



Historical Laughter!

A lighthearted romp through 600 years
of British history

a play with songs
by Stewart Auty



Characters in order of appearance:

Narrator 1	*King James
Narrator 2	*Charles 1st
Holly	*Oliver Cromwell
Grant	*Golfer
Jonathan	*Footballer
Zoe	*The Plague
Mr (interesting) Timeline	*Soldiers
His (glamorous) Teaching Assistant	*Serving wench

*King Harold

*William the Conker King

*Henry II

*Soldier 1

*Soldier 2

*Thomas a Becket

*Henry III

*Inventor

*Torturer

*Black Death

*Henry V

*Archbishop

*Henry VIII

*Catherine of Aragon

*Anne Boleyn

*Jane Seymour

*Catherine Howard

*Ann of Cleves

*Catherine Parr

*Catesby

*Rockwood

*Digby

*Guy Fawkes

*Tresham

PLEASE NOTE:

*Could be parts for 40 children but * denotes parts that can be doubled up. In theory, one could do this play with as few as 15 children and lots of quick changes!*

HISTORICAL LAUGHTER

ACT ONE

The scene is a classroom. At the back of the room, facing the audience, is a tiered plinth (like an Olympics plinth for 1st, 2nd and 3rd place). The children – Holly, Grant, Jonathan and Zoe, are sitting at their desks looking bored. The Narrators (one either side of the stage) are dressed as jesters and they are also looking bored.

(Song - Another Brick in the Wall)

We don't need no education
We don't need no thought control
No dark sarcasm in the classroom
Teachers leave them kids alone
Hey teacher leave them kids alone
All in all it's just another brick in the wall
All in all you're just another brick in the wall

We don't need no education
We don't need no thought control
No dark sarcasm in the classroom
Teachers leave them kids alone
Hey teacher leave us kids alone
All in all you're just another brick in the wall
All in all you're just another brick in the wall

NARRATOR 1

Another day at St. Oroph's Secondary School.

NARRATOR 2

Routine and predictability are the order of the day.

NARRATOR 1

In Class 7Z, the timetable is being discussed.

NARRATOR 2

I think they must be having a messy uniform day!

JONATHAN

What's next today?

HOLLY

History with Mr. Timeline.

GRANT

Oh, no! I don't think I can stand anymore.

JONATHAN

You'd better sit down then.

HOLLY

It's not so bad really, I quite like History.

GRANT

But it's so boring. I mean, everything happened so long ago.

ZOE

But bits of it are all right.

GRANT

Which bits, then? Go on then, tell me which bits!

JONATHAN

Well, there are battles for instance.

ZOE

And great discoveries too.

HOLLY

Famous people and events, Kings and Queens.

ZOE

Struggles for right and wrong.

GRANT

So what use is it now?

HOLLY

You need to understand the past to make sense of now.

ZOE

It's because of history that we are what we are today.

GRANT

So why is it so boring then?

HOLLY

But it isn't, and it shouldn't be. We have over two thousand years of fascinating history in Britain.

GRANT

Nearly as long as one of Mr. Timeline's history lessons.

JONATHAN

But History is fine; it's him that's boring.

GRANT

He could bore for England.

HOLLY

Well, what do you know about history?

GRANT

What do you mean?

HOLLY

Well, from all the history that you've been taught, what's the earliest date you can remember?

GRANT

Well, I suppose 1066.

(Enter Mr Timeline, dressed in evening dress, like a magician. His Assistant is dressed in a sparkly dress. They set up a flip-chart to one side and the Assistant is carrying a bag of props)

TIMELINE

Well my dull and uninterested children, that's where we'll start!

JONATHAN

It's Timeline! But he looks different!

ZOE

What's the matter, Sir? Are you feeling alright?

TIMELINE

I'm Mr. Timeline no more. From today I'm Timeline, your Guide *(to audience)* I'd rather be a Sea Scout, but that's another story!

ASSISTANT

And I'm his glamorous assistant.

TIMELINE

Together we will demonstrate the attractions of history.

JONATHAN

And what are you going to show us then?

TIMELINE

My mission is to show you that History needn't be as bad as you make out.

GRANT

Your mission? Mission Impossible if you ask me.

TIMELINE

Now stop that! We mean to try.

ASSISTANT

And with the help of your imagination, I think we can succeed.

TIMELINE *(Revealing Image 1 on the flipchart)*

Did you know that Harold shouldn't really have been king?

ZOE

But surely he inherited the throne?

TIMELINE

Not really. Edward the Confessor was dying. *(Image 2)*

GRANT

Well, I'm dying of boredom already.

TIMELINE

But Edward was so saintly, that's why he never had any children.

ASSISTANT

So he had no natural heir.

JONATHAN

Does this mean he was bald? Did he wear a wig?

ASSISTANT

No, stupid. No son to take his place. No one to inherit the throne.

HOLLY

So who took his place?

TIMELINE

He chose his brother in law, Harold.

HOLLY

But I seem to remember that Edward promised the throne to William of Normandy.

TIMELINE

Yes, he even made the promise by swearing on a box of holy relics.

JONATHAN

My mum says it's naughty to swear.

ASSISTANT

Not that kind of swearing, this was an oath, a sacred promise.

TIMELINE

So William of Normandy wasn't very pleased.

ZOE

Normandy? But that's in France!

TIMELINE (*Image 3*)

Yes, and when Edward died, he came to England to claim the throne.

GRANT

I bet that caused trouble!

ASSISTANT

Harold had been fighting at the Battle of Stamford Bridge.

GRANT

Those Chelsea supporters always were hooligans.

TIMELINE (*Image 4*)

No, Stamford Bridge near York. The Vikings had invaded the Yorkshire coast.

ASSISTANT

So Harold had to defend against the Vikings, not realising what William was doing.

TIMELINE

And when William landed, Harold had to march with his army to Hastings.

JONATHAN

But that's about 300 miles.

GRANT

No wonder he lost. Poor souls would be tired out.

TIMELINE

This is how it was....

(2 Norman soldiers enter with King William and 2 Saxon soldiers enter with King Harold. They march about singing)

SOLDIERS *(Singing, to the tune of 'Champion the Wonder Horse')*

"William, the Conker King! William the Conker King!"

CHILDREN *(counter singing to the soldiers – to the tune of popular football chant)*

We love you 'arold, we do,

We love you 'arold, we do,

We love you 'arold, we do,

Oh, 'arold we love you.

NARRATOR 1

There was clearly strong support on both sides.

(Harold rushes up to the middle plinth and the soldiers occupy the two either side)

HAROLD

Stay on the high ground. They'll never defeat us fighting uphill.

JONATHAN

Sounds a bit like King of the Castle to me.

TIMELINE

Well, that's a good comparison. Listen, though...