

To what extent was henry vii a successful monarch? essay sample



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Henry the VII was a shrewd, enigmatic king whose meticulous manner contributed to his avarice, whilst he ruled over England. He was by no means the best King, but he was extremely successful in the fact that he had a strong hold over his reign, there was little war and conflict – shy of the Battle of Bosworth 1485 and the Battle of Stoke 1487 – and, most importantly, he was the only Tudor to come out of the throne not in debt; showing his capabilities with finance and control over the economy and expenditures. All these, and more, aided him in the establishment of his power and a dynasty.

Henry's strong power and authority is shown by his winning of the Battle of Bosworth in 1485. This shows that he is capable of being a strong warrior king, and the fact that he led a French army, meant that he must have had leadership skills and strong determination – which are traits needed for being king. His first few years were probably the hardest. There was great unrest amongst some of the people and there were also some minor rebellions arising – which meant that he had to secure his dynasty and his monarchy fast. He was a swift and decisive king who imprisoned and executed rebels such as de la Pole – this was all done to neutralise opposition so that he could succeed in his reign. This worked with great success as by the end of his reign, there was no opposition to be heard of.

Other than being bloody and ruthless, Henry also used diplomatic tactics to secure his throne. His treaty and trade treaties with France and within his own towns meant that alliances and security could be founded and built. This meant that Henry would have the upper hand if internal opposition should arise, because he had the power to cut off trade – usually wool – and call in his security – usually foreign countries. He also – quite cleverly – married

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Elizabeth of York in order to end the war of the roses and unite York and Lancaster. This greatly pleased the citizens of England, as nobody liked the civil wars – it was a waste of lives and money, so this went highly into Henry's favour.

Henry was also greatly – and probably the most – successful in his control over the nobles. At his accession to the throne there had been a reported number of 55 nobles serving by his side – however, some of these nobles were much more wealthy and powerful than the king, therefore, they were deemed as a threat and branded “over-mighty subjects” or “super nobles”. In order to secure his throne and combat this problem, Henry passed the Act of Attainder law which prevented any disloyal subjects and their descendants from possessing or intending land. At the time – and even now – land meant money, and money meant power, so Henry's taking away of power from the nobles caused fear and obedience for Henry VII. Furthermore, the appliance and use of bonds and recognisances – which stated that the subject would forfeit large sums of money to Henry VII if he should act on his own – enforced even tighter obedience and showed his power of control and success as a ruler over the nobles.

However, Henry did not only hand out punishments to convey his position – he also handed out places in offices, rather than land and money, for those who were loyal to him. The loyal subjects eventually made up various Local Governments – equivalent of today's MPs – which were situated in smaller towns and cities to keep watch over them. This enabled Henry VII to benefit his position by setting up the court of requests. These courts listened to the cases brought by the poor to the king and tried to appease them on the

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king's behalf, or with the king's aid. This showed to the peasants that Henry VII cared for the poor and his influence and authority increased further.

Moreover, the court of request and the local government enabled Henry VII to keep a watchful eye over his land and anticipate any form of opposition arising; securing his power of the land and establishing a strong dynasty.

The use of bonds also had a positive effect on the economy and finance. The money fined from the un-loyal nobles went in to the royal accounts – and money from revenues of feudal lords and royal estates were also collected. This money was put into critical use in re-building and helping the country and its rural areas. These areas had been devastated during the major outbreak of the black plague in the mid-fourteenth century. This led to the dramatic decline in population which in 1300 was six million, but in 1450, it had dropped to an incredible one and a half million – however, these figures started to slowly increase in the 1480's, but the sudden outbreaks of the plague still made it hard to keep at a steady rate. The drop in population, outbreaks of plague and periodic bad harvests forced farmers and agricultural workers out of their work, or to sell part of their estate. This was almost fatal for the population, as 90% was living off the land – so with no food coming in, starvation would surely occur, especially amongst the poor. This problem tested Henry VII's capabilities in keeping with the appeasement of the citizens to keep them happy – and of course with his control over the use of his money. He overcame this problem with increased mobility across the land so that peasants and the poor could find work elsewhere and earn more wages.

Furthermore on the subject of Henry's successes in economy – 90% of the exports of England was cloth made from wool. This meant that throughout his reign, the wool industry had a huge impact on trade, alliances, friendships and – most importantly – manual labour and employment. With more employment meant more work and money which kept the citizens happy and it gives another success to Henry VII. Moreover, Henry VII realised that overseas trade would benefit the economy and increase the wealth of the country, not to mention the strengthening of alliances between two countries. However, the navigation was somewhat limited, so sailing efficiently was extremely hard. This problem was combated with Henry's passing of the navigation act of 1485-6 which sought to break the foreign hold on England's trade. This was a huge success for Henry, as it did not only increase the resources going in and out and the independence of England, but the building of new ships, navigation, new ports, and training for the crew became the foundations for naval bases and Britain's powerful navy – which Henry's sons and daughters would build on.

Also, the use of new ships, built and repaired the damaged relationship between France and England, and with the 1486 negotiations on a new commercial agreement which lifted the restrictions on a Franco-English trade, this bonding and alliance was further enforced. After some further discrepancies, both sides experienced unlimited trade. Henry did not stop there. He continued to pursue more ambitious trades to further his success and he soon started trading fine luxury items with Italy.