

Were there
Black Tudors?

The Tudors were a family who ruled England and Wales from 1485 to 1603

I love a wedding!



The most famous Tudors were King Henry VIII . . .

Marriage isn't for me

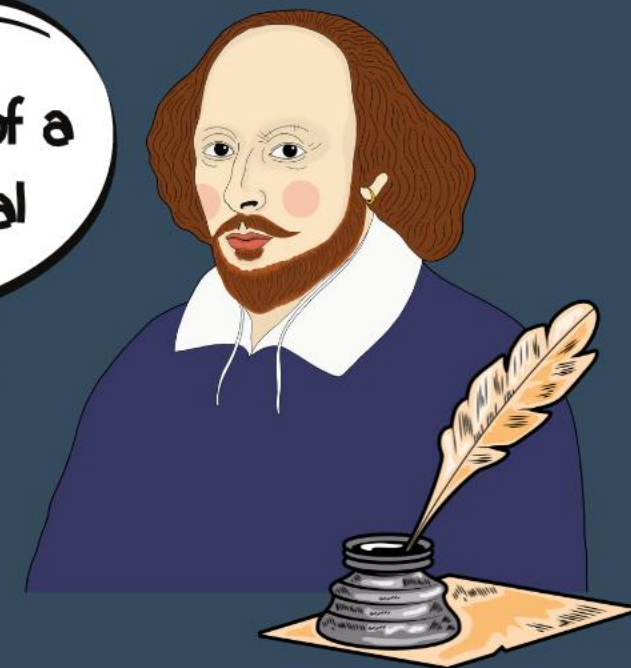
. . . and Queen Elizabeth I



When people think about the Tudor period, they mostly think of. . . .



Chopping peoples' heads off



Shakespeare



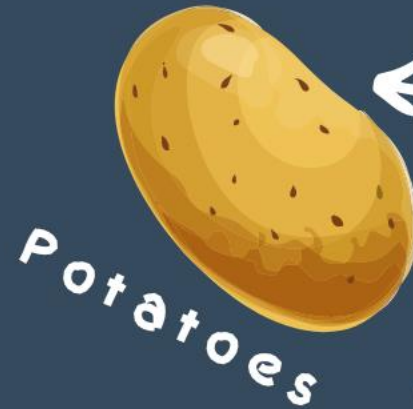
The Reformation



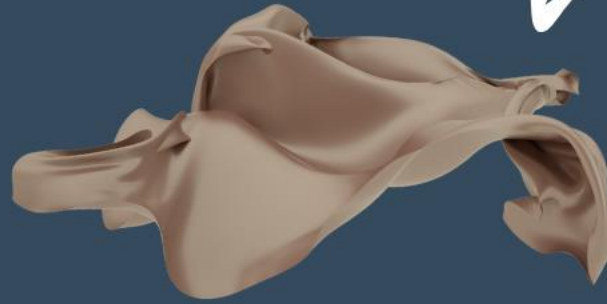
During the Tudor period England started to explore the world



These things were very expensive, so most Tudors couldn't afford a bag of chips!



Potatoes



Silk



Tomatoes



Spices

What new discoveries did people get excited about?





At the same time England explored the oceans so did Spain and Portugal.



More and more people were travelling. A lot of people from Africa were now living in Europe and some travelled as far as England to start new lives.



There were now Black Africans living in England. Despite this growing population, the only known images of a Black Tudor are those of John Blanke.

This image is from the Westminster Tournament Roll. The roll was created to record the celebration of the birth of a short-lived son of Henry VIII and his first wife, Katherine of Aragon.



John Blanke worked for me. He was a royal trumpeter

But there were hundreds more Black people living in England - there just aren't any pictures of them.

In fact there aren't many pictures of anyone - unless they were rich and paid for their portrait to be painted by an artist.

But there are records of Black Tudors. A word often used to describe Black people living in England was Blackamoor.



A black silhouette of a man's head and shoulders in profile, facing right. The man has curly hair. The silhouette is positioned in front of a brown folder icon with a white tab. The folder is on the left side of the image.

