also download the Ovation program.

Characters

KATE (Katherine Parr) Intelligent, politically astute, and fiercely independent, Kate is Henry's last wife. She is deeply in love with Thom but accepts marriage to the king for survival, position and influence. A skilled negotiator, she balances personal ambition with genuine concern for the future of England and Henry's children; fighting especially for his daughter's place in the succession of the throne.

BESS (Princess Elizabeth I) Clever, strong-willed, and insightful, young Bess has an open and kind heart and is deeply influenced by Kate's guidance. She learns the art of politics and diplomacy from her stepmother, shaping the formidable queen she will one day become. Her resilience and wit make her a compelling presence, even as a child.

MARY (Princess Mary I) Serious, devout, and politically aware, Mary begins the play resenting her father for his cruelty. She is torn between loyalty to her mother's memory and fealty to her father, the King. She is wary of Kate but recognizes her intelligence. As the eldest child, she understands the instability of the Tudor court and is determined to protect her position and legacy.

HENRY (Henry VIII) Aging, powerful, and mercurial, Henry is both a charismatic leader and a dangerously unpredictable ruler. He is drawn to Katherine's intellect and strength, yet his insecurity and need for control make their relationship volatile. He craves loyalty and love but often destroys those who challenge his authority.

THOM (Thomas Seymour) Charming, passionate, and ambitious, Thom is Kate's true love. He is reckless and sometimes selfish, but he genuinely cares for Kate and resents her marriage to Henry. His desire for power and status drives his decisions, making him both a romantic hero and a tragic figure.

EDDIE (Edward VI) The young prince, heir to the throne.

Content Overview

This section may contain spoilers.

Strong language. Reference to sexual violence/rape, other violence, murder and execution; some suggestive content. For further details, please [visit our recommendations page](#).

Playwright's Notes

This is an imagining of history. Oh yes, it is based on actual people and events, and though portions of it are deliciously accurate, some may offend the historically concise among you, while still others are completely and utterly fabricated. My priority in choosing must always favour the dramatic. What I am deeply interested in is the humanity of these iconic historical characters. I want to imagine what made them do what they did, just as I want to imagine what made Margaret Thatcher, George Bush Jr. and Bashar al-Assad do what they did. They are human after all. They have mothers, fathers, siblings and children. One expects that they play tennis, they watch television, they read books; they laugh, they worry, they drink too much coffee from time to time. It fascinates me to create these personal possibilities, and then imagine how they might lead to some of the major decisions that history records. It calls our political self-righteousness into question. Katherine Parr was an accomplished woman who we should all know more about. I hope this play encourages you to pick up a book about her, and explore this chapter in our feminist past. Then imagine your own version of her story. It's really all any of us can do.

Synopsis

This section contains spoilers

1: Kate and Thom alone. Seems intimate. Kate is still married to John. Thom is challenging John's ability to protect her, and she admits there was the one time he didn't. Henry interrupts and after some banter establishing Kate's wit and the Kings interest, informs Thom he will be sent to Holland as a representative of the crown. In a moment alone, the king expresses his continuing wishes to pursue Kate, and she dodges making any commitment, recognizing his power. Thom is allowed to return and they make an agreement to continue meeting when he is in town, despite the danger.

2: Henry has Mary help him to hide a poem (titled Respect, apparently a real thing that happened) in a book from Kate's room.

3: John has died and Jane has been called to the king to answer his proposal. She tries to counter, and it leads to a physical altercation. He expresses that he feels she is the only one that can help his son succeed him, and that his son is the priority. She admits to having been raped, and her condition is the right to refuse in the bedroom. He surprises her by agreeing. She requests he bring his first child Elizabeth (Bess) back to be part of the household, as a gift to her.

4: Bess is talking to Kate about the wedding, and about being back. They discuss how Mary and Elizabeth have lost title, and how the idea of being queen speaks to them. Jane admits her dream of teaching Elizabeth in the hopes that the country could one day “have two smart people running it”

5: They marry. He has a vow regarding her obeying him in bed put in the vows.

6: Kate expresses anger about the vows following the ceremony. He says it was for appearances. She convinces Henry to let her take care of his leg. She shares about her mother, and how she doesn't like the way he treats his daughters.

