



WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE	KING LEAR	HAMLET	MACBETH	OTHELLO	ROMEO AND JULIET	JULIUS CAESAR	CORIOLANUS
CYMBELINE	TITUS ANDRONICUS	TIMON OF ATHENS	TROILUS AND CRESSIDA	ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA	KING JOHN		
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<u>HENRY VIII</u>	ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL	AS YOU LIKE IT	THE COMEDY OF ERRORS	LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST			
MEASURE FOR MEASURE	THE MERCHANT OF VENICE	THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR	A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM				
MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING	PERICLES, PRINCE OF TYRE	THE TEMPEST	TWELFTH NIGHT	THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA			
THE TWO NOBLE KINSMEN	THE WINTER'S TALE	LOVE'S LABOUR'S WON	THE HISTORY OF CARDENIO	A LOVER'S COMPLAINT			
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## HENRY VIII

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# Henry VIII

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## characters

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## King Henry VIII

Henry VIII, the play's namesake. Henry begins the play under the powerful influence of Cardinal Wolsey and is easily persuaded to do away with Buckingham. Wolsey then convinces him that his marriage to the queen is illegal, since Katharine was his brother's widow. So, Henry divorces Katharine, intending to marry the beautiful Anne Bullen (the historical Anne Boleyn). He finally realizes that Wolsey is manipulating him when he intercepts letters between Wolsey and the Pope discussing his divorce. Angered, Henry strips Wolsey of his title and wealth, then marries Anne and announces it to the kingdom. Henry gains a more active role finally when his friend Cranmer is threatened by negative rumors. Giving his ring to Cranmer, the king watches the trial and intervenes to save Cranmer and to scold the lords of their court for their constant infighting. Father to the child (who will grow up to become the great Queen Elizabeth), Henry concludes the play at her baptism, believing that bringing her into the world is the best thing he has done.

## Cardinal Wolsey

The king's right-hand man, Wolsey is quite a schemer. He engineers a truce with France before the play begins, then a break with Spain when the king divorces Katharine, who is the daughter of the king of Spain. He plants the idea in Henry's mind that his marriage to Katharine is illegal because he wants Henry to marry the daughter of the king of France, thus, solidifying the treaty he engineered. But he inadvertently introduces Anne Bullen to the king at a dinner, and Henry is smitten. In a letter, Wolsey tries to convince the Pope to deny Henry a divorce until Henry gets over his infatuation with Anne. But Henry intercepts the letter, along with an inventory of all the lands and holdings Wolsey has slowly been acquiring from fallen lords. Henry, enraged at Wolsey's betrayal, fires him, removes his royal protection, and takes his possessions. Wolsey

[KING JOHN](#)[RICHARD II](#)[RICHARD III](#)

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finally understands that he was wrong to have so much arrogance and realizes that he was out of his depth to be plotting the future of the kingdom as he saw fit. Finally understanding humility and honor to be the correct path, Wolsey sees the truth of his wrongdoing. Humbly, he leaves the court and dies soon after in a monastery.

**Queen Katharine**

Married to King Henry VIII's brother before marrying Henry, Queen Katharine is present at the trial of Buckingham, and she is the only one who suspects any wrongdoing in the trial. When Cardinal Wolsey convinces the king to divorce her, she rails against Wolsey and accuses him of being her enemy. She refuses to let him judge her, and she will not submit to the divorce. When Wolsey comes to her, speaking kindly, she charges him with being a traitor and plotting to bring her down. She speaks at length of her loyal nature as a wife for more than 20 years, and she cannot believe she is being punished for it. If anything, she is being cast out for not giving birth to a male heir, nor to the future Queen Elizabeth. When Katharine is finally divorced, she is made "Princess Dowager." After hearing her attendants speak well of Wolsey, she forgives him and has a vision of her own imminent death.

**Buckingham**

Buckingham has just returned from France, where he has developed a grudge against Cardinal Wolsey. He rails against Wolsey and complains that Wolsey unfairly influences the king. Wolsey orders him arrested. At his trial, Buckingham is accused of having plotted to gain the throne (having been informed that he had a tenuous link to it should the king die without an heir). Buckingham is executed.

**Anne Bullen**

Anne Bullen is an unmarried lady when the king meets her at Cardinal Wolsey's dinner party. He is much impressed with her and apparently has her in mind throughout his divorce proceedings. Anne, speaking with one of her attendants about Katharine's misery during the divorce, declares that she would never want to be the queen. Yet she marries Henry, though the Pope has not consented to Henry and Katherine's divorce. Later, she gives birth to the child Elizabeth, but remains offstage for the remainder of the play, having hardly anything to do after her marriage but to join in official processions and impress people with her beauty.

