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Henry VIII; Victoria

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These are 'differentiated text' versions of Wayland titles first published in 1995: new, simplified texts in large print, written around exactly the same illustrations as the original titles.

Neither book overcomes the problems arising from this change. Each text is a precis of the original and tends to lurch where passages have been omitted. The arrangement of the books, each of which start with an overview of the reign before going back to the beginning, is confusing for the intended audience. Some illustrations are made out of place or redundant, or require more explanation, because of the changes in text. But, at the same time, captions to the illustrations shrink and become less specific: although there are two illustrations of Victoria's mother, we never learn her name; we are shown an engraving of Henry attacking a town in France but are not told where the siege is. The literal impossibility of the dynastic painting which shows Jane Seymour standing next to her grown child Edward VI, when she had, in fact, died just after childbirth, is not explained.

Nevertheless, the original titles were good, particularly in their use of a wide range of contemporary pictorial sources, and the new authors have worked with care and skill to produce simpler accounts. These focus more on personality than policy but make an acceptable and approachable introduction to the reigns for 7-9 year olds and older less able children.

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