**Helen Castor ‘A Queen in a King’s World’**

**Challenge:** Read through the part of the article on Matilda, daughter of Henry I and how she nearly became England’s first female ‘King’ and answer the questions in the boxes or on a separate piece of paper and upload a picture to google classroom.

**Define heir:**

**Why did Henry turn to Matilda becoming his heir?**

**Why was there uncertainty in England after 1066?**

Power was inherently male in the Middle Ages. England in the 12th century had few hard-and-fast rules of the government that could dictate the course of political events. After all, the kingdom had just experienced the greatest upheaval imaginable, the Norman Conquest of 1066, which left new Norman rulers in an unfamiliar political landscape full of possibility and uncertainty. One question was how England’s Norman crown was to be passed on.

Henry I (father of Matilda) in 1100 took the crown by force. However, he was determined that his children would inherit it from him. His hopes were pinned on his son William however horror struck when William drowned in 1120. Henry’s son was gone, but he still had a daughter, Matilda. Henry insisted that she would be his heir.

**Which 3 problems did Matilda face which ultimately meant she was never crowned.**

**Give 2 reasons why the barons supported Henry’s decision to name Matilda as his heir.**

Under the frightening glare of Henry I his barons swore they would support Matilda as his successor. No one spoke out to declare that a woman could not rule in her own right. After all, there was no rule to say that she could, there was equally none to say that she couldn’t.

**Define civil war**

**Why did people support Stephen?**

**Why did people support Matilda?**

All that stood in Matilda’s path to the throne was a rebellion which is exactly how her father Henry gained the crown. When Henry I died in 1135, his nephew Stephen raced from France to Winchester where he was crowned King before Matilda. Matilda was slowed down by her pregnancy and Stephen was King before she knew what was happening.

This led to two sides. Those who supported Stephen who had royal blood who could offer leadership of a familiar kind. The other was those who supported Matilda who was the only legitimate child of the previous King. The result was a civil war. Despite her sex, Matilda’s claim was not dismissed by the barons she hoped to rule. In fact, she proved able to command enough support that by the summer of 1141 her army had defeated and captured Stephen at the Battle of Lincoln. Meanwhile Matilda advanced to Westminster in London to prepare for her own coronation.

Matilda was trying to become Queen of England, not in the conventional sense of a King’s wife, but in the extraordinary form of a female king. Kings were required to be commanding and authoritative. But when Matilda tried to command her subjects with her new royal authority, she found herself punished for being unfeminine, wilful and domineering. A historian from the time said about Matilda that “she no longer relied on their advice, as she should have, and had promised them, but arranged everything as she herself thought fit and according to her own will.”

**Where did Matilda go wrong according to Helen Castor and contemporaries from the time?**

On the edge of power, the ways in which Matilda did not “fit” the crown she claimed began to be voiced for the first time. One historian of the period remarks, “She at once put on an extremely arrogant demeanour instead of the modest gait and bearing proper to the gentle sex”. Henry of Huntingdon declared at the time that “she was lifted up to an insufferable arrogance… and alienated the hearts of almost everyone.”

**Why did some people’s opinions of Matilda change?**

Matilda did not exactly do what her advisors told her. The expectation of unquestioning obedience, and the punishment of those who did not follow the commands had been key elements of Henry’s kingship. How, then, could Matilda achieve an authority to match her father’s if she could only command her kingdom in a way that was “proper to the gentle sex”

**Compare Matilda and a Medieval King you have been looking at in lessons. How are they similar and how are they different?**

**Why did Matilda give up her fight for the crown?**

**What positives (in Matilda’s eyes) came from this in 1154?**

Matilda’s story left a complex legacy in English politics. Women could pass on the throne to their male heirs, that much was clear, and no rule had been established to exclude them from succession. But there was no neutral political ground on which a woman could stand to exercise power that contemporaries assumed was ‘naturally’ male.

**What can we learn from Matilda’s story and how is it still relevant today?**

Matilda never got her coronation. The Londoners, whose economic interest in the trade route through Stephen’s lands in Europe, supported Matilda’s rival Stephen. They drove her from Westminster before the crown could be placed on her head. Nineteen long years of civil war were finally ended by Matilda’s realisation that she could only achieve victory for her cause by leaving the country in 1154. She gave up her claim to her son, who took the throne after Stephen’s death in 1154 becoming King Henry II. Reuniting the legitimacy of his mother’s claim with his own ability to embody the functions of Kingship in male form.