Jacques Francis

Jacques Francis

- Born in the 1520s on an island off the coast of the part of West African known to Tudors as 'Guinea'
- Worked as part of a team of salvage divers managed by a Venetian man named Peter Paolo Corsi.
- In May 1547 Jacques testified in court in support of Corsi, who had been accused of stealing items salvaged from another ship in Southampton.
- Jacques's testimony states that he was a very skilled diver, having mastered the art of free diving (requiring no breathing apparatus).

Why is Jacques' story so interesting?



England started to build more ships so they could explore the world and protect their shores from invading enemies.



Shipwrecks were common.



Most Tudors couldn't swim!



Salvage diving was incredibly important to the English economy, as ships were expensive investments which carried valuable merchant goods or military equipment.



Cattelena

Cattelena

- We know about Cattelena because of the inventory of her possessions after her death (a list of things she owned).
- She is described as 'Cattelena, a negra deceased of Almondsbury in the county of Gloucester, single woman and in the diocese of Bristol'.
- Her inventory includes cooking utensils, clothes, bedding, tablecloth, a candlestick, and a cow.
- Cattelena's cow was worth £3 and 10 shillings, which is £460.32 in today's money. In 1625, the year Cattelena died, this was the equivalent of 70 days of skilled labour.

Why is Cattelena's story so interesting?



She had an income through the sale of dairy products, such as cheese and butter in the local area, giving her the opportunity of independence.



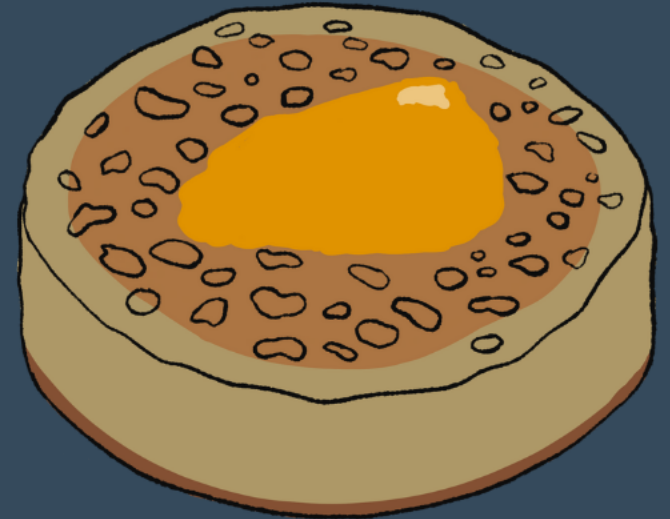
Cattelena was unmarried but this was not unusual in the Tudor period, with around 30% of the English adult female population single.



It was rare for single women to live in their own home. Cattelena's inventory doesn't list furniture - suggesting she rented a room in someone's house.



Cattelena's inventory shows that Black Tudor women could own property and financially support themselves, living a life of relative independence.





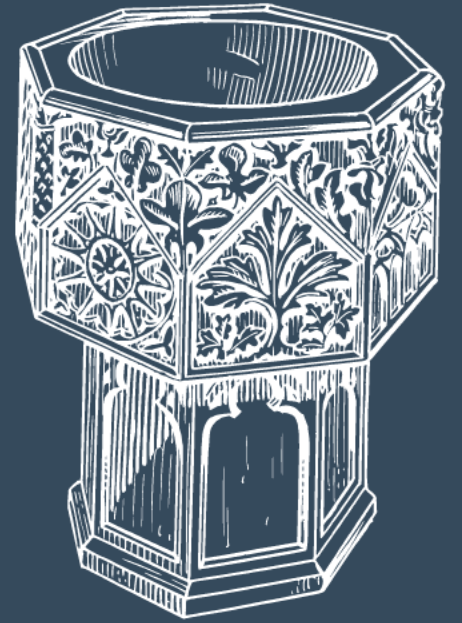
Mary Fillis

Mary Fillis

- Mary was 20 years old when she was baptised in the parish of St. Botolph Aldgate. Thanks to a detailed account of her baptism, written in July 1597 we know a lot about her.
- Mary was born in 1577 and had lived in England since she was around 6 or 7 years old.
- Mary was the daughter of 'Fillis of Morisco, a black more', a basket maker and a shovel maker. 'Morisco' suggests they were from Morocco.
- Mary worked as a servant for Millicent Porter - an 58 year old widow, working as a seamstress and living in East Smithfield, London.

