

Chiara R. – 3<sup>a</sup> LSMB sez. B

### **THOMAS BECKETT'S LESSON**

On 29 December of 1170 a monk called *Edward Grim* witnessed Thomas Beckett's murder in a very holy building, the Canterbury Cathedral. It was a cruel scene, thanks to Edward's hold the Archbishop managed to stand as long as he received the third sword's blow. After claiming he was ready to die, the knights had no mercy about him, staining with his blood the Cathedral floor. One of their sword broke down due to the hard hitting and Becket's brain was scattered all over the ground.

Despite these are the historical facts which really happened, the truth was that king Henry II and Thomas Beckett were actually friends. However, the Archbishop was so troublesome that he annoyed the King, and unfortunately his knights listened to his wishes about getting rid of him.

- SOURCE A (by Edward Grim)

Although the monks tried to bolt the doors to protect the Archbishop, he didn't want to make his cathedral stand like a fortress (**Becket is a religious man**), so he ordered them to give up any resistance. He then denied the accuse of being a traitor and consequently declared himself as a prier of God, ready to die for him (**Becket is a brave man**). Also when the knights told Becket to forgive the people he had expelled from the Church, he made it impossible by holding himself tight to a pillar (**Becket is a determinated/stubborn man**).

What can you learn from Source A about Thomas Becket?

Here is another part of the story about the murder of 1170, written by the monk, Edward Grim.

The monks tried to bolt the doors to protect Becket, but he ordered them to open the doors. He said, "It is wrong to make the house of prayer into a fortress." The knights called out, "Where is Archbishop Thomas Becket, a traitor to his king and country?" Becket answered, "I am here. I am a priest of God, not a traitor. I am ready to die for Him. I will not run from your swords." The knights told Becket to forgive the people he had expelled from the Church. He refused. They tried to drag him from the cathedral, but he could not be forced away from the pillar. Then he started to life his hands in prayer.

Source A, by  
Edward Grim

**TASK 1: Copy & Complete**  
**these three sentences in**  
**your book**

1. Which part of Grim's story suggest that Becket was a very religious man?

"Becket is shown as a religious man in Source A when it says "..."

2. Which parts suggest that he was a very determined man or even a stubborn man?

"Becket is shown as a stubborn man in Source A when it says he "..."

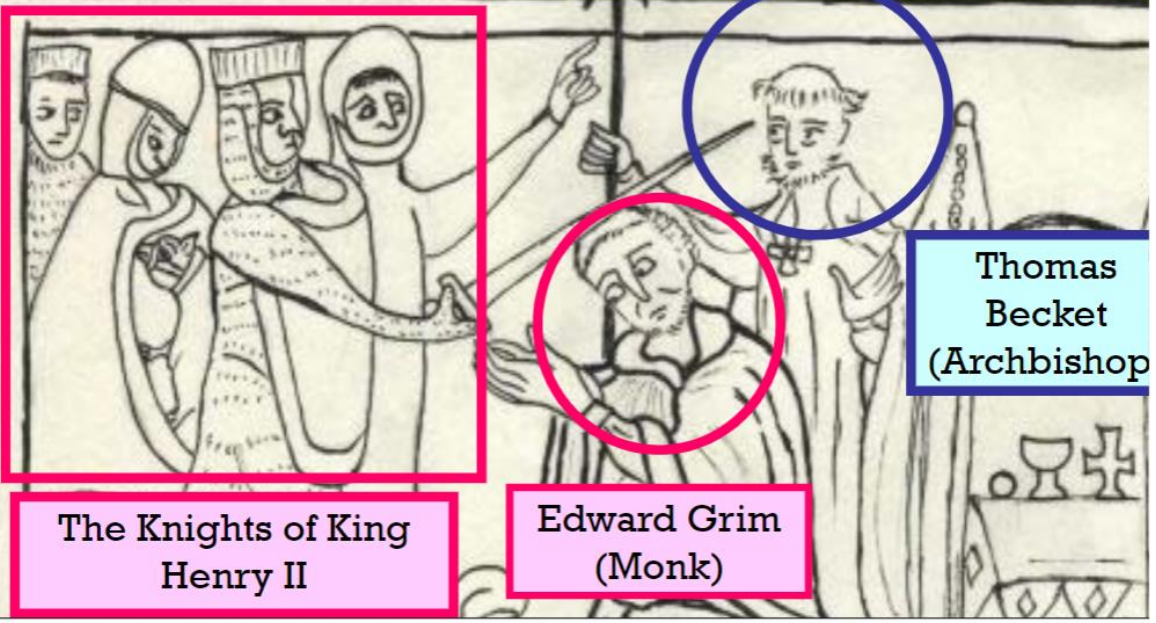
3. Which parts suggest that he was a very brave man?

