

Creative Works Reflective Essay

Lance & Elena Calvert Undergraduate Research Award

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The sources I used to create my short story, *Fourth Time's A Charm*, were essential for all aspects of its development. My story concerns the awkward first meeting of King Henry VIII and his fourth wife, Anne of Cleves. As with all historical fiction stories, striving for period appropriate details and accurate representations of historical events was crucial. The resources that I was able to access through the UNLV University Libraries not only assisted me throughout my project by streamlining the research process, but proved indispensable for obtaining various primary sources that I may not have been unable to access otherwise. By compiling and utilizing sources that I discovered with the assistance of the UNLV University Libraries, I believe that I was able to conceive a story that is both entertaining and reasonably accurate.

Of the three sorts of sources I used to create my story (primary, secondary, and tertiary), my primary sources were definitely the most significant in number, impact, and elusiveness. To point me in the right direction, I began my research into viable primary sources by meeting with Priscilla Finley, a humanities librarian at Lied Library. She assisted my quest for primary documents by helping me decide what sort of documents would be most beneficial, leading me to potentially useful databases, and aiding my navigation through the UNLV Libraries website and various online databases. She also created an inclusive guide specifically for my honors class, which included links to databases and collections that she predicted might be useful for writing historical fiction. Ultimately, I utilized the knowledge and feedback that Priscilla Finley provided me with to locate nine primary sources: one painting, one illuminated manuscript, and

seven sets of records containing letters and papers regarding King Henry VIII and Anne of Cleves.

By far my favorite and most nontraditional primary source utilized for this project was the painting, *Portrait of Anne of Cleves* by Hans Holbein, which is currently housed in the Musée du Louvre in Paris. However, thanks to *ARTstor*, a digital library of images and media that I accessed through the UNLV Libraries website, I was able to view an extremely high-quality version of the artwork without having to leave the comfort of my home. This painting was essential to the creation of my story for a number of reasons. First, its existence is specifically referenced in my story by multiple characters. Second, it provided reference for my description of Anne's clothing. Third, it aided my defense of Anne's physical beauty, which I believe to have been striking despite popular opinion. Lastly, it allowed me to look into the eyes of a woman who has long since passed in order to attempt to discern her motivations and overall character. In passing, Anne might seem childlike or bored in the portrait. However, in interpreting the subtleties of her expression that are more apparent when zooming in on her facial features (e.g. the slight smirk and quirked brow), I found that Anne transforms from feeble-minded damsel to shrewd manipulator. Due in part to this discovery, I attempted to depict Anne of Cleves as calculated and cunning despite her unthreatening appearance.

Though I preferred to lean more heavily on primary sources during the writing of my story, I also utilized a number of secondary and tertiary sources to fully realize the tale. The six secondary sources that I found helped in a number of capacities, such as providing comprehensive descriptions of societal norms and cultural details that are not explicitly stated in most primary documents and presenting unique interpretations of related historical events. One example of the latter is an article that I found in the most peculiar of places: *PubMed*, a medical

index available through the UNLV Libraries website. The article, *500 Years Later: Henry VIII, Leg Ulcers and the Course of History* by Chalmers and Chaloner, helped me understand Henry VIII's state of mind, and subsequently portray his actions in a believable manner that was based on more than blind speculation. Also, though I used my three tertiary sources (i.e. historical fiction) least of all, they did play an important role in the development of my story. Mainly they provided examples of costume pieces not well-depicted in primary sources and helped push me through bouts of writer's block. The contribution of UNLV University Libraries to these sources was also small but mighty, in that I used a study area in Lied Library to view a relevant episode of *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* between classes.