Why is Mary's story so interesting?

- † Just like Mary, many of the Black women living in Tudor England, had moved here when they were children.
- † Being a Christian was really important in Tudor England. Being baptised meant Mary could fully participate in community life, such as getting married.
- † Mary was from Morocco, in north Africa. English merchants would go there to trade in sugar, dates and almonds, as well as saltpetre, a key ingredient for making gunpowder!
- † Queen Elizabeth I started sending ambassadors to Morocco in the 1570s, and Moroccan ambassadors visited London in 1589 and 1600.





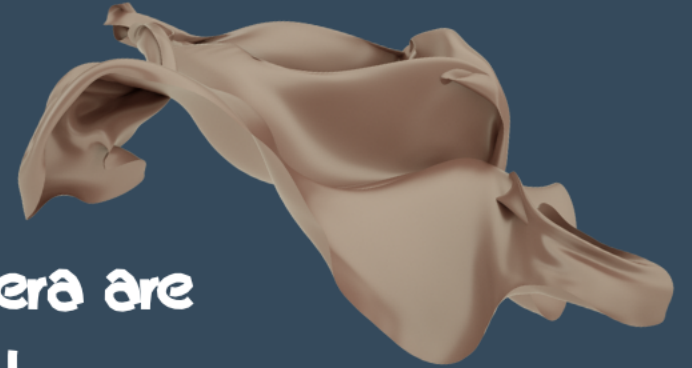
Reasonable Blackman

Reasonable Blackman

- Reasonable was a skilled silk weaver of African descent living in Southwark, just outside the City of London.
- He was financially independent, earning enough by his trade to support his wife and children.
- Church records of Reasonable Blackman describe him as a 'blackmor' and 'a blackmore'.
- Elegant silk clothing was highly sought after by aristocracy and gentry.
- Silk weaving was a new and expanding industry in Elizabethan London. Evidence shows that imports of raw silk increased between 1560 and 1593.

Why is Reasonable's story so interesting?

- 🦋 Silk weaving originated in China and came to Europe along the 'Silk Roads' through Asia and North Africa.
- 🦋 Examples of married African men with families in the Tudor era are not unusual, appearing in Cornwall, Kent, Worcestershire and Hertfordshire.
- 🦋 Antwerp in the Netherlands was the leading centre of the silk industry, but in the 16th century its position started to be challenged, resulting in revolt and war.
- 🦋 50,000 refugees left and settled in England, with a very high proportion of silk weavers settling in Southwark – perhaps this is how Reasonable Blackman came to live there.



Selly Manor Museum asked 4 artists to imagine what each of the Black Tudors looked like.

Artist Nina Simone Brown created artwork of the salvage diver Jacques Francis.