7: Thom is back from Holland and Kate finds him visiting with his nephew, Eddie. They speak to each other, communicating their desires through Thom and Eddie's game. After he leaves, Kate gauges how Eddie feels about his sisters and their family relationships.

8: Kate convinces Mary and Bess to take an oath that will help return her to the king's favour, and convinces Henry to reinstate them into the line of succession.

9: Henry and Thom discuss a coming war. Kate enters and Henry boasts about how she has been influencing him, and his children's lives.

10: Family dinner. Henry takes exception to the lessons Kate has been teaching and everyone but Eddie has a huge fight. Bess is told that she is to leave again.

11: Thom has snuck into Kate's room drunk. He talks about how much he misses her and loves her and she fails to communicate that back. He leaves sadly as they hear Henry approaching.

12: Henry enters the room singing a song he wrote in his youth. He apologizes and she does as well. She offers to sleep with him.

13: Eddie comes to their room having had a nightmare that Kate has been killed and he couldn't stop it.

14: Kate convinces Henry to name her regent while Henry is at war.

15: Henry names Kate Regent.

16: Kate and the girls are managing affairs. Mary is cynical about their prospects, while Bess thinks seriously about what they could achieve. Thom arrives with a warning about the way Kate is doing things but she rejects his advice and he leaves on a bad note.

17: Henry comes home. At first it seems he is impressed with her handling of things. Later when she offers to help with his workload going forward, he becomes enraged and walks out.

18: Kate confides in Mary, asking how to tell when Henry is going to kill her. Mary suggests that she threatened him, that his insecurity causes him to get rid of those who challenge him. Her advice is to do needlepoint and sleep with him.

19: Kate tries to talk to Henry, but only angers him further. He rages at her and Thom tells her that he has signed a warrant for her to be killed, and that he is supposed to deliver it. Thom tells her to sleep with him to convince him to reverse it. She does.

20: Thom has tried to deliver the warrant but the king beats him and tears it up. Kate stands between them.

21: Henry is ill enough he can't sleep with Kate anymore. He tells her he is going away. He has named her as protector with a seat on an advisory for Eddie.

22: On his deathbed, Henry refuses to let the women in. Kate has lost her seat on the council after the council voted her out. Eddie is only allowed to write her letters. Kate and Thom resume their romance.

23: Kate and Thom are happy to be back together.

24: Mary exposes that Thom has been caught fooling around with Bess, and had sent Bess and Mary both love letters before he and Kate married. Thom makes excuses and explanations, citing court politics. Kate arranges for Bess to leave for a time to ensure that no scandal comes out that might complicate her place in succession.

25 (epilogue): Mary and Bess have gathered Kate's things from the Seymor estate. Eddie killed Thom and is now also dead. They place her things with her and say a few words, then leave to "do great things."

Context and Related Resources

1500s Feminism vs. Patriarchy

Kate Hennig includes the following quote at the beginning of her script: “There’s something deeply, mercilessly wrong in the way the world treats women. Gender equality is the single most important struggle on the planet. Patriarchy is a crime against humanity.”— Stephen Lewis, Stratford Festival Forum, 2013

At the time of King Henry VIII’s rule, women’s primary role was mostly domestic; however, their lives weren’t well documented. That being said, there was more literacy than previously seen among women, and women did hold more influence, though mostly via their husbands.

As we watch Catherine Parr work to educate Henry’s daughters in this play, there are several ways we are reminded of this. Women are referred to as livestock. Every time Catherine moves the needle in the right direction, her position, and that of the girls, is that much more vulnerable.

First Henry, then Thom, tell Kate “You can’t just flip the entire system on its head [...] you have to follow the rules that are in place.” When Henry says this to her, she goes on to convince him to leave her as Regent while he is at war. She has incredible influence on him, and uses it to prepare the girls to be Queens one day. When Thom says this to her, he speaks on behalf of an already decided council who has cut her out. When she responds, “and who got to make those rules in the first place” Thom holds no power to negotiate, he speaks on behalf of the council (of men), and “It is done.” This is representative of the time – a woman may work within her marriage and wield incredible influence, but a woman on her own against the established patriarchy is vulnerable.

