Critical Lenses on Classroom Histories:
Gender, Power, and Faircloughian CDA in
The Tudors: England 1485-1603

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates gender representation in the history textbook *The Tudors: England 1485–1603* (Oxford University Press, 2015) through Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA, and it offers findings relevant to scholars, educators, and researchers interested in the ideological dimensions of curriculum materials. Addressing a research gap in history-textbook studies, the analysis focuses on a 500-word excerpt where women first receive individual attention. This examination prioritises the micro-level (textual features) and the macro-level (broader sociocultural practice), while interweaving meso-level considerations of discourse practice to situate analytical findings. Micro-level textual analysis reveals systematic use of passive constructions when women are acted upon, lexical choices that frame marriage as a male-controlled institution, and recurrent identification of female figures through their relationships to men. Meso-level considerations situate these patterns within textbook production and classroom use, highlighting how alignment with the National Curriculum and A-level assessment prioritises political narratives centred on male agency. The macro-level discussion connects the textbook's discourse to wider patriarchal ideologies that still shape contemporary gender disparities in the United Kingdom. The findings demonstrate that subtle linguistic choices perpetuate female passivity, reinforce male supremacy, and instrumentalise women's reproductive roles, thereby normalising historical gender hierarchy for student readers. This article, by presenting a detailed critical discourse analysis, not only shares specific research outcomes but also aims to support the growth of educational researchers by exemplifying a methodological approach to a common challenge in curriculum studies. It argues for systematic revision of educational materials to ensure balanced representation of gender and to foster critical engagement with historical narratives, an endeavor pertinent to educators, particularly those working with high school students, and all those committed to more equitable educational practices and the exploration of marginalised perspectives in educational content.

KEYWORDS

Sociolinguistics; gender bias; history textbooks; Critical Discourse Analysis; patriarchy

Introduction

Gender equality remains a significant concern in the United Kingdom, with persistent disparities across various sectors despite ongoing efforts to promote fairness. Education plays a crucial role in shaping societal attitudes toward gender roles, and textbooks convey cultural norms and ideologies to students. While extensive research has examined gender biases in language textbooks (Hartman & Judd, 1978; Abraham, 1989; Lee & Collins, 2009; Fahlgren & Sawyer, 2011; Ballantine et al., 2021), particularly in second-language education (Porreca, 1984; Jones et al., 1997), a noticeable gap exists in studies focusing on history textbooks. This study addresses this gap by applying Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis to *The Tudors: England 1485–1603* (Tillbrook, 2015) to examine how its language may perpetuate gender bias and patriarchal ideologies. By critically analysing the representation of gender in this educational material, the essay seeks to contribute to a

deeper understanding of how authors' narratives can influence students' perceptions of gender roles and inform efforts to promote gender equality in education.

Women's Status in England

We begin by presenting statistical information on the status and roles of women in England. Firstly, as of mid-2023, the total population of England and Wales was 60.9 million, with women accounting for 51% (Team D, 2024). Secondly, the gender pay gap has gradually narrowed—from 7.5% in 2022 to 7.0% in 2023—and over the past decade, the gap for both full-time employees and for all employees has fallen by around a quarter (Team E, 2024). However, the proportion of women in senior positions—such as managers, directors, and senior officials—declines with age. Among employees aged 50 to 59, only 42.6% are women (Team E, 2024).

In specific professions, gender imbalances are pronounced. Women are concentrated in primary education, secretarial and junior management roles, and in nursing and midwifery, with female representation of 76%, 77%, and 89%, respectively ("School workforce in England", 2024; Team D, 2024). In summary, while gender equality is steadily progressing, disparities between genders remain evident. Recognizing the reality of gender inequality is essential for effectively addressing and transforming the current inequitable conditions.

Textbook Selection and Gender Ideologies

Selecting textbooks as the research object is pivotal because the educational system is a significant driver in shaping students' gender-based attitudes and behaviours (Jones et al., 1997; Youdell, 2005). Textbooks, as the most commonly used teaching tools, act as disseminators of societal rules and standards regarding gender ideologies and roles (Britton & Lumpkin, 1977; Gupta & Yin, 1990). Currently, the UK government does not provide direct guidelines for textbook publication but seeks to indirectly influence content and quality through the establishment of the National Curriculum (Department for Education, 2014) and the issuance of educational policies and regulations (such as the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and the Equality Act 2010).