What do you imagine when you think of Jacques? →



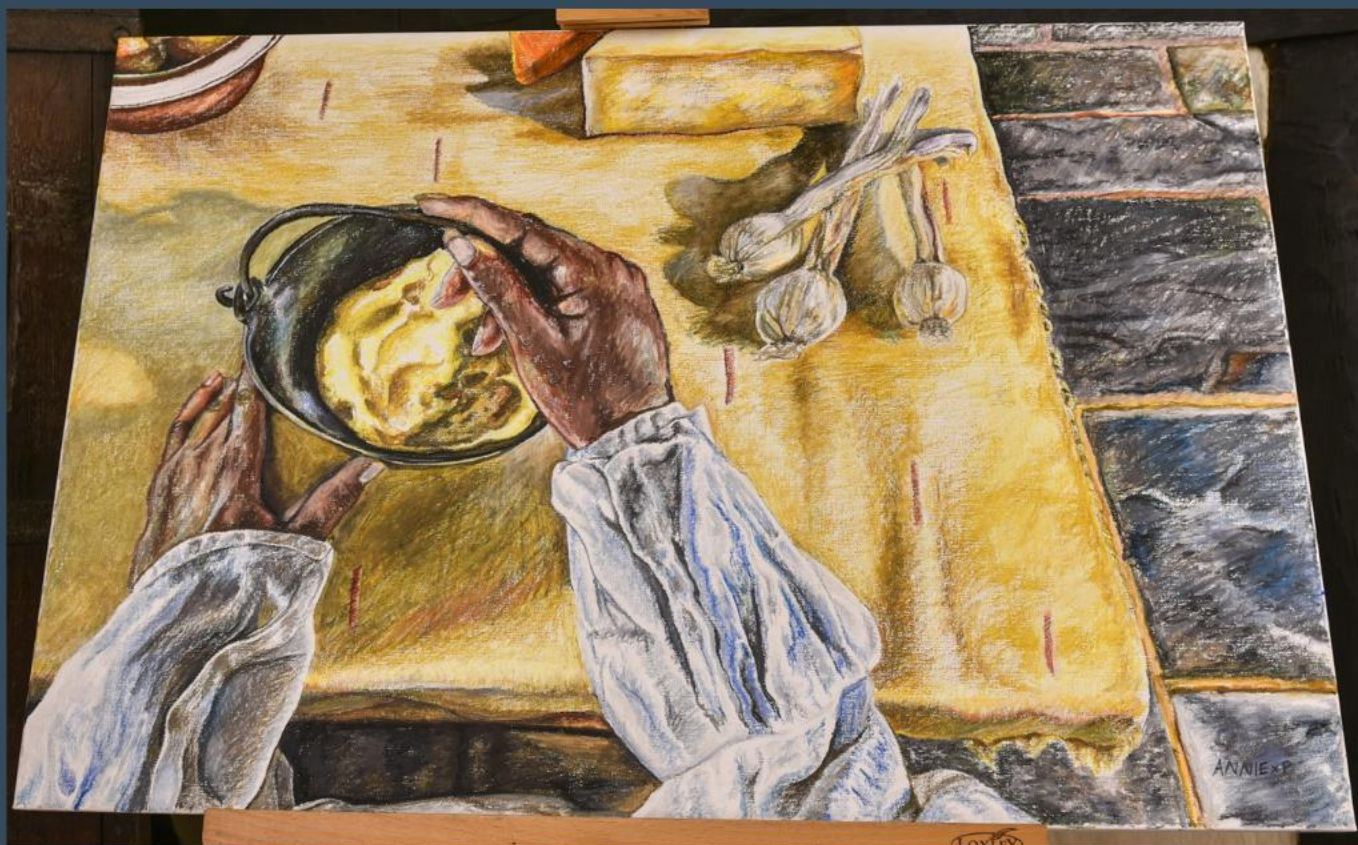
Does Jacques look how
you imagined?

How is he different?

Artist Annie Pearson created artwork of
Cattelena who was an independent woman,
with income from her cow.

What do you imagine when you think of
Cattelena? →





Does Cattelena look
how you imagined?

How is she different?

Artist Jade Eynon created artwork of Mary Fillis who moved to England from Morocco and was baptised.

What do you imagine when you think of Mary? —————>



Does Mary look how you
imagined?

How is she different?

Artist Nompumelo Ncube created artwork of
Reasonable Blackman, the silk weaver.

