

# Henry VIII: England's Most Important Reign [B2]

Simbolo del fascino aristocratico, Enrico VIII cambiò il suo Paese, segnandone il futuro per sempre. Vi raccontiamo la vita del re più famoso della storia dell'Inghilterra.



---

Henry VIII became king in 1509 at the age of eighteen. Before he died, in 1547, he had created a new Church, the Church of England, and made himself its head. He was England's most majestic monarch, with fifty palaces, including Hampton Court, with its own [bowling alley](#) and [tennis courts](#). Henry VIII is the most famous — and [notorious](#) — monarch in English history.

## HEIR TO THE THRONE

Henry became king after the death of his [elder](#) brother, Arthur, and quickly married his brother's widow, Catherine of Aragon. Like all monarchs, he needed an [heir](#), and this became a problem. Catherine had three stillborn children and a miscarriage, although she finally had a daughter, but a female succession was problematic. After twenty-four years of marriage,

Henry asked the [Pope](#) for an annulment, which would allow him to marry again. The [Pope](#) refused.

## REVOLUTIONARY ACTION

The divorce from Catherine became the King's [so-called "great matter"](#). Henry made a revolutionary decision: the English Church would separate from the [Pope](#) and become "a spiritual department of state under the rule of the king as God's [deputy](#) on earth." The consequences were major. Henry became the supreme head on earth of the Church of England, a divine [ruler](#). His act stimulated the Protestant Reformation in the rest of Europe. Henry dissolved the monasteries, making himself enormously rich in the process.

## ROYAL DESPERATION

Henry became increasingly desperate for an [heir](#), and the wives came and went. After the annulment of the marriage to Catherine in 1533, Henry married Anne Boleyn (who was executed, officially for treason), then Jane Seymour (who died shortly after [childbirth](#)), then Anne of Cleves (marriage annulled), then Catherine Howard (also executed for treason), and finally Catherine Parr (who [outlived](#) Henry). The wives gave him three legitimate children, Mary, Elizabeth and [frail](#) Edward, who all became monarchs of England.

## THE KING'S CHARACTER

As a young man, Henry was attractive, charismatic, well-educated and [accomplished](#). However, his early reputation disappeared after his break from Rome, which led to Britain moving slowly from Roman Catholicism to Protestantism. The King's [ruthless](#) side became clear, with anyone who opposed his rule being executed. Royal power expanded and Henry became a feared figure. He also became enormous: in his final years, he was obese and often ill. Some historians have described him as [lustful](#), egotistical, paranoid and tyrannical. However, few doubt that his reign was the most important in English history.

---

# Glossary

- **accomplished** = abile
- **bowling alley** = sala da bowling
- **heir** = heredero
- **great matter** = grande questione
- **ruler** = governante
- **ruthless** = spietato
- **tennis courts** = campi da tennis
- **notorious** = famigerato
- **Pope** = Papa (di Roma)
- **deputy** = vicario, rappresentante
- **childbirth** = parto
- **frail** = cagionevole, fragile
- **lustful** = lussurioso
- **elder** = maggiore
- **so-called** = cosiddetto
- **outlived** = sopravvivere a