

Tudors:

Henry VIII'S Armour

King Henry VIII loved to be the centre of attention and just had to have the latest gadget or most fashionable armour.

Henry and the king of France, Francis I, decided meet in northern France in June 1520 at The Field of Cloth of Gold. It was to be the most expensive and lavish sporting event that had ever been staged.

The kings were to be accompanied by huge entourages, including their queens and courtiers, nobles, men of the church, servants, entertainers, cooks and many more. A village of huge tents, made of gold fabric, with a fountain that flowed with wine instead of water, was constructed. Great banquets and entertainments were also planned throughout the two-week festival.

Most importantly the two young kings would compete in a tournament. Henry demanded a new state-of-the-art armour. So the best armourers in the land set to work.

Additional resources

You can find lots more fascinating facts and close up images of Henry VIII's armours and weapons on our website:

collections.royalarmouries.org

Type **Henry VIII** into the search box

Watch a video about Henry VIII's armours on our [Facebook page](#)



Fascinating Facts

The original armour

This is the state-of-the-art armour that Henry's armourers made for him to wear in the foot combat at The Field of Cloth of Gold.

It is amazing because it was designed to cover his entire body, even his bottom, yet would still allow him to move freely. It would have been a very fashionable armour in its day. Look at the sabatons (foot protectors), they have a square-shaped toe – the most fashionable shape for shoes back then. However, Henry never got to wear his new armour because three months before the tournament, the competition rules were clarified and this type of armour was no longer allowed. So the armourers stopped working on it.



The replacement armour

With less than three months to go, Henry's armourers had to create a whole new suit of armour, but this one had to have a 'tonlet', or a metal skirt.

As time was short this armour was mostly made up of parts from other existing armours, however the tonlet and pauldrons (shoulder guards) were made from scratch.

Henry VIII actually wore this armour at The Field of Cloth of Gold tournament.



Can you spot the mistake?

There is a regular pattern of decoration on the skirt but there is a mistake – one square that should be blank has been engraved.

Henry would have wanted to look as splendid as possible in the tournament arena, so the armour was not only decorated but there may have been a colourful, fabric skirt over the tonlet and plume of feathers on top of the helmet.