When schools and teachers select textbooks, they must first ensure that teaching resources align with the requirements of the National Curriculum (Donovan et al., 2023). Under the supervision of Ofsted, they must also uphold values concerning gender equality and diversity. The guidance on Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) is particularly prominent and important. Post-pandemic, secondary schools are required to adhere to RSE guidelines: "*Schools should be alive to issues such as everyday sexism, misogyny, homophobia, and gender stereotypes and take positive action to build a culture where these are not tolerated* (Department for Education, 2021, p. 14)." However, the RSE requirements have faced widespread protests across England (BBC News, 2019).

History textbooks, as a small part of the broader educational system in England, rely heavily on the specifics of the National Curriculum for their compilation. They primarily focus on assessment content linked to A-level examinations and lack specific standardised chapters on gender (MacLure & Elliott, 1993, p. 93). The AQA 1C examinations in 2021 and 2022 centred on high-level political themes—religious settlement, regime stability/authority, causes of rebellion, diplomacy and the economy (AQA, 2021b)—with no questions that treated "women/gender" as an independent analytic strand (even when queens appeared, they were situated within political or religious frames). This constitutes direct textual evidence for the observation that gender is not a mainstream examined topic. In parallel, the Royal Historical Society (2025) reports that, across 216 GCSE/A-level history papers set in 2023, only 31 of the 357 named individuals were women—and 9 of those instances were Elizabeth I—making the shortfall strikingly visible (Hodgson & Gower, 2024).

 OUP (Oxford University Press, n.d.) claimed to increase inclusivity in the textbook: "We work hard to avoid reinforcing stereotypes in our books and include positive role models who challenge limiting societal expectations". Additionally, the textbook primarily targets teachers and students. Teachers often lack flexibility in adapting their instructional methods and thus heavily depend on the textbook as an authoritative guide (Ball & Cohen, 1996). Consequently, students are directly exposed to the ideologies embedded in the

textbook. Due to their limited experience and critical capacity, these ideologies significantly influence and shape students' perspectives (Sleeter & Grant, 2017).

Research on Gender Issues in Textbooks

Gender inequality in textbooks has long been a concern in academic circles. Since the 1970s, numerous studies have found that textbooks contain gender discrimination and stereotypes, with male roles typically dominating and female roles being marginalised (Hartman & Judd, 1978; Abraham, 1989). These issues are prevalent globally, including in the United States, Europe, and Australia (Ballantine et al., 2021; Fahlgren & Sawyer, 2011; Lee & Collins, 2009). United Nations reports have also highlighted problems of gender stereotypes in textbooks (Michel, 1986; Brugeilles & Cromer, 2009; Global Education Monitoring Report Team, 2024).

Research often focuses on themes such as male supremacy, occupational gender stereotypes in textbooks, visibility imbalance between genders (Ullah et al., 2014), gender marking imbalance, and unequal sequencing of male and female appearances. Beyond gender discrimination, the lack of multicultural representation is another significant issue in current UK textbooks—for instance, the normalisation of heterosexuality. Paiz (2015) reported that UK ESL textbooks generally exhibit high heterosexual normalisation.

However, most studies concentrate on language textbooks, especially in the field of second-language teaching (Porreca, 1984; Jones et al., 1997). Research on gender bias in history textbooks is relatively scarce (Trecker, 1971; Osler, 1994). This may be due to history textbooks involving complex intersectional social and cultural factors such as race, religion, and national identity (Commeyras, 1996; Von Borries, 2019; Kühberger et al., 2019). Therefore, it is necessary to delve into gender representations in history textbooks, particularly using the method of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).

Method

Introduction and Application of Critical Discourse Analysis

Since the mid-1980s, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has become a key method for studying language and power (Pires & Peixoto, 2023). Its core idea is that language not only communicates but also maintains and alters power relations (Shenhav et al., 2012); accordingly, CDA explores how discourse constructs, maintains, and challenges social inequalities (Fairclough, 2010). Researchers use it to uncover implicit power dynamics in discourse and assess the social impact of texts (Hughes, 2018). Norman Fairclough established CDA by drawing on Halliday's systemic functional linguistics to analyse how texts convey ideologies and maintain power through language choices (Yip, 2024). Influenced by Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony, Fairclough examined how ideologies are embedded through cultural and linguistic practices (Gramsci, 1971). This framework helps explore how discourse constructs and reflects social structures and power relations (Hammer, 2017). CDA can highlight issues of gender inequality, making these problems more visible (Baker, 2014). Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA framework (2010) posits that discursive practices naturalise ideologies, thereby maintaining hegemony. He views discourse as a social practice shaped by broader sociocultural contexts. This approach is particularly useful for analysing educational materials, revealing the interplay between language, power, and ideology (Gee, 2014). Fairclough's three-dimensional model includes:

