

# 11 Tudor Marriage



wet-nurse  
bride-ale spinster

Garters were even more popular. Young men tried to tear them from the bride's legs even before she had left the altar. Sometimes, it got out of hand and the screaming bride was knocked over and had to be rescued.



A poor couple could get their marriage off to a better start by holding a bride-ale. This was a big party, often held in the church after the service. There was dancing and plenty to drink.

When everyone was in a good mood and enjoying themselves, they made a collection for the newly-weds. It was a big help.

Even a rich bride would find her new life was not easy. Most women could expect to become pregnant in nearly every year of their lives until they became too old to have children.

Giving birth was dangerous for the mother and being born was dangerous for the baby. Because many babies died within days of birth, they were baptized at once. Unfortunately, cold water was used which often killed the baby.

The mother usually fed the baby herself and for longer than nowadays. Queen Elizabeth did not

Mary, Queen of Scots, had led an unusual life. In many ways, she had gone against the customs of the time. For her first marriage, to a French prince, she had worn a white wedding dress. This may not sound strange but, at that time, French queens usually wore white clothes when someone had died.

By the end of the century, white had become a common colour for a bride to choose. It still is today.

Tudor weddings were colourful events. The bride and groom went to church in a big parade. There was a lot of music and noise. The bride walked on a path covered with things to remind her of her future husband. If he was a blacksmith, there would be pieces of old iron.



The noise often carried on inside the church, especially towards the end of the service. People tried to grab laces and ribbons worn by the bride.



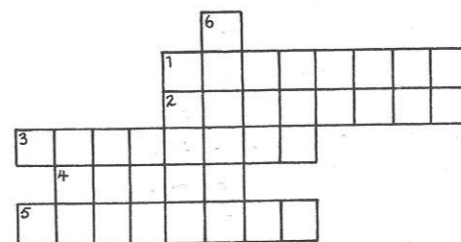
A The inside of a cottage. A picture from a 17th-century book. Look at what the three people are doing.

have other foods until she was thirteen months old. Some rich mothers paid a **wet-nurse** to feed their babies. This might be a woman whose own baby had died.

Despite the hardships, most girls probably did want to get married. There were no careers for women at that time. A girl's only other future

would be to stay at home with her parents and spend her time spinning. (This is why unmarried women were called spinsters.)

It was not a very exciting prospect. Perhaps it is not surprising that girls wanted to get married, even though their parents chose their husbands for them.



- Copy this diagram into your book, then fill in the spaces, using these clues:
  - This happened to a baby as soon as it was born.
  - The party held after a marriage.
  - The name for an unmarried woman.
  - It became a common colour for wedding dresses by 1600.

- Babies might be fed by one of these people. When you have finished, write down the word going down (6) and write about what it had to do with weddings.
- Look at evidence A. Divide your page into two columns with a pencil. On the left, write about these things, which you can see in the picture: cooking; heating; washing clothes; beds; furniture. On the right, write about how they have changed since then.
- Look at the baby in evidence A. What do you think it is doing?
- Describe the scene shown in evidence A. Is this family poor or rich?