**Spartacus Educational Classroom Activity**

# Did Anne Boleyn have six fingers on her right hand? A Study in Catholic Propaganda. (Questions & Answers)

<http://spartacus-educational.com/ExAnTEU19.htm>

This commentary is based on the classroom activity: [Did Anne Boleyn have six fingers on her right hand? A Study in Catholic Propaganda](http://spartacus-educational.com/ExTEU19.htm).

**Q1**: Read the introduction and study sources 1, 6 and 10. Explain why many historians have expressed doubts about the reliability of these portraits.

**A1**: Source 1 is a copy of a portrait of [Anne Boleyn](http://spartacus-educational.com/TUDboleyn.htm). The original was probably painted between 1533 and 1536. We have several copies that are very similar. The problem is that we do not know who originally painted the portrait. Source 10 is a sketch by [Hans Holbein](http://spartacus-educational.com/TUDholbein.htm). It has "Anna Bollein" written on the painting. However, [Alison Weir](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alison_Weir), has doubts about its authenticity because the woman looks very different from source 1. Source 6 was painted around sixty years after Anne Boleyn's death and is therefore not considered an accurate portrait.

**Q2**: Read sources 2, 3, 4, 5, 7 and 11. Make a list of aspects of her appearance that appear in more than one source.

**A2**:

Eyes: "black and beautiful" (2); "black-eyes" (5); "large, dark eyes" (7)

Complexion: "swarthy" (2); "sallow" (3); "a sallow skin" (7)

Breast: "bosom not much raised" (2); "rather flat-chested figure" (7);

Hair: "black" (3); "a heavy mane of glossy black hair" (7); "glossy dark hair" (11);

Clothes: "always well-dressed" (3); "dressed well and had become a leader of fashion at Court" (7); "dressed well" (11);

**Q3**: Compare what [Nicholas Sander](http://spartacus-educational.com/Nicholas_Sander.htm) (source 3) and [George Wyatt](http://spartacus-educational.com/George_Wyatt.htm) (source 4) say about Anne Boleyn. Read their biographies and assess the possible reliability of their accounts.

**A3**: Nicholas Sander (source 3) claims that Anne Boleyn "had a projecting tooth under her upper lip, and on her right hand, six fingers". Sander also claims that there "was a large wen (tumour or wart) under her chin". George Wyatt disagrees about the extra finger and said it was "little show of a nail, which yet was so small".

Sander was a devout Catholic and his book, [Rise and Growth of Anglican Schism](http://www.amazon.co.uk/Nicholas-Sander/e/B00N833NG4/ref%3Dsr_ntt_srch_lnk_2?qid=1431500304&sr=1-2&tag=blogccasion)(1585) was an attack on all those who he thought made the Protestant Reformation possible. This included Queen [Elizabeth](http://spartacus-educational.com/TUDelizabeth1.htm) and her mother, Anne Boleyn. In his description of Boleyn he tried to give the impression of evil.

Wyatt, was the son of [Thomas Wyatt](http://spartacus-educational.com/TUDwyatt.htm), who had been executed for treason by the last Catholic monarch, Queen [Mary](http://spartacus-educational.com/TUDmary1.htm). Although his book was not published in his lifetime he would have been keen to please Queen Elizabeth. However, unlike Sander's work, it was not religious propaganda and historians tend to believe that his description of Anne Boleyn is accurate.

**Q4**: Study sources 1, 8 and 9. Do these sources support the views of Sander and Wyatt?

**A4**: Source 1 does not show a projecting tooth, six fingers on her right hand or a large wart under the chin.[Retha M. Warnicke](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Retha_Warnicke) points out in source 8 that [Mario Savorgnano](http://spartacus-educational.com/Mario_Savorgnano.htm) (source 2) provides the most detailed contemporary account of Anne Boleyn and he did not mention the tooth, finger or wart. [Alison Weir](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alison_Weir) (source 9) reports that no one in the French court mentions these deformities. However, [Margaret Roper](http://spartacus-educational.com/Margaret_Roper.htm), the daughter of Sir [Thomas More](http://spartacus-educational.com/TUDmoreT.htm), did mention the sixth finger. However, they were both, like [Nicholas Sander](http://spartacus-educational.com/Nicholas_Sander.htm), were devout Catholics and very hostile to Anne Boleyn.