There are further examples, both in the play and without. Mary’s comments about Kate’s “Queen School” start with questioning the point of becoming queen in the system at all – her regarding the point of becoming queen “so that we can barter our own cherry instead of them doing it for us” speaks this idea, that they will still be bound by the same patriarchal system.

This conversation, how the patriarchy can be challenged from within, leads to the bigger discussion of power. Who has power in the play, how do they express that power? Henry has incredible power, as king, as head of the church, as a husband and as a man. Henry sleeps with who he likes, regardless of who he is married to, with no repercussions. Henry marries who he likes, and gets rid of wives he doesn’t want one way or another (two divorces, two beheadings). The use of sex for control is seen throughout, not only in terms of marriages as political tools, but rape as a weapon of land disputes, and rumour as a political weapon. Although the play demonstrates women wielding power successfully, it is incredibly risky, and does little to break down the patriarchal systems of the time.

The Tudors

Tudor England came out of a succession war, named “The War of the Roses.” The War of the Roses was fought for the throne over many years and through much loss of life, and so the idea of ensuring clear succession was hugely important, impacting those who came after.

Henry the Seventh had two sons, Henry the Eighth being the second. He was raised to be clergy in the Catholic faith, learning theology rather than how to be a ruler. His older brother’s death resulted in him becoming heir later on. His brother had married Katherine of Aragon to create an alliance with Spain, and the family didn’t want to lose that alliance, so they had the first marriage annulled and she was married to Henry when he was old enough.

Katherine of Aragon lost many pregnancies, only having one child with Henry, a girl named Mary. After many years, Henry decided he needed to try for a boy with someone else. He tried to have his marriage to Katherine of Aragon annulled, but this time, the Pope said no. After a long legal battle, during which Mary was forbidden contact with her mother, Henry couldn’t convince the Pope to annul the marriage and finally broke with the church in order to do so. He created the Church of England, of which he was the head, and appropriated funds and lands from the Catholic Church to enrich the kingdom.

Henry VIII’s second wife, Anne Boleyn, was a lady of waiting to Katherine of Aragon. Their marriage produced Elizabeth, and more lost pregnancies. Charges were filed against her, seemingly made up, and she was executed shortly after.

Henry the eighth’s third wife, Jane Seymour, finally produced a male heir for Henry, however, she died after complications from childbirth. Edward was raised to be Henry’s successor, and Mary and Elizabeth were disenfranchised.

Henry the eighth’s sixth wife, Katherine Parr, was integral in ensuring Mary and Elizabeth received training and reinstatement to the line of succession. Because of the time, when they married, their husband would become the King, but the line would pass to them.

When Henry died, Edward did ascend to the throne, and ruled for several years. He was kept away from Katherine Parr and tried to name Lady Jane Grey as his successor before he died of illness. She ruled briefly, but Mary successfully ascended soon after. Mary had held on to her Catholicism and tried to return the country to Catholicism during her short reign. Due to her aggressive and violent ways of dealing with those who opposed this, she was given the nickname “Bloody Mary”.

Elizabeth succeeded Mary, and turned the country back from Catholicism once more. She ruled for over forty years, and never married or had children. She was not only pivotal in reforming the church, but made huge reforms to governing structures, such as the privy

council. The huge changes that occurred during the reign of the Tudors really set the stage for how England developed into what we see today.

Related Resource Link: Watch [The Tudors Explained in 13 Minutes](#) on YouTube for some extra background or [read a Who's Who of the family](#) including all six wives.

Religious Reform

Did Henry the VIII really enact religious reforms in order to get a divorce? I mean...

Henry needed an heir, and he believed he needed a new wife to get one. Also, he wanted to make Anne Boleyn his mistress, but she wouldn't unless he married her. According to History.com, normally the Pope would have gone along with it, but due to geopolitics, instead he drew out the proceedings, until Henry took matters into his own hands.

Henry had studied theology and had been a huge ally to the Pope previously, even publicly feuding with seminal Protestant thinker Martin Luther less than ten years earlier. However, politically, becoming the head of a new Church of England was both convenient for ending his marriage, as well as enriching the country.