- **Text Analysis (Micro):** This focuses on vocabulary, grammar, and structure, examining how language choices convey meaning and reflect social relations. In gender studies, this involves analysing how language constructs gender identities and reinforces biases.
- **Discourse Practice (Meso):** This covers text production and interpretation, considering how texts are created, distributed, and consumed, and how sociocultural norms shape these processes. For textbooks, this means analysing how content selection and presentation impact students' perceptions of gender.
- **Sociocultural Practice (Macro):** This situates discourse within broader social and cultural contexts, examining how discourse shapes and is shaped by social structures and values. In gender-biased

textbooks, this involves analysing how patriarchal norms influence content and presentation, reinforcing or challenging gender relations (Lazar, 2007).

By applying Fairclough's CDA framework, this research aims to reveal how history textbooks subtly perpetuate gender bias and patriarchal ideologies through language. Critically analyzing textual features, discourse practices, and socio-cultural contexts effectively explores how educational materials reinforce traditional gender roles and marginalise female perspectives (Rezai et al., 2021). Previous research employing similar methods has effectively examined gender biases in educational materials, as demonstrated in the work of Lazar (2005).

In the context of history textbooks, CDA can reveal implicit gender notions, thus contributing to a better understanding of how educational materials facilitate or hinder gender equality (Curaming & Curaming, 2020).

Research Material and Design

Corpus and alignment: The corpus is the Oxford University Press student text *Oxford AQA History: The Tudors: England 1485–1603* (Tillbrook, 2015), a student text aligned to AQA's 2015 specifications in structure, content, and assessment demands (AQA, 2021a; Tillbrook, 2015; OUP, n.d.). The "Tudors" topic has long been prominent within A-level British history and is embedded in a mature ecology of teaching and exam preparation, maximising transferability of findings to classroom practice and assessment (Historical Association, 2019). The book is widely used in secondary settings and integrates with OUP's Kerboodle digital resources—subscribed by over 4,000 schools—making it a mainstream text for AQA 1C classroom reading (OUP, n.d.).

Passage selection and purposeful sampling: To examine the visibility and representation mechanisms of non-sovereign women within a grand political narrative, the study adopts purposeful sampling, focusing on Chapter 7, pp. 67–69 (main text plus the "A Closer Look" sidebar) for close reading. Three reasons motivate this choice: (1) after reading the preceding chapters, p. 67 is the first point at which an individualised female figure—Catherine of Aragon—appears, providing a natural entry to observe strategies that move from absence to first visibility; (2) compared with "queen-as-exception" narratives (Mary I, Elizabeth I), Catherine—being non-reigning—better reveals everyday constructions of gendered roles and subordination, avoiding the masking of structural issues by royal exemplars; and (3) the composite layout of main narrative plus sidebar/terminology box enables comparison of how information and stance are distributed across frames, testing whether women are introduced, named, and positioned as marginal notes rather than central agents.

Analytical framework and coding: Following Fairclough's model, the micro analysis encodes lexico-grammar and narrative structure. We code who acts on whom and how the text shows or hides agents (process types; participant roles; passivisation/de-agentivisation), how people are named (referential choices), and how attention is allocated (agency distribution, evaluative lexis, theme/focus). The meso analysis attends to production–distribution–use, with particular attention to coupling with AQA's "breadth study + historical interpretations" assessment orientation (AQA, 2021a). Macro analysis situates the text in its wider sociocultural context, exploring how social structures and values shape the text and are reinforced by it, and how the material may influence students' gendered understandings in relation to contemporary inequalities. For reproducibility, quotations and page references are supplied; where pagination varies by print run, the student edition (Tillbrook, 2015) is the baseline. Regarding "marriage–succession–legitimacy" materials, the analysis remains faithful to textual semantics without presupposing heterosexuality as the sole relational paradigm; the fusion of marriage with reproduction—especially the expectation of a male successor—is treated as a narrative premise to be examined, not as an analytic default.