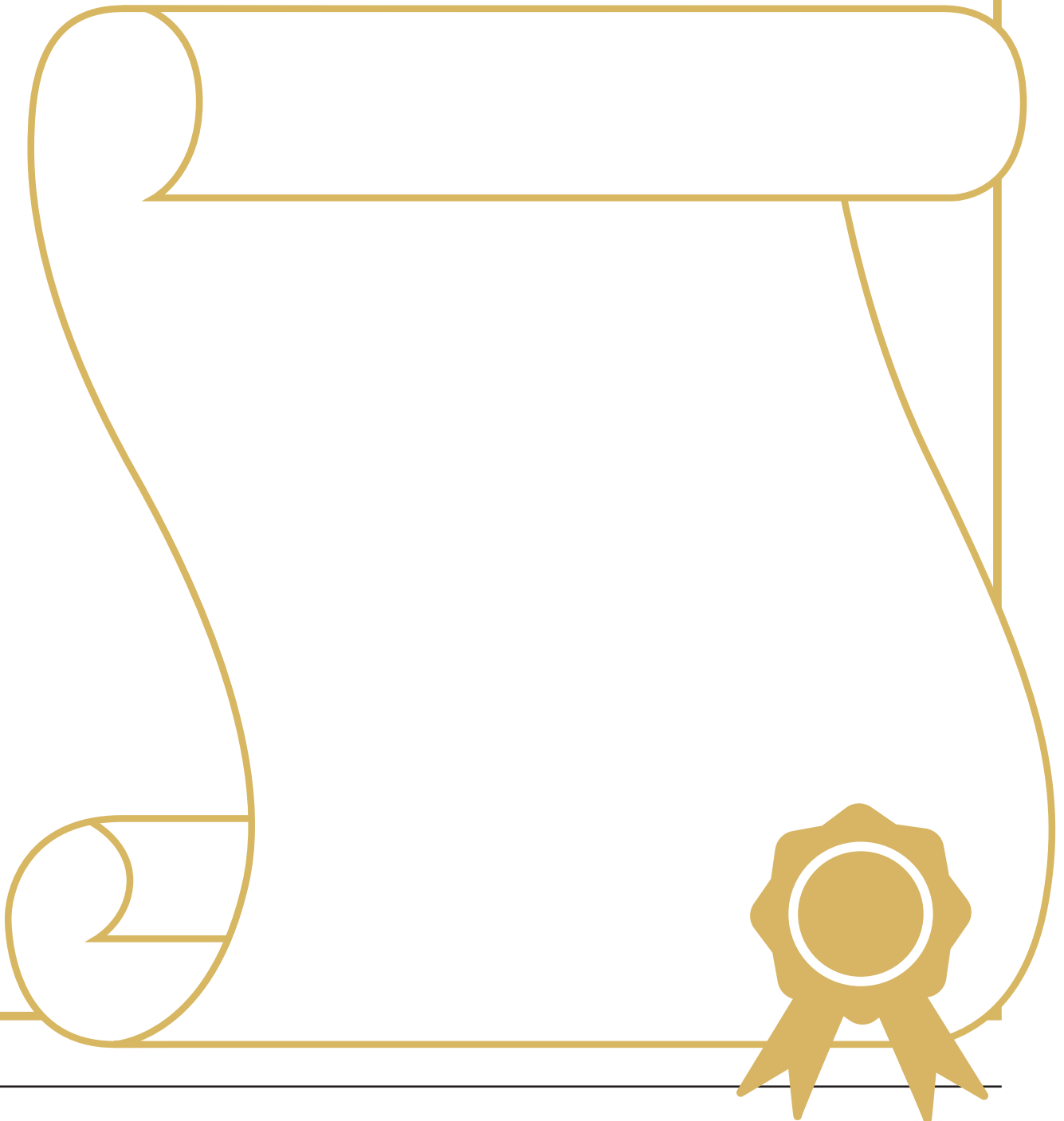


Things to do

Write to the King

It is March 1520, three months before the English and French kings are due to meet at the The Field of Cloth of Gold tournament. You are one of the French organisers and must write to King Henry to clarify the rules of the competition and to let him know that he needs a suit of armour with a 'tonlet' in order to compete in the foot combat.

Write a letter giving the king very clear instructions. Don't forget to use your best language and handwriting, a king will be reading this after all. Make sure to finish it with a fancy signature.



A large, decorative scroll template for writing a letter. The scroll is outlined in gold and has a ribbon seal at the bottom right corner.

Imagine

You are young King Henry VIII.

Stand up tall and proud and imagine you are wearing the tonlet armour. You are also holding a massive sword, almost as tall as you. Think about walking out into the tournament arena. How does it feel? What does the armour feel like to wear? What can you see out of your helmet? Can you hear much? What does it smell like? What emotions are you feeling?

Get creative!

Pretend you are an armorer in the king's workshop at Greenwich Palace.

The king has demanded a new armour to wear to compete in a very special tournament.

Using only things in your house (please ask your grown ups if you can use them first!), create a suit of armour. It must have a tonlet, protect the wearer from top to toe but also allow them to move.

Armour

Helmet

Pauldron

Breastplate

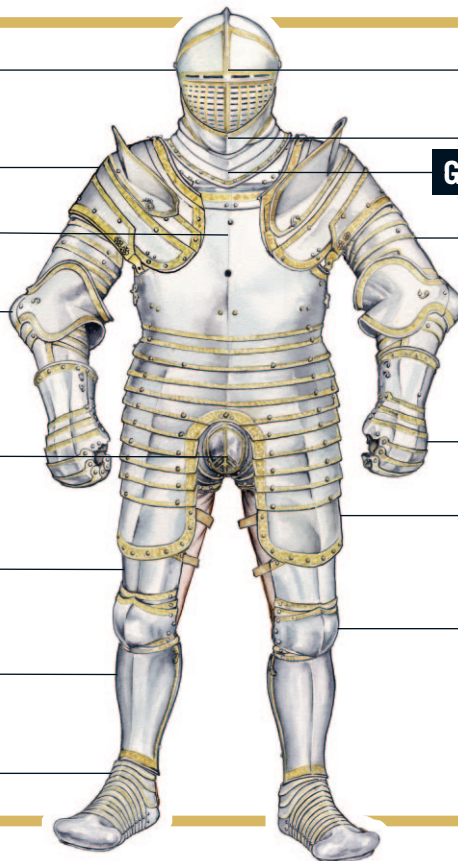
Couter

Codpiece

Cuisse

Greave

Sabaton



Visor

Bevor

Gorget

Vambrace

Gauntlet

Tasset

Poleyn

Q: What did a COUNTER protect?

Q: What was the groin defence called?

Q: Where would you wear SABATONS?

Q: What would you wear on your hands?

Q: Where would you wear a GREAVE?

Q: What protected your chin?

Keep in touch

We would love to read your letters to the King Henry. Please email them to educate.leeds@armouries.org.uk