**Cranmer**

Archbishop of Canterbury, Cranmer spends the first acts of the play offstage, traveling to colleges to ask scholars about the legality of the king's divorce. As he travels, Gardiner spreads rumors about him and plots his demise. The king discovers this and gives Cranmer the king's own ring, so that he can appeal to the king in his trial. Cranmer is innocent of any wrongdoing and seems not to understand why others would have it in for him. When the king saves him from the Council, Cranmer forgives Gardiner for plotting against him. He baptizes the child Elizabeth.

[TIMON OF ATHENS](#)[TITUS ANDRONICUS](#)[TROILUS AND CRESSIDA](#)

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[RECENT SITE ACTIVITY](#)

## Cardinal Campeius

An emissary from the Pope, Campeius has come to assess the situation of Henry's divorce and give his decision about its legality. He carries papers from Rome that apparently grant the divorce, since Henry plans to carry it out. He and Cardinal Wolsey speak to Katharine to convince her to take part in the divorce proceedings, and they tell her that Henry still loves her and plans to protect her. She curses them both. Later, Campeius flees to Rome after Wolsey's correspondence with the Pope urging against granting the divorce is discovered. It is not clear whether Campeius supports or opposes the divorce or whether he was a pawn of the Pope or of Wolsey.

## Norfolk

A lord of the court. At first, he does not believe Buckingham's criticism of Cardinal Wolsey and urges Buckingham to hold his tongue. After Buckingham's fall, Norfolk and other lords meet to scheme against Wolsey. When Wolsey falls into disgrace, Norfolk takes part in reading charges against Wolsey. After Wolsey's demise, Norfolk is promoted. He takes part in a trial to bring down Cranmer, but the king saves Cranmer. Norfolk is in attendance at the baptism at the end of the play.

## Suffolk

A lord of the court, Suffolk is present at many court scenes. After the fall of Cardinal Wolsey, Suffolk gets a promotion. He is a member of the Council that tries Cranmer.

## Lord Chamberlain

A lord of the court, Lord Chamberlain is present at many court scenes. He is a member of the Council that tries Cranmer.

## Lord Chancellor

A lord of the court, Lord Chancellor is present in many court scenes and presides over the Council that tries Cranmer.

## Cromwell

Friend of Cardinal Wolsey, Cromwell is devastated by Wolsey's demise. Yet Wolsey encourages him to go back to the king and continue serving the state. Wolsey tells Cromwell to be honorable and humble, to not have ambition or do what Wolsey has done. Cromwell follows through soon thereafter, as one of Cranmer's only supporters.

## Sands –

A lord of the court, Sands is present in many court scenes. Sands flirts with Anne Bullen at Wolsey's dinner party before the king meets and marries her.

## Lovell

A lord of the court, Lovell is present in many court scenes.

### **Gardiner**

Formerly Cardinal Wolsey's secretary, Wolsey assigns Gardiner to the king with the understanding that he will remain loyal to Wolsey. When Wolsey falls from grace, Gardiner is given a promotion and becomes a member of the Council. Gardiner has particular hatred for Cranmer, and, out of lingering loyalty to Wolsey, tries to bring Cranmer down. Yet the king intervenes and tells Gardiner to embrace Cranmer and be friends.

### **Guildford**

A lord of the court, Guildford announces the beginning of Wolsey's dinner party.

### **Vaux**

A lord of the court, Vaux escorts Buckingham to his death.

### **Surrey**

Son-in-law of Buckingham, Surrey is a lord of the court. Because of Buckingham's demise, Surrey is angry at Cardinal Wolsey and wants to engineer his fall.

### **Abergavenny**

Buckingham's friend, taken to the Tower at the same time Buckingham is arrested.

### **Brandon**

Sergeant at arms, Brandon is sent to arrest Buckingham.

### **Denny**

A lord of the court, Denny brings Cranmer to speak to the king.

### **Butts**

The king's doctor, Butts sees the Council is up to no good when they refuse Cranmer entrance to the Council of which he is a member. He watches the trial of Cranmer unobserved from above with the king.

### **Buckingham's Surveyor**

The Surveyor is brought in by Cardinal Wolsey to speak against Buckingham at Buckingham's trial. The Surveyor managed Buckingham's lands but was recently fired by Buckingham because of complaints against him from tenants. Hence, the Surveyor holds a grudge against Buckingham.

### **Old Lady**

Anne Bullen's attendant. When Anne speaks about how much she doesn't want to be the queen, the Old Lady tells her she's wrong--any woman should want to be the queen.

### **Griffith**

Queen Katharine's attendant, Griffith speaks kindly of Cardinal Wolsey, thus, convincing

Katharine to cease hating him. Griffith's kind elegy is filled with the kind of forgiveness and pity encouraged in this play.