Reader response and linguistic effects: Experimental work shows that so-called "generic masculine" forms are not neutrally processed but skewed towards male mental representations (Gygax et al., 2008). Reviews further indicate that gender-fair language (e.g., neutralisation/pair forms) reduces stereotyping and increases women's visibility (Sczesny et al., 2016). In education-relevant experiments, gender marking in occupational titles alters children's self-efficacy and interest judgements in traditionally "male" careers (Vervecken & Hannover, 2015). International reporting underscores that curriculum-embedded gender norms can shape subject choice and occupational imagination, risking the reproduction of traditional gender norms

(UNESCO GEM, 2024). The history education community likewise notes systemic shortfalls in women's history and their consequences (Royal Historical Society, 2025). The patterns identified here—passivisation, referential choices, and process type allocations—accord with such mechanisms. A careful formulation is therefore warranted: these patterns may increase the normalisation risk of male-centred narratives in reading comprehension. Claims are limited to text-level malleability rather than classroom-level causality; the latter requires observation or experimental confirmation.

Methodological scope & limitations: The design deliberately focuses on a single book, chapter, and passage to gain fine-grained insight into the co-construction of the main narrative and sidebar. It does not undertake cross-publisher comparisons (e.g., Hodder, Cambridge), corpus-level analysis of the entire book, or national-level market-share estimates. These constraints are revisited in the Discussion, which outlines future directions—cross-text comparison, whole-book/multi-book corpus validation, and multimodal expansion—to strengthen external validity and generalisability.

Ethical Considerations

Although this research analyses publicly available secondary history materials and does not involve human subjects, it observes the following responsibilities and limits:

Justifying identification: In the public interest and for reproducibility, the book title, edition, pagination, and publisher are identified; claims are confined to verifiable text-level evidence and risk characterisations, with no attributions of motive to authors or publishers.

Fairness and harm-reduction: Neutral, evidence-based language is used; where appropriate, the publisher's public commitments/policies are juxtaposed to offer full context and mitigate reputational risk.

Compliance and researcher duty: Quotations fall under fair dealing for criticism/review; only minimal necessary text is reproduced and page numbers are supplied; no substitute compilation is produced. The author discloses no financial or employment ties. Quotations that might reproduce bias are immediately framed critically to reduce secondary harms.

Analysis

Through detailed textual analysis, this paper examines how the selected textbook within a male-centred narrative presents female figures and how its language reproduces, and reciprocally resonates with, entrenched gender stereotypes and ideologies, while not treating heterosexuality as the sole default when marriage narratives are involved. It also fills a documented gap and offers implications for gender-equality work in educational practice. In what follows, 'male-centred narrative' denotes the text-level (micro) orientation; 'patriarchal norms' refers to institutionalised expectations (meso); and 'patriarchal ideology' names the value framework that naturalises male authority (macro).

Passive Tense Associated with Women and Expressions of Weakness

In the roughly 500-word excerpt, there are nine passive or patient-oriented formulations. Excluding the single instance where the affected participant is Thomas Wolsey (a man) "*It posed a major problem for Wolsey*" the remaining eight concern women, either directly or in connection with their marriages and identity arrangements. The immediate effects of these passives are: (i) to shift the reader's attention from 'who does what' to 'what happens to women'; and (ii) by leaving the agent unspecified or replacing it with a relational phrase, to reduce the visibility of male decision-making, thereby down-modulating women's agency and diluting lines of accountability.

A typical sentence in which a woman is the patient is: "Catherine had been unfairly treated." This sentence likewise uses the past perfect passive; the verb phrase is "had been unfairly treated". The subject is "Catherine"; the auxiliary is "had been"; the past participle of the main verb is "treated"; and the adverb "unfairly" modifies the verb, signalling the injustice of the treatment. The passive usage here further accentuates her lack of agency, as she is not the acting agent, thereby reinforcing her powerlessness and vulnerability. At the level of reading processing, such phrasing more readily places women in the position of

patient and provides an accessible interpretive route for readers to construe 'women's disadvantaged position at the time'.

Another instance in which a woman is the patient appears in a causal subordinate clause: "*As Catherine had been very briefly married to Henry's brother Arthur.*" This sentence likewise employs the past perfect passive; the verb phrase is "had been married". Grammatically, the subject is "Catherine"; the auxiliary is "had been"; the past participle of the main verb is "married"; and the accompanying prepositional phrase "to Henry's brother Arthur" specifies the marital relation. The passive places Catherine in the subject position yet highlights an experience rather than an action. This structure effectively weakens her agency, suggesting that marriage is imposed on her rather than chosen; by de-agentivising, it effaces the source of power, producing a textual effect of down-modulated agency.