Mary was 17 when the marriage was annulled, and remained faithful to Catholicism. When she became queen, she tried to reinstate Catholicism, however she died after only 5 years, and Elizabeth managed, in nearly 45 years as the next ruler, to successfully complete the reformation Henry and Edward had begun.

A Sidequest: Parr's Wikipedia is Wild

While you might not need to research Catherine/Katherine Parr further to understand the play, there are a lot of interesting events in her life, including:

- Her husband being abducted, and her self and stepchildren being held hostage
- Being pursued by two men at once, marrying first Henry VIII but marrying the other dude secretly months after Henry died.
- Being plotted against by Henry's advisors and having the arrest warrant lifted by convincing Henry she was just trying to distract him from his painful leg, and then almost getting arrested anyways but that advisor being dismissed, because he didn't get the memo
- Being the first queen published under her own name
- Getting pregnant for the first time in her 4th marriage at thirty five, during a time when her husband and her stepdaughter maybe had a fling, that she maybe helped with, and who he eventually was arrested for trying to marry after Catherine had died.
- Between her death in 1548, and 1817 grave was opened many times, and moved, and lost, and people kept taking little bits of her, and once threw her body in the garbage before being moved again, and eventually she was found in a chapel crypt as a skeleton. Some of her is in a museum.

Glossary and Mentions

Annexing (land) - one country taking part of another country for their own.

Aristotle - ancient Greek philosopher, studied in Henry 8s time

Bastard - a child of two people who are not married

Bugger - a term of endearment given to someone annoying, but also, someone who participates in anal sex, or in some other way a heretic. The way modern slang is used in this play, and this word being particularly used to a small child, it is safe to assume it is not meant to be derogatory.

Capricious - unpredictably moody

Choleric humour - aggressive and short tempered. The four humours were a way that folks in this time and place understood and described medical and psychological concerns through the body systems various fluids and their balance or imbalance.

Cinched - tightened. A garment with a cinched waist would be one that was tight at the waist.

Confab - a casual discussion

Conjugal relationship - marriage. In play, Kate is referring sexual relations.

Connotation - the meaning of a word beyond the definition. How the word makes you feel.

Connubial - an adjective referring to marriage

“Creaming the French” - destroying them in battle or war

Croaks - informally used in the play, meaning “dies”

Deter - stop from

Ditch-sitters - derogatory...to do with physical appearance? Unclear

Euphemism - an expression used to tone down a harsh, embarrassing, overly sexual, or otherwise impolite message

Euripedes - one of the only Greek playwrights whose Tragedies have survived. Studied during King Henry 8s time

Fascist - used informally by Henry about himself in this play to mean someone who uses authority to violently suppress those challenge him.

Filly- young female horse

Galliard (dance) - a renaissance partner dance, upbeat, counted in threes

Heifers - female cows

Heresy - an opinion that goes against an established belief (in this time, Catholicism or Protestantism, dependent on which side you were on.

Inane – stupid

Liberal tendencies - in this case, meaning more relaxed or less strict in enforcing doctrine, not the modern political party

“Liming your bush” - limestone is added in a garden in order to reduce soil acidity. Mary is using wordplay to suggest sex, insinuating that Thom is trying to win her favour.

Ludicrous - ridiculous

Masque - a type of dance party where peoples faces were covered in masks

Melancholic - another of the humours, a personality cold and intellectual

Pansy - in this instance, an insult Henry uses to immaculate Thom, meaning he is a weakling, delicate, overly pretty

Pilfered - stolen

Plato’s Republic/Platonic friend - Henry catches Thom and Kate in a lie in the first scene by the revelation that Kate is incredibly educated, having read Plato in Latin, and goes on to discover she speaks French and Italian, but when she can’t respond to Spanish he asks Thom to translate for his platonic friend.

Plutarch - a Greek Platonist philosopher, another who would have been studied in Henry 8s time.

Privy council - a group of advisors for the ruler of the time, who assisted running the affairs of state.

Prudence - cautiousness in reasoning and decision-making

Reformation - in this case, The Reformation, the split of the English from

Catholicism, reforming their religious beliefs and forming the Anglican Church, independent of Rome and the Pope. It was a big deal.

