

## ACTIVITY 2

## Recommended For

KS2 and KS3  
(History, English)

## Learning Objectives

- To understand why Henry VIII was a significant individual in English history.
- To use interesting adjectives, rhythm and rhyme in poetry (English)

## Time to Complete

30-45 mins

## Equipment Needed

Poetry for a King activity sheets (printed copies for each student)



Henry VIII

## Summary

In 1499, the Dutch philosopher Desiderius Erasmus met the young Prince Henry, who would later become Henry VIII, at Eltham Palace. During dinner, Prince Henry sent a note to challenging Erasmus to write something for him. Erasmus wrote a poem in Latin in praise of the prince, his father King Henry VII and England.

Students can analyse the extract on the next page to understand how Erasmus uses poetic language devices (similes, adjectives, repetition and opposites) to praise Prince Henry's father. The extract refers to historical and mythological figures. Students should think about the qualities associated with those figures and why Erasmus uses them to describe Henry VII.

They should also think about why Erasmus would want to please Prince Henry. Erasmus was a guest in England, trying to make a career from his writing. Even at nine years old, Henry was surrounded by influential and important people in the royal court at Eltham Palace who could give Erasmus writing commissions that would raise his profile.

## MORE LEARNING IDEAS

Students could use the extract as inspiration for their own poem in tribute to someone. This could be a significant person in modern times, such as Queen Elizabeth II or the Prime Minister, or someone they admire, such as their favourite teacher, author or TV star.

Students can think about the qualities in the person they admire (or want to impress!) and try to associate mythological or real historical figures with these qualities. They will need to come up with interesting adjectives, similes and imagery to impress the person they are writing about.

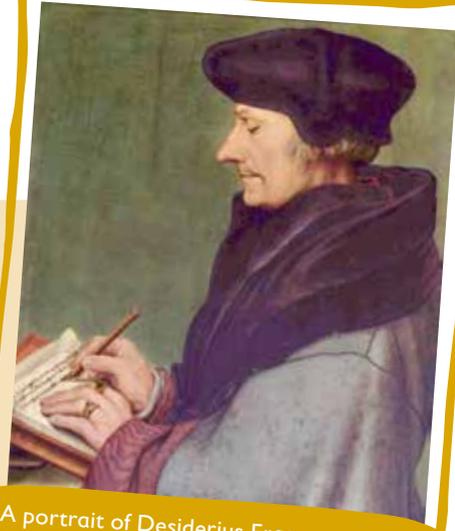
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## POETRY FOR A KING

'Skilled in war,  
Lover of peace,  
Indulgent to others,  
Strict to himself,  
More sublime than Caesar,  
More generous than Maecenas...  
The father of the Age of Gold.'

A short extract from the poem 'Prosopopoeia Britanniae', by the philosopher Desiderius Erasmus, printed in 1500. The poem was written for the young Prince Henry (who later became Henry VIII). This extract praises his father, Henry VII.

'Erasmus: The Poems of Desiderius Erasmus', ed. Cornelis Reedijk (Leiden: Brill, 1956).



A portrait of Desiderius Erasmus painted by Hans Holbein the Younger in 1523.

Now write your own poem in tribute to someone:

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