However, both sentences share the same problem: the use of the passive voice results in the sentence's failure to specify who restricted Catherine or who arranged the marriage. In terms of content, it is men who control women and their marriages, but this point is omitted at the grammatical level. Thus, the specific identity and motives of those who constrain individual freedom and bring about the marriage are obscured, weakening the critique of men's control over others' lives and their dominance in marital arrangements.

In sum, although the passive patterns in this subsection differ in their grammatical realisation, they converge in placing women in positions of 'patient/outcome' and in lowering the visibility of male decision-making by omitting or downgrading the agent; in the contexts of marriage and identity, this orientation often co-occurs with an identification strategy of 'entering via relational terms', such that women enter the text first through their relations to men rather than as individual actors. Within the bounds of text-level analysis, this configuration may heighten the salience of a 'men act—women undergo' construal and tends to compress readers' attention to women's motives, judgements, and strategic choices. Here, the paper identifies only a text-level interpretive risk and does not make causal claims about classroom-level effects.

Manifestations of Male Supremacy and Women's Subordination
Male Dominance in "Marriage"

This point is mainly reflected in the formation, continuation, and dissolution of marriage, a process involving both parties, which, in the textbook's narrative, is entirely controlled by male characters. Women lack emotional expression and opportunities to voice their opinions, and have lost substantive power and initiative.

The sentence in the second line, "*A marriage ... had not been finally agreed while Henry VII was king,*" points directly to Catherine's marriage being constrained by Henry VII's agreement/approval ("agreed"). The lexical choice creates a top-down sense of authority: Catherine's own wishes are absent; she is downgraded to the object of discussion rather than the subject of action. In the following paragraph, this deliberate portrayal of female imagery is also expressed:

> **Line 8:** "*This suited Henry's councillors, who took the view that marriage for Henry would deflect him from political matters and enable them to conduct conciliar business as usual, and Henry and Catherine married on 11 June 1509*".

This part narrates that Henry's councillors believed his marriage would divert him from political affairs, thereby maintaining their interests, and eventually, the marriage could take place. The underlying logic of this passage is that men should focus on public affairs; without marriage, Henry would attend to political matters, which would interfere with the councillors' interests. But because there was marriage—that is, the participation of women—the male ruler would be distracted. Within this framing, the text implicitly associates women's presence with disruption—indeed, with political 'disorder'—rather than with 'serious politics'.

> **Also in Line 12:** *However, by the mid-1520s, Henry would repent of the rapidity of his marriage to a woman who was over five years older than he was, especially once it was clear that she could never present him with a healthy male heir.*

Here, "present him with" positions Catherine as a provider, and "male heir" directly binds the value of marriage to a male successor; the emphasis on being "over five years older than he was" carries an implicit devaluation of women on the basis of age and an assessment of "reproductive fitness". Syntactically, Henry is the subject and appears in the active voice, signalling control; Catherine is placed in a passive position in which her value is measured by reproductive performance. This phrasing tends to steer readers towards attributing problems in the marriage to the woman, while overlooking the biological fact that the sex of a child is determined by the male chromosome.

The male partner's evaluation of the female partner focuses on her age, assuming that women should be younger than men. Broadly, the notion that women should be younger than men is directly linked to marriage, especially fertility. The latter part of the article emphasises the age difference, leading to the female partner being unable to provide the man with an heir. Evaluating a woman's value is not connected to her politics, talents, or personal character but instead linked to her "reproductive value," reflecting a phenomenon of women's marginalisation and instrumentalisation.

In this part, we observe from a macro perspective the further reinforcement of female stereotypes. Particularly when connected to the earlier mention in Line 8, where women are labelled as sources of trouble, this not only deepens the negative image of women as causing chaos and interference but also exacerbates their devaluation and marginalisation. Additionally, Line 12's association of women with reproductive functions emphasises traditional notions of gender roles, further solidifying gender biases.

These descriptions not only repeat stereotypical views of women but also imply gender discrimination deeply rooted in cultural narratives. Through these textual descriptions, we can see how gender stereotypes are inadvertently reinforced and propagated, reflecting a limited and one-sided understanding of women's roles and abilities.

Women Defined from a Male Starting Point

The second manifestation of male supremacy is in the definition of women. In these selected texts, several different women are mentioned, mainly focusing on Catherine of Aragon and Anne Boleyn. However, these passages from the textbook portray these two female figures from a male perspective.

