

Henry VIII

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English IV, Blue 2

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“Divorced, beheaded, died, divorced, beheaded, survived” is a certain jingle of a very powerful and influential English ruler. Henry VIII, ruler of England, was son of Henry VII and Elizabeth of York. His reign was full of death, power, and government that helped him mark his place in history. Henry started out as a handsome young king who was an accomplished musician, a patron of the arts, and a fine athlete, but became a bloated old despot with a waist-measurement of 54 inches, and a greedy tyrant (Ridley). Henry was an involved ruler, had 6 different wives, and threw England into poverty by his last days. Welcome to the first Tudor ruler.

Henry VII and Elizabeth of York became the parents of Henry VIII on June 28, 1491 (“Henry VIII” 188). Henry VIII was second in line for the throne behind his brother Arthur, Prince of Wales. Arthur married Catherine of Aragon and a few months later got extremely ill. Arthur died April 2, 1502, possibly of tuberculosis (“Henry VIII”). Henry only being 10 when Arthur died was offered Arthur’s widow as a wife. Their marriage wouldn’t actually happen until Henry VII’s death in 1509. Henry VIII and Catherine were crowned King and Queen on April 21, 1509 (“Henry VIII”).

Henry VIII was an engaged, powerful, and ruthless king. When it came to foreign affairs and major questions Henry was involved. Wolsey became Lord Chancellor in December of 1515

and was made a Legate a Latere in 1518 making him able to override the ecclesiastical authorities. In the letters sent between Henry and Wolsey they were all to the point and respectful. When the two disagreed, Wolsey never fought him on his decisions. Henry always wanted his advisers to speak their minds freely and give him their honest advice. Wolsey always advised him on big decisions and when large foreign meetings took place the two men would discuss the best plan of action (Ridely). In 1529, Cardinal Wolsey started to fall out of favor when he failed to give Henry and Catherine an annulment. He was arrested and charged with treason (“Henry VIII”).

Thomas Cromwell was Wolsey’s successor become Henry’s Chief Minister. Cromwell helped Henry with 2 major happenings: divorce and the split with the Roman Catholic Church/ Papal Authority (“Henry VIII”). Being part of these two acts brought Cromwell wealth through the dissolution of well-funded monasteries. Over 4 years, Cromwell disbanded over 800 monasteries taking their land and treasure for Henry (“Henry VIII”). In 1534 Henry broke with the Pope and declared himself the supreme head of the Church of England. This meant that the Church was under England’s rule and not Rome’s (“Biography.com editors”). Three acts were made concerning the split of the church. The Act of Submission of the Clergy, Act of Succession, and the Act of Supremacy declared the king “the only supreme head of the Church of England called Anglicana Ecclesia”. The breach between King and Pope made people have to choose where their true allegiances lie (“Henry VIII”). Right after the Act of Restraint of Appeals and the Act of Supremacy were passed in 1534, a riot broke out just a year later (Greaves). Lasting from 1536-1537 the “Pilgrimage of Grace” was a mob of 30,000 people who rebelled against the king’s changes. The leader of the rebellion, Robert Aske and 200 other people were killed along

with Bishop John Fisher and Sir Thomas Moore, former Lord Chancellor, refused to take the oath to King Henry and were arrested and taken to Tower Hill to be beheaded (“Biography.com editors”).

Since Henry was always active with foreign policies he was always campaigning with the Anglo-Spanish against the French, which ended peace with France in 1520 (“Henry VIII ”). Henry joined Pope Julius II’s Holy League against France in 1511. The Scots saw this as a chance to invade England but were defeated at the Battle of Flodden in 1513. War with France became to prove unsuccessful and expensive. During his reign Henry was also known as the “Father of the Royal Navy”. When he first became king the navy only consisted of 5 royal warships. When Henry passed he left his successor with a bigger Navy that consisted of around 50 ships. Henry established the Navy Board around 1546 (“Henry VIII”).

“Divorced, beheaded, died, divorced, beheaded, survived.” That is a jingle most people know because Henry VIII married 6 different times. Catherine of Aragon was Henry’s first wife. They were married on April 21, 1509. This was also the same day Henry was crowned king and Henry’s father, Henry VII, died. During their marriage Henry and Catherine tried multiple times to conceive and she gave birth to 6 stillborn babies. Catherine gave birth to their first heir to survive, Mary. Henry became frustrated that she couldn’t bear a son and started keeping mistresses, Catherine’s ladies in waiting, at his beckon. One particular mistress, Mary Boleyn, introduced him to her sister, Anne Boleyn. Henry and Anne started secretly seeing each other. Henry asked the Pope for an annulment because Catherine could no longer bare children, but he refused and the trial lasted 6 years. In 1533, Anne, Henry’s mistress, became pregnant. Finally Thomas Cromwell, the Archbishop of Canterbury, annulled the marriage. Anne and Henry were

secretly married in January of 1533. Later that year in September, Anne gave birth to Elizabeth, the second heir to the throne. Anne miscarried twice and Henry was still unsatisfied that she couldn't produce a male heir. Henry became interested in her lady-in-waiting, Jane Seymour. To escape his marriage he said that Anne had committed adultery and was planning to murder him. He charged three men of adultery with Anne and put Anne on trial. On trial she denied all the accusations and the marriage was annulled. She was taken to Tower Green that day and was secretly beheaded. Within 24 hours of her death, Jane and Henry were married.

In October of 1537, Jane bore the first male heir, Edward. She died 9 days later from pregnancy-related infection. Henry considered Jane to be one and only true wife because she bore him a male heir. 3 years later he married another Anne. She was the sister of the Duke of Cleves, the king's official painter. He divorced her after 6 months. She received the title of the "Kings' Sister." Weeks later Catherine Howard made her way into the scene. Henry being 49, and Catherine being 19 married happily. By this time Henry was gaining weight and already had a bad leg. Catherine being her young age, started seeking men at her own age. Henry convicted her and found her guilty of adultery. She was beheaded in the Tower Green on February 13, 1542. Her lady in waiting, Catherine Parr was daughter of Maud Green. She was named after Catherine of Aragon, Henry's first wife. They married in 1543 and she was arrested for trying to ban books. Henry freed her and saved her life (Biography.com editors).

During Henry's last years he increased in weight and was failing in health, but he desired to appear all-powerful. He continued his campaign to mainly France and occasionally Scotland. His campaigns failed and it forced loans and currency depreciation to pay off war. Therefore, England was subject to inflation and poverty ("Henry VIII Catherine acted as Henry's nurse,

taking care of him as needed. Henry died January 28, 1547 and was buried next to his “true wife” Jane Seymour at Windsor Castle (“Henry VIII”). Henry VIII’s successor, Edward VI, was crowned February 20th at the age of 9. He carried on the legacy of the Tudor household and was a fierce ruler like his father and died very young.

Henry altogether left a major mark on history from his wives to his split with Rome. Henry suppressed the monasteries and seized their wealth for himself, repudiated Papal supremacy and founded the church of England, he also put to death the Carthusian monks and Sir Thomas Moore but also burned Protestant martyrs who refused to pledge to himself. Above all Henry is known for his obsession with male heirs, concluding to his marriage to 6 different women. Henry left a somewhat broken country to his son Edward who died very young. The Tudors will always be remembered with the start of Henry VIII and his powerful reign.

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