

Teaching notes

The following activity is designed to cover the events of Northumberland's coup in 1553.

Activity one: Graph of support

Issue students with the chronology of events that details Edward's death and the subsequent revolt (p.2). Students should use this information to plot a graph (see template on p.4) of support for Northumberland, to chart how his backing dwindled as the revolt developed.

Extension questions:

1. What evidence can you find of Mary having more key support than Northumberland?
2. What mistakes did Northumberland make?

Activity two: Discussion/debate

Which were the biggest turning points in the revolt?

- Northumberland's failure to have the will changed through parliament?
- Northumberland's failure to secure Mary before the announcement was made that Jane was to be Queen?
- Northumberland's decision to leave London to and command the army himself?

Do students think the rebellion failed due to:

- a) Northumberland's failings?
- b) Mary's strengths?

Activity three: Analysis of a Historian's view

Students should read the source on p.3 then answer the following key questions:

- Why does Morris say Northumberland's rebellion failed?
- Does his view differ from your own?

Chronology of events

15 June: Northumberland personally supervised the changing of the King's will to exclude Mary and Elizabeth from the succession. Instead, the crown would pass to Lady Jane Grey, the strictly Protestant daughter of the Duke of Suffolk and, through her mother Frances Brandon, a grandniece of Henry VIII. This changing of the will was supported by the Lords of the Council who declared it would be open treason to disobey their sovereign's explicit command.

16 June: An engagement to perform the King's will after his death was signed in his presence by Northumberland and 23 others. Finally, the King's official 'declaration', issued as letters patent, was signed by 102 notables, among them the whole Privy Council, peers, bishops, judges, and London aldermen.

6 July: Edward VI died. The changes to his will were never passed through parliament and therefore were not legal.

7 July: Northumberland sent his son Robert into Hertfordshire with 300 men to secure Mary Tudor. Aware Edward was dying, the Princess had just moved to East Anglia, where she was the greatest landowner. She began to assemble an armed following and sent a letter to the Council, demanding to be recognised as queen.

10 July: Jane Grey was proclaimed as queen. Mary's letter arrived at the Privy Council. Northumberland now faced a dilemma – he had not prepared for Mary to be so difficult to capture and now needed time to gather a large force to secure the princess. He was also in a dilemma over who should lead the troops. He was the most experienced general, but he did not want to leave the government in the hands of his colleagues, in some of whom he had little confidence. Queen Jane decided the issue by demanding that her father, the Duke of Suffolk, should remain with her and the Council.

14 July: Northumberland headed for Cambridge with 1,500 troops and some artillery, having reminded his colleagues of the gravity of the cause and the need to remain resolute and resist Mary's approaches.

17 July: Supported by gentry and nobility in East Anglia and the Thames Valley, Mary's military camp was gathering strength daily and, through luck, came into possession of powerful artillery from the Royal Navy.

18 July: The army proceeded from Cambridge to Bury St Edmunds then retreated again to Cambridge. Some troops started to desert on hearing rumours that Mary had foreign support and command of the Royal Navy.

Why did Northumberland's coup of 1553 fail?

20 July: A letter from the Council in London arrived, declaring that they had proclaimed Queen Mary and commanding Northumberland to disband the army and await events. Dudley did not contemplate resistance. The next morning the Earl of Arundel arrived to arrest him.

25 July: Northumberland returned to London, riding through the City of London to the Tower with his guards struggling to protect him against the hostile crowds who were now supporting Mary. He was subsequently tried and executed.

A historian's view

The dice were loaded against Dudley. The majority of Englishmen were still, in some sense, Catholic in religious feeling; and a very great majority were certainly unwilling to see King Henry's eldest daughter lose her birth right. We must remember that Catherine of Aragon never ceased to be popular. Besides, most Englishmen feared France more than Spain. Dudley's Protestant reforms had been too rapid, too drastic and too patently cynical to win much popularity. The economic situation had not improved. Nothing had been done to reform the currency. Prices were still rising, and any attempt by the government to fix maximum prices only resulted in driving commodities off the market altogether...

Nor had Dudley many real friends even in the Council. He found it more and more necessary to visit the king by night, so as not to be seen by colleagues who were jealous of his influence. He also found it more and more necessary to by-pass the Council and proceed by authority of the king alone. Lord Chancellor Rich resigned in protest; and the departure of so notorious a rat may be taken as a sign that Dudley's ship was sinking.

The scheme to make Lady Jane Grey Edward's heiress was so shameless that it had little chance of success. Ostensibly, the rights of Mary and Elizabeth were passed over on the grounds that the kingdom could not be entrusted to female rule; and both of them might conceivably be thought bastards. But at the last moment the words in the 'Device' giving the succession to 'the heirs male' of Lady Jane were changed to 'the Lady Jane and her heirs male', thus openly making another female heir-apparent to the throne. This inconsistency, combined with forgery, was forced on Dudley because it had become clear that Edward would die before Lady Jane could have any heirs.

Christopher Morris, *The Tudors* (1955)