At the beginning of the article, in the second line, Catherine is defined as: "*his brother Arthur's widow Catherine of Aragon.*" Catherine is first introduced as "his brother Arthur's widow." Her identity is mainly defined through her relationships with men (Arthur and Henry), neglecting her background and achievements as an independent individual. Additionally, the sentence does not describe Catherine's actions or characteristics but simply assigns her an identity label. There are no verbs or descriptive words reflecting Catherine's personality, actions, or influence, making her an object being defined rather than an active participant.

In the later part, we can also see the definition of Anne Boleyn: "*Anne Boleyn, the niece of Thomas Howard.*" Anne is defined as "the niece of Thomas Howard," using the kinship term "niece" to pre-modify her relationship with a male relative. Her identity is mainly reflected through her connection to male relatives. Defining women as men's appendages once again weakens their independent status and personal value, implying that women's identity and importance stem from their relationships with men.

Through word choices and grammatical structures, the text primarily defines women as men's appendages, lacking descriptions of women's personal traits and achievements, thereby simplifying and marginalising their identities. Men are granted more voice and presence, while women are placed again in secondary positions. Broadly, students may subconsciously accept the notion that "women ought to be dependent on men", shaping their perceptions of historical actors; the insufficient depiction of women may lead readers to underestimate or overlook their roles and impact in historical events and, under a narrative premise limited to heterosexual marriage, to the further muting of other relational configurations in history.

Discussion

The analysis of the selected excerpt from *The Tudors: England 1485–1603* reveals gender biases embedded within the textbook's narrative. By applying Fairclough's CDA framework, this analysis shows

how language choices can convey gender bias to student readers, highlighting that patriarchal ideologies and marginalisation of women in educational materials still exist.

The frequent use of passive voice related to female figures helps to emphasise their lack of agency and autonomy, particularly highlighting the historical gender issues of the Tudor era. The deliberate use of passive sentences like "Catherine had been unfairly treated" further underscores the vulnerabilities of women during this period. Although these linguistic choices ostensibly invite students to reflect on the inequalities and sexism portrayed, they simultaneously reproduce those very biases: by diminishing women's roles and obscuring the actions of the men who dominate them, the text ultimately reinforces the stereotype of women as passive and powerless. This is consistent with previous research that emphasises how language subtly perpetuates gender inequality (Hartman & Judd, 1978).

The portrayal of male dominance in marital relationships further underscores the patriarchal perspective of the textbook. Women are depicted as lacking emotional expression and agency, with marriages being orchestrated and controlled by male figures. For instance, phrases like "A marriage… had not been finally agreed while Henry VII was king" highlight male authority and decision-making power while neglecting women's perspectives, reflecting the instrumentalisation of women primarily for their reproductive capabilities. The specific mention of a "male heir" introduces an additional layer of gender bias, perpetuating the historical devaluation of women based on their ability to fulfill patriarchal expectations (Osler, 1994).

Additionally, the textbook frequently defines female figures as male counterparts, such as referring to Catherine as "his brother Arthur's widow" and Anne Boleyn as "the niece of Thomas Howard." This practice diminishes women's identities and accomplishments, framing their significance through their connections to men, which contributes to the marginalisation of women and upholds patriarchal ideologies by implying that women's value is derived from their relationships with men (Gouvias & Alexopoulos, 2016).

At the meso level, the bias is structurally traceable. From AQA's (2021a) publishing/assessment guidance and samples of past papers, assessment objectives and question design are principally oriented to the causal chains and interpretative controversies of "high politics" (e.g., royal succession, conciliar decision-making, trajectories of religion and diplomacy). Gender is neither explicitly listed as a standalone knowledge point nor commonly operationalised as an analytic dimension in question stems and mark schemes. Correspondingly, female figures in questions and source materials tend to appear as relational markers (marriage, succession, kinship) or as functional nodes, rather than being developed as sustained, agentive historical actors. This assessment-orientation → textbook structuring → classroom uptake alignment chain, under constraints of limited lesson time and pressures of assessability, pushes teachers' focal work towards evidence-gathering and causal reasoning around male action (e.g., "chains of royal decisions"); classroom questioning is naturally anchored in textual evidence for male Actors (Ball & Cohen, 1996). Hence, institutional pressures at the meso level and micro-linguistic realisations cohere in an interpretable way: Actor roles are disproportionately occupied by men; women enter via passive or relational processes; and the experiential space of gender is compressed into examinable margins of the political narrative. This is not to deny teacher agency: some teachers counter-align this tendency by supplementing materials and redesigning tasks; yet, within the evaluative logic of the AQA core specification, this shift of centre-of-gravity remains the default pathway.