### Capucius

An ambassador from the king of Spain in the English court, the king sends Capucius to talk to Katharine, the daughter of the king of Spain. Katharine gives Capucius a letter asking the king to care for their child and her servants.

### The child

The offspring of Henry and Anne, christened Elizabeth, who will later become Queen Elizabeth.

### Prologue

This allegorical figure enters the scene at the beginning of the play to make a short introduction to the play to the audience.

### Epilogue

This allegorical figure enters the scene at the end of the play to make a short conclusion to the play, commenting on whether or not the audience liked what it saw.

### Gentleman

One of many regular people in the street who eagerly attended every significant event in the play, from Buckingham's sentencing to the coronation of Anne and the baptism of the child.

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### Summary

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The figure of the Prologue comes onto the stage to declare that what follows is a serious play. Several lords, including Buckingham, enter; Buckingham is angry that Cardinal Wolsey has such powerful influence over the king. Buckingham suspects Wolsey of being ambitious and disloyal. The other lords urge him to keep his words to himself, but just then, a guard comes to arrest Buckingham with the charge of treason. He goes quietly to jail.

The king and queen attend a hearing in which Wolsey questions Buckingham's former employee (the Surveyor) about his loyalties. This man declares that Buckingham fancied himself next in line to the throne should the king die without an heir. Henry is angered and

sentences Buckingham to death for disloyalty. However, the queen thinks that the Surveyor bears a grudge against Buckingham and has delivered lies in his testimony.

Many lords go to a dinner party at Wolsey's house, and the king comes in disguise. Wolsey sees through the disguise, and the king meets Anne Bullen. He is very impressed with her beauty.

Several men in the street discuss the trial of Buckingham, how he defended himself eloquently but was sentenced to death. The common people hate Wolsey, they all agree. Buckingham, speaks to the people, forgiving those who turned against him. He notes how his own death resembles that of his father, who also was killed by the king to whom he was loyal all his life.

Several lords hear talk of the king's plan to divorce his wife, Katharine. Anne hears the news, too, and is sorry for Katharine, reflecting that she herself would never want to be the queen. Then, she receives a new title and money from the king, as a sign of his fondness for her.

A cardinal from Rome arrives with the Pope's decision about whether Henry may divorce Katharine. Katharine beseeches the king not to divorce her, saying that she has been a loyal and honest wife to him for two decades. She calls Wolsey a traitor and refuses to submit to his will, sweeping out of the court. The king enumerates his reasons for believing his marriage to Katharine is unlawful and must be dissolved. Wolsey and the cardinal from Rome speak to Katharine, trying to convince her to go along with the divorce so she may stay under the king's care. She curses them for their role in her demise, which enrages her after so much faithfulness.

The lords of the court now suspect Wolsey has been double-dealing in the divorce. But before they can work out a scheme to bring him down, Wolsey falls through his own inattention. The king intercepts an inventory of the possessions Wolsey has seized from fallen lords and a letter Wolsey wrote to the Pope urging the Pope to refuse the divorce request until Henry forgets his infatuation with Anne. The king confronts him and asks Wolsey if he has been a good servant, and Wolsey replies affirmatively. Then, the king shows him the papers he has uncovered. Wolsey knows he is lost. The lords deliver the king's charges against Wolsey, stripping him of his title and belongings. Wolsey regrets his ambitious behavior and sees that he was wrong to have tried to influence the affairs of state. Saying that he finally knows himself, he leaves the court.

The king announces his marriage with Anne, and people in the street scramble to watch the procession to her coronation. Katharine has now been demoted to "Princess Dowager," and she expects that her demise will lead soon to her death. Hearing of the death of Wolsey, she speaks against him again, but one of her attendants (Griffith) praises him. Katharine is, thus,

convinced to forgive Wolsey.

In the court, the lords hear that the queen (Anne) is in labor. The king discovers a plot against his recently returned friend Cranmer, so he summons Cranmer to explain the complaints against him. Cranmer is convinced that he will fall into traps set for him, so the king gives him his ring as a sign of his support. Meanwhile, Anne gives birth to a female child.

Cranmer is called before the Council, of which he is a member, to answer to complaints against him. The king watches the proceedings from above. The lords tell Cranmer that nothing can be done about the complaints while he is a Council member, so they want to make him into a regular citizen by confining him to the Tower. When guards arrives to take him away, Cranmer shows the lords the king's ring, and the king enters the Council to scold the lords for infighting, urging them to get along with each other. Cranmer forgives those who have plotted against him, specifically Gardiner.

Commoners gather in the street to view the baptism of the king's daughter. Cranmer baptizes her as Elizabeth and speaks of her future greatness and the achievements both she and her successors will have. The Epilogue comes on stage, urging the audience to applaud.

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