Regent - a regent is appointed to temporarily rule in place of the monarch when they are too young, unfit to rule or have to be away. Kate is made Regent while Henry is at war.

Rude - Edward uses the word rude to describe his writing with in a letter to Kate. In this case it means rudimentary, rather than unkind.

Sedition - trying to convince people to rise up against they ruler.

“So then we can bargain away our own cherry instead of them doing it for us?” - Mary suggests that the ability to become a queen would only give them the authority to follow the same paths that existed now, in particular, that they would choose their own politically advantageous husband. Women were supposed to be virgins when they were married, she is using cherry as a euphemism for virgin to make her point.

“Taking the air” - stepping out to get some fresh air, go outside

Tatting - a process of making lace by hand using knots

Temperance - the ability to be self-restrained

Troubadour - a lyric poet who composed songs in for court

Tuetonic women - written about during the Roman Empire, it is unclear if they were pre-germanic or celtic groups. One story recounted that rather than be exterminated by the Romans, a group of Teutonic women killed their own children and then each other before they could be taken. Henry likely means “northern” women, while also implying they are uncivilized, strange or aggressive. He uses this word as a part of a speech as he is sending Thom away to get

him away from Kate, and probably intends to scare him with the kind of welcome he will receive.

“Wiping out the estates” - the king has the authority to take land from his subjects, threatening wiping out the estates would mean that he was threatening to take Kate’s husband’s land away, and thus his home, wealth, and ability to make money in the future.

Explore More: Recommended Library Reading List

Explore More writing about Katherine Parr

Katherine the Queen: The Remarkable Life of Katherine Parr, The Last Wife of Henry VIII by Linda Porter. The sixth and final wife of Henry VIII was once seen as a nobody, but she is also known as the one that survived. Far from a nobody, she was intelligent, ambitious, and known to have a strong temper. Her life was dramatic even before becoming queen. Explore her life close-up with Linda Porter’s biography. B CATHARINE PARR 2010

Katharine Parr, The Sixth Wife: a Novel, by Alison Weir

The final in Weir’s Tudor series, Katharine is in love with Sir Thomas Seymour when Henry fixes his eyes on her. Four years into their marriage Henry dies, leaving the throne to 9-year-old Edward, a puppet of the courtiers. Thrilled by her chance to marry her true love, Katharine doesn’t know she is just a stepping stone for Thomas’ chance at the throne. FICTION WEIR

Explore More Royal Families

Love and Louis XIV : The Women in the Life of the Sun King, by Antonia Fraser

Cross the English Channel from Henry VIII’s England to the court of France’s Louis XIV nearly a century later. This work explores the so-called Sun King’s relationships with women. From mother to the sometimes fluid categories of sisters-in-law, governesses, wives, and mistresses. Delve into this vivid depiction of the king and the women that surrounded him. B LOUIS XIV 2006

Alix and Nicky: The Passion of the last Tsar and Tsarina, by Virginia Rounding

Dive into another power couple’s journey. Find out how Emperor Nicholas II and his wife Alexandra’s lives are now shaped by the divisive opinions characterizing them. Venerated saints, innocent victims or heralds of revolution and imperial doom. A tragic love story. 947.083092 NICHOLAS II 2012

Explore More Treatment of Women, Power, and Rights

The Queen and the Heretic: How Two Women Changed the Religion of England, by Derek Wilson. Catherine Parr and Anne Askew were Protestants and their beliefs threatened their lives. Anne, a poet and a preacher was deemed a heretic and burned at the stake. Powerful men at court sought to bring Catherine down. Learn about their lives and those of women at various social strata. 942.052092 WILSON 2018

Sex with Kings : Five Hundred Years of Adultery, Power, Rivalry, and Revenge, by Eleanor Herman. A meticulously researched romp into five centuries worth of the scandalous sex lives of kings. This witty and irresistible book offers up insights into the real lives and motivations of some of Europe's most famous and influential royal mistresses. 940.099 HERMAN 2005

Explore More Modern Takes on Royalty

The Royal We, by Heather Cocks & Jessica Morgan

For a more light-hearted take on the intricacies and drama of royal matrimony, this romance novel tells the story of Bex, an American studying in Oxford who finds herself falling in love with Nick, who just happens to be the heir to the British throne. Charming and humourous, exploring the sacrifices required when one's romance is lived in the spotlight.