What do you imagine when you think of
Reasonable? →

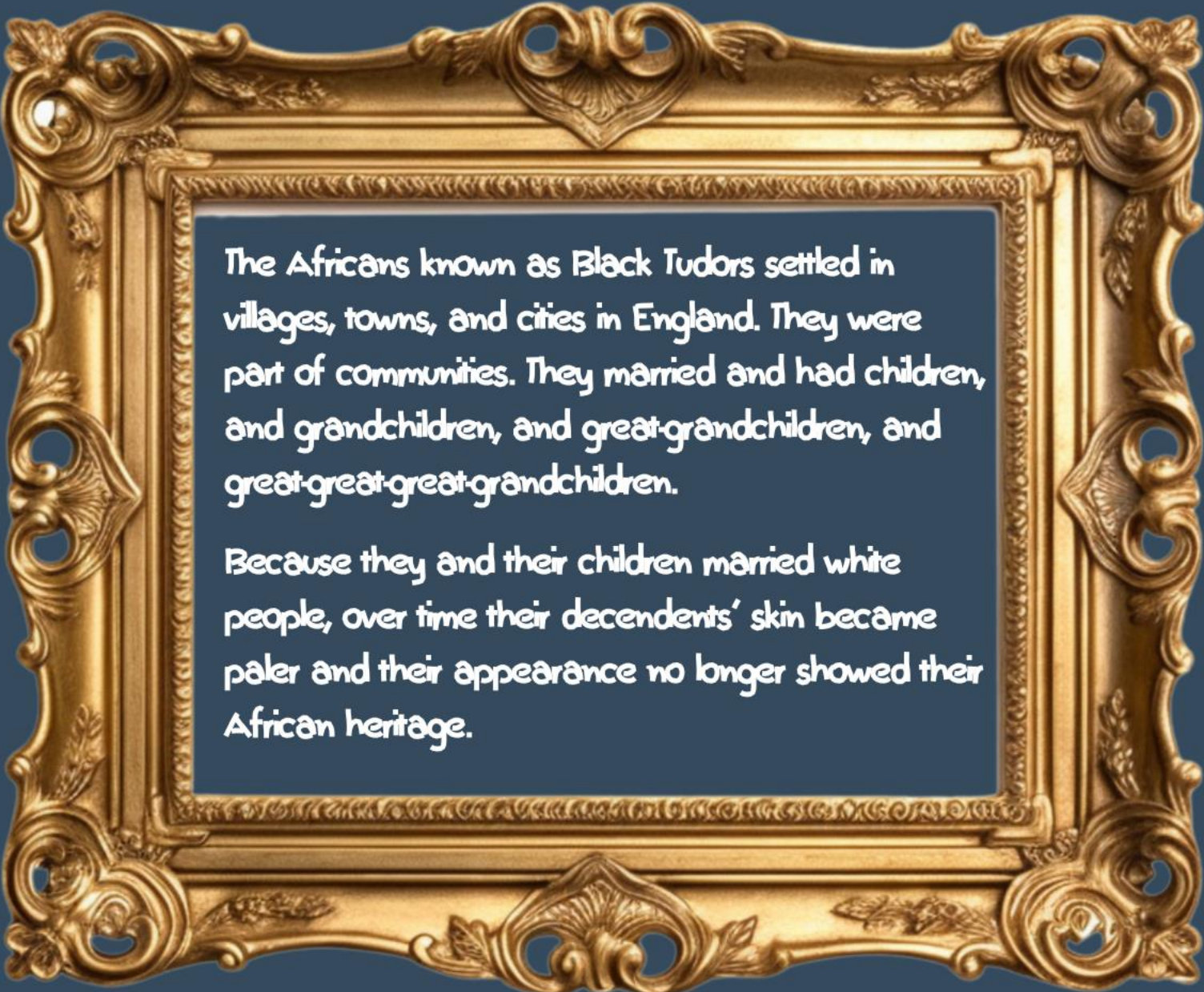
Does Reasonable
look how you
imagined?

How is he
different?



Detail about the lives of Jacques, Cattelena, Mary, and Reasonable appear in a wide range of sources:

- Parish registers (lists of baptisms, marriages, & funerals)
- Tax returns
- Household accounts
- Letters
- Diaries
- Wills and inventories (a list of your belongings)
- Government papers
- Legal records



The Africans known as Black Tudors settled in villages, towns, and cities in England. They were part of communities. They married and had children, and grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, and great-great-great-grandchildren.

Because they and their children married white people, over time their descendants' skin became paler and their appearance no longer showed their African heritage.