"Becket is shown as brave in Source A when it says "..."

- SOURCE B

Becket's murder was his own decision, indeed, meanwhile the monk Edward Grim seems to surrender to the knights, Beckett in this picture looks clearly ready to face his opponents.

What impression does Source B (this picture) give about the murder of Becket?



The Knights of King Henry II

Edward Grim (Monk)

Thomas Becket (Archbishop)

**TASK 2:** Copy and Complete these two sentences, based on Source B picture).

- Source B suggests that Becket's murder was...
- I can prove this because in the source it shows...



- SOURCE C

The picture shows Henry II and Thomas Becket greeting each other in a quite kind way, while the king's knights behind the priest have the swords held off. That's the clear proof that they get along together.

What can you learn from Source C about Henry and Becket's relationship?

**TASK 3: Copy** and **complete** the following sentences using Source C.

- Source C suggests that...
- I can prove this because in the source it shows...



**Source C: Henry & Becket**

- SOURCES D & E

Both sources state Henry II to own a brilliant brain. In fact, Tony Robinson's book says he was very clever and enhances this by pointing out that he set up new, fairer law courts. On the other hand, from Peter's letter we understand his great level of wisdom.

By contrary, these sources don't totally agree: the first one admits that Henry had a horrible behavior toward his family so that also his country started crumbling; whereas the other says he was peaceful, gift-giving, kinder to poor and overall friendly to all in his household.

## Does Source E support Source D about Henry II?

**CHALLENGE TASK:** Compare these sources about Henry II. How do they agree and disagree? Complete the sentences below. Use quotes to support your answer.

"Henry the Second was big trouble! He was short and stocky with a neck like a bull and blazing grey eyes that flashed in his fiery face. He had vivid red hair and when he was in a rage he threw himself on the floor. But he was also brilliantly clever. He set up new, fairer law courts. But he was also horrible to his wife and children, who rebelled against him. Eventually the country started crumbling, just like his family life."

Source D: From Tony Robinson's book, 'Kings and Queens', published in 2001.

"You will know that the lord king has been red-haired so far, except that the coming of old age and grey hair has altered that colour somewhat. His head is round, and great wisdom sits upon it. Our king is peaceable, victorious in war, glorious in peace. He never sits, unless riding a horse or eating, although he has shins greatly wounded and bruised with frequent blows of horses' hooves. No one is more magnificent in gift-giving or kinder to the poor. He is friendly to all in his household."

Source E: Letter to an archbishop in Italy from Peter of Blois in 1177.

### **TASK 4 (The challenge task!) - Copy and complete these sentences:**

Source E agrees with Source D because they both say that... I can see this where Source D says... and Source E says...

Source E does not agree with Source D because one says... but the other says...

## THE MURDER OF BECKET - Summary

Henry the Second was the king who ruled over England, Ireland and parts of France. He had a good friend, whose name was Thomas Becket, that helped him to ensure the payment of everyone's taxes. Besides, in order to have power also over the Church, the King chose him as the Archbishop of Canterbury. In particular, he had to convince workers of the Church to obey his court and not the Pope's one.

However, the King was informed that Becket didn't follow his directives, so he was labelled as a traitor and exiled to France for six years.

After the time went by, Thomas Becket persisted in supporting both Henry's and the Pope's decisions. As a result, the King's rage reached higher and he got misunderstood by his knights.

Thomas Becket let the knights get in the Cathedral. Unfortunately he was murdered for being Henry's traitor and his head was teared up with a sword.

In the end the King and the Archbishop's friendship ended in death, even if the first one didn't mean for the second to be killed. One year later he was flogged by monks as a punishment where his friend died.

From that moment Becket's shrine became a famous destination for pilgrims.