FICTION ROM COCKS



There are 1.4 million books, movies, audiobooks, eBooks and more at the Winnipeg Public Library, and all you need to borrow them is your library card. There are 20 locations throughout the city and there's an online catalogue for requesting items for pick-up at your library of convenience. An e-Library has thousands of eBooks, eAudiobooks and more! All free with your card.

Visit us at Winnipeg.ca/library

Discussion and Activities

Pre-Show

The Overgrown Family Tree (ELA 10.A2)

Henry VIII has a very wildly overgrown family tree, and we come into the play at the very end. Ours is the last Kate - the one who has inherited the children of three of the five previous wives. In order to wrap your head around Kate's mission, Mary's anger and Elizabeth's vision, and the family dynamics throughout the play, it helps to know a bit about that convoluted history.

As a group, see how far you can get in mapping the connections between Henry and his various wives. Assign each group a wife or Henry to map, looking for parents, siblings, and other family members, including any children they and Henry had, and then bring the groups

findings together into a common map. You can also choose to include where their parents were from, and if any of the wives were related (they were).

Here are several videos to choose from:

- What happened to Henry VIII's Six Wives (2 minutes)
www.youtube.com/watch?v=zT4L5KNp41A
- Who were the six wives of Henry VIII (9 minutes)
www.youtube.com/watch?v=31dy3ZEA2NE
- The Tudors Explained in 13 minutes (13 minutes)
www.youtube.com/watch?v=uvy-Dy3D8Fc
- Henry VIII Oversimplified (26 minutes) - suggested with the caveat that it's a little silly, and that it includes a sponsored ad from 7:17 to 8:08
www.youtube.com/watch?v=ewLpXw6uN28

What's a Privy Council? (ELA 10.B1, 10.B3, 10.C3))

Do a dive into the role of the privy council to scaffold your students understanding of the gift of a seat given and taken away from Kate later in the play.

Post-Show

Technical Analysis - Flow of act 2 (DR-R1, R2)

The play is intended to pick up the pace, "particularly in the last third of the play" and the playwright notes to "move actors rather than furniture" in order to keep things moving. What did you notice about the sets, lighting, staging or other elements of production that helped to achieve this goal? Was it successful? Did the play feel well paced to you?

Review (DR-R3, DR-C2) - Write a letter to Ms. Hennig explaining what you thought of the show. If you don't know what to talk about, consider any of the following elements in order to explain your overall like or dislike: character relatability, ease of understanding, engaging dialogue, ability to provoke emotion, length, sound or visual effects, costume or set design.

Research (ELA 10.B1.3, 10.B3.1) Witchcraft in England in the 1500s

Ugly History - Witch hunts (5 minutes) www.youtube.com/watch?v=7x5KesH3dzM

There are a number of moments in the play where Kate is open about being taught as a healer by her mother. Mary suggests witchcraft at one point, but later seems to be using Kate's box of rocks to avoid having children (ew). Why do you think these bits of imagination are included in the play? How do they help shape the story of Kate Parr, early feminist?

Write an epitaph for a famous feminist, or important woman (ELA 10.C1.1)

An epitaph is a phrase, short poem, or other short text such as you would see on a gravestone. The show ends with Mary and Elizabeth visiting Kate's grave, returning her possessions, and reading a short poem together as an epitaph to her.

Assign students a historical feminist to look up, ask them to come up with their own, or have them think of an awesome woman they once knew personally, and write an epitaph for them. Then hold a class discussion about how those who come before us have often worked hard pave the way so we have an easier time.

Debate: "Yeah, Kate's Cool but she Can't do up her Own Bracelet" (ELA 10.A2)

Not once, but twice, Kate has trouble with, and receives help to do up her bracelet. Catherine Parr was known for her style and her jewelry, in fact, there was a big to do about being able to retain her jewelry after Henry's death. Now, we could do a historical deep dive on why jewelry was important to women during a time when they didn't get to own property or hold their own wealth, but rather, let's consider: Jewelry - Kate loved it - but can't wear it independently? Unpack that metaphor and make your case!

