

Creative Works Personal Statement

Lance & Elena Calvert Undergraduate Research Award

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My short story concerning the meeting of King Henry VIII and Anne of Cleves, *Fourth Time's A Charm*, is not simply an essay that I wrote to earn a decent grade. Rather, it is the culmination of my life-long passion for creative writing, my fascination with the monarchy of the United Kingdom, and a semester's worth of intensive research. My professor, Dr. McMahon, encouraged me to utilize the sources I discovered to help realize the four key elements of my story: setting, plot, character, and theme. I am very proud of the final product and believe that it could not have been accomplished without a thorough understanding of the subject matter.

I utilized the settings in my story to represent the transformations that my characters underwent. Perhaps the most apparent example of this was Henry VIII's reinvigoration after he had been rejected by his future wife, Anne of Cleves. Henry's physical transformation from dejected fool to commanding monarch would not have been nearly as impactful had it not been for specific details of his setting. By referring to period appropriate garments, furniture pieces, and social norms, I have attempted to create a sense of immersion and realism in my story.

The plot of my tale centers around a transformation that my protagonist underwent: his realizing the error in his arrogance and underestimation of others. Sir John Russell begins this humbling journey thinking very highly of himself. However, this changed when he witnessed Anne of Cleves' obvious cleverness and cunning, which I based on historical records of her decision making and subsequent actions. I hope that my readers are able to discern the moral of this plot, which I intend to be a warning against egocentrism.

In my story, I defend the intellect and attractiveness of my favorite character, Anne of Cleves, using historically accurate examples of her competence as inspiration. Anne is popularly known as the unattractive and unfit wife of Henry VIII, though I believe that this could not be farther from the truth. In order to convey this, I initially presented Henry's insulting commentary of her appearance and intellect. To contradict these falsehoods, I made sure to include a more flattering portrayal in my protagonist's internal monologue. Also, I include a monologue directly from Anne so that my reader will come to see Anne as I do: as an attractive and intelligent figure, rather than a plain and simple damsel.

The theme of discordance between expectation and reality served to anchor my story in a relatable and timeless fashion, allowing my readers to personally engage with characters whose fame has inflated them to mythic statuses. Though he was a physically and historically imposing figure, Henry VIII was only an ordinary, flawed man. In order to convey this, I use true events from the life of Henry VIII to demonstrate his vulnerability. Disappointment and astonishment are universal experiences. They serve to humanize my otherwise lofty and excessively exalted characters, allowing for an engaging and realistic portrayal of events.