These observations carry implications for the development and use of educational materials: textbooks are frequently relied upon as key resources for understanding history and social norms. Against this background, if relevant narratives perpetuate gender bias, they may increase the risk, at the level of comprehension, that learners revert to traditional gender-role frames and they may hinder the visibility of women's historical contributions (Ballantine et al., 2021). Where textbooks lack sufficiently critical treatment of historical gender inequality, such narrative orientations may attenuate scrutiny of patriarchal norms (institutionalised expectations) and the patriarchal ideology (systems of belief) that underwrite them (Walby, 1990). A more cautious formulation is therefore appropriate: the textual patterns identified here indicate a risk and a tendency that warrant attention, rather than a direct causal claim about classroom-level effects. On this basis, publishers and educators should sustain content review and resource updating to promote more inclusive representations (Oxford University Press, n.d.). Consistent with this stance, the reading of marital materials

herein focuses on how narrative premises organise reader understanding, rather than making causal assertions about attitude change in classroom settings.

There are several limitations to this essay. Methodologically, applying corpus linguistics would be more effective because this approach can accommodate the entire textbook, rather than just selected excerpts. Analytically, particularly regarding marriage, I assumed heterosexuality, which is not correct. Although I did not find any content on same-sex relationships in this book, focusing on this aspect might require more space for discussion. Future research may consider a broader range of textbooks across different subjects, educational levels, and publishers to assess the prevalence of gender biases in educational materials comprehensively. Longitudinal studies could examine how gender representation in textbooks evolves, particularly in response to policy changes like the implementation of the National Curriculum and equality legislation. Moreover, incorporating perspectives from educators and students could provide insights into how these texts are utilised in classrooms and their impact on learners' perceptions of gender roles. Experimental studies might explore the effects of revised, gender-inclusive textbooks on students' attitudes toward gender equality.

Conclusion

This study applied Fairclough's three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis, informed by Feminist CDA, to examine how gendered power relations are linguistically constructed in the A-level history textbook, The Tudors: England 1485–1603. The analysis identified distinct patterns at multiple analytical levels, demonstrating how linguistic strategies, especially the frequent use of passive constructions, systematically obscure male agency and position women primarily as passive recipients of historical action. Contextual analysis linked these textual choices to the broader discursive practices of textbook production and curriculum guidelines, revealing underlying patriarchal assumptions that are subtly reinforced through ostensibly neutral narratives.

Theoretically and methodologically, the study highlighted the effectiveness of integrating Feminist CDA with Fairclough's dialectical-relational model, emphasizing the importance of combining qualitative critical reading with targeted corpus-based verification to ensure analytical rigour. Furthermore, the research offered pedagogical insights for educators aiming to cultivate students' critical historical literacy, underscoring the necessity of moving beyond passive consumption toward active interrogation of textbook narratives.

However, certain limitations should be acknowledged. The study's intensive focus on a single-page excerpt inevitably restricts the generalizability of findings across the textbook or broader curriculum materials. Additionally, the exclusive attention given to linguistic dimensions meant that multimodal elements, such as visuals and layout, as well as classroom practices, were not considered.

Consequently, future research could extend this critical investigation in several meaningful ways. Comprehensive corpus-based analyses of multiple textbooks across different historical periods or educational levels would provide broader insights into evolving patterns of gender representation. Incorporating multimodal analysis frameworks, like those proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen, would enrich understanding of how non-verbal textbook elements either reinforce or resist gender stereotypes. Ethnographic classroom studies would further illuminate the interactive dynamics of textbook use, revealing how gendered discourses are negotiated or contested in practice. Additionally, exploring intersections of gender with other identity categories, including class, ethnicity, and nationality, would yield more nuanced insights into the ideological complexity of historical narratives. Comparative studies across national contexts might also uncover distinct or shared biases within educational discourses globally.

Ultimately, this study underscores the critical role textbooks play not just in narrating history, but in shaping social attitudes and future possibilities. Continuous scholarly attention to textbook discourses is vital for developing educational materials that challenge inequitable representations and foster critical, transformative learning environments.

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