Curriculum Connections

English Language Arts – The Draft Manitoba Curriculum for English released in August/September 2025 suggests the following connections. These are from the Grade 10 Curriculum, but similar outcomes from other senior years grades are comparable and similarly applicable. This list is not exhaustive.

FROM STRAND A

- ELA.10.A2 Language as the Foundation for Reading and Writing
Learners will develop and apply the understanding of the system of language (knowledge and skills) and language comprehension for reading and writing.
- Word Study (Morphology) ELA.10.A2.4
Analyze and evaluate morphological knowledge, including etymology (study of word origins) to analyze words for deeper understanding/application and accurate spelling of unfamiliar, topic/content specific and technical words (e.g., transform, transformation, transformational).
- Vocabulary ELA.10.A2.5
Acquire, clarify and use a variety of vocabulary related to different contexts, including figures of speech (e.g., oxymoron, euphemism); identify the subtle differences/associations in the meaning of words with similar definitions (e.g., refined, respectively, polite, diplomatic); use different sources to locate word pronunciations to clarify precise meanings/parts of speech, including etymology or standard usage.

FROM STRAND B

- ELA.10.B1 Acquire New Information
Learners will activate, acquire and build background knowledge through inquiry of diverse topics and engagement with multimodal forms of text (e.g., visual, oral, print, digital, experts, Elders).
- Engage with a Variety of Texts (Read, View, Listen) ELA.10.B1.3
Engage with a variety of multimodal texts across genres, interests and complexities through real-world relevance (e.g., video case studies, visual storytelling) to support the application of abstract concepts as tangible and relatable to everyday life.
- ELA.10.B3 Think Critically about Multimodal Text and Respond
Learners will recognize, analyze, and respond critically to inequities, bias, and viewpoints in texts and ideas.
- Analyze Text ELA.10.B3.1
Analyze how texts reflect or challenge societal norms around diversity and equity; use direct and inferred evidence to support claims about representation and bias (e.g., How does the author use language or structure to highlight issues of equity? How does this compare to other texts?).

FROM STRAND C

- ELA.10.C1 Generate Ideas, Create Plan and Draft/Prototype
Learners will generate ideas, conduct research, evaluate sources, and design a plan to compose multimodal texts (visual, multimedia, oral, written) for a range of purposes and audiences.
- Generate Ideas ELA.10.C1.1
Select topic based on ideas generated from experiences, current events, literature, and cross-curricular knowledge; focus topic based on purpose, format and audience.
- ELA.10.C3 Edit and Publish
Learners will apply knowledge of editing to communicate the text clearly and coherently to an audience, using a variety of media, tools and strategies to publish text.

Drama

Connecting - The learner develops understandings about the significance of the dramatic arts by making connections to various times, places, social groups and cultures.

DR-C2 - The learner develops understandings about the influence and impact of the dramatic arts.

Responding -The learner uses critical reflection to inform learning and to develop agency and identity

DR-R1 - The learner generates initial reactions to drama/theatre experiences.

DR-R2 - The learner critically observes and describes drama/theatre experiences

DR-R3 - the learner analyzes and interprets drama/theatre experiences.

Social Studies – Renaissance England is not covered in any High School Curriculum in Manitoba, however, it is covered in Grade 8 Social Studies so students should have some familiarity.

Sources

Playwrights Biographical info sourced from:

<https://katehennig.com/>

Catherine Parr's Wikipedia Page

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catherine_Parr

Curriculum Documents accessed through the Manitoba Education Training and Youth website:

<https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/>

Tudor Contraception

<https://www.elizabethfiles.com/info/tudor-life/tudor-contraception/>

On Reformation

<https://www.history.com/articles/henry-viii-divorce-reformation-catholic-church>

VIDEOS

What happened to Henry VIII's Six Wives (2 minutes)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=zT4L5KNp41A

Who were the six wives of Henry VIII (9 minutes)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=31dy3ZEA2NE

The Tudors Explained in 13 minutes (13 minutes)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=uvy-Dy3D8Fc

Henry VIII Oversimplified (26 minutes) - suggested with the caveat that it's a little silly, and that it includes a sponsored ad from 7:17 to 8:08

www.youtube.com/watch?v=ewLpXw6uN28

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