

King Henry VIII

Reading comprehension

Arguably, Henry VIII is one of the most famous and remembered kings in the history of the British Royal Family. He was a strong and ruthless ruler, who brought about many great changes during his reign. He was infamous for having had many wives and also for starting a new Christian church in order to divorce his first wife. Many features of modern society can be traced back to Henry VIII and the time period in which he was ruler.

Background on the Tudor Period

The Tudor reign lasted from 1485 until 1603 (118 years). The Tudor family ruled England and Wales during this time. The Tudor reign is recognised as a very important historical time as there were many advances made in religion, the arts, overseas exploration and colonisation.



What happened in King Henry's childhood?

Henry was born on 28th June 1491 in Greenwich Palace, London. He was the second son born to King Henry VII and Elizabeth of York. Arthur, who was his elder brother, was five years older than him and next in line to the throne. He had two sisters: Margaret (who was 2 years older than Henry) and Mary (who was 5 years younger). He also had three more siblings, but unfortunately, they died in infancy. At the time, sons took precedence over daughters, so Henry was second in line to the throne after Arthur. His brother died when he was only 15 years old in 1502, which meant Henry became the Prince of Wales and heir to the throne at the tender age of 10. It is said that in his younger years, Henry was a very talented horseman and athlete.

When did King Henry VIII become King?

Henry became king at 17 years old after his father died on 21st April 1509. Shortly after becoming king, Henry VIII married Catherine of Aragon on 11th June 1509. Catherine was his brother's widow. Henry VIII was adamant that Catherine would give him a son, so he had an heir to the throne. Unfortunately, Catherine had several stillborn children before giving birth to their daughter Mary on 18th February 1516.



Why did he create the Church of England?

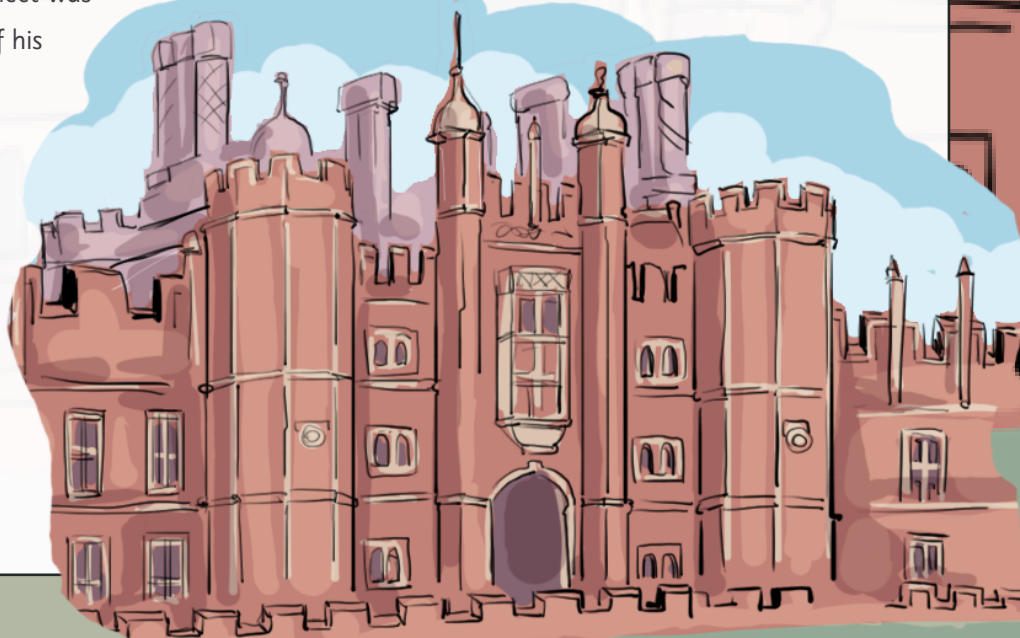
Despite having a daughter, Henry was still desperate for a son to carry on his legacy. Henry decided he would divorce Catherine and find a new wife, who would perhaps give him a son. Consequently, he fell in love with Anne Boleyn, who was lady-in-waiting to Catherine. In 1527, he decided he would divorce Catherine in order to marry Anne. At the time, England was a largely Catholic country, and under the Catholic Church's rules divorces were banned. Henry appealed to the Pope (head of the Catholic Church), but Pope Clement refused to allow the divorce to happen. Henry VIII thought he should be allowed to divorce Catherine as she had previously been married to his brother. It is believed that the Pope was put under pressure by Holy Roman Emperor Charles V (who was Catherine's nephew). As a result, Henry was enraged and adamant he would use his power to get his own way. He created the Church of England, which he would become the head of, and England broke away from the clutches of the Catholic Church.

What was the Reformation?

When Henry VIII created the Church of England in 1534 and broke away from the Catholic Church, it released a wave of shock across England, Wales and Europe. In other countries, such as Germany and France, revolutionaries like Martin Luther and John Calvin had rejected the Catholic overriding power and created further protestant churches. This was called the Reformation.

What were the key achievements of King Henry VIII?

One of the most marked political achievements was unifying England and Wales together under the same government. Another one of his major achievements was having the ability and power to begin a new Christian church, the Church of England, as mentioned earlier. In 1511, he commissioned the first gunship and named it 'The Mary Rose' after his first child. King Henry VIII was known as the 'Father of the British Navy' for his display of dominance and his attacking prowess: during his reign the Navy fleet was extended from 5 ships to 60. One of his key political achievements was decreasing the power of nobles, which in turn gave Parliament and the monarchy more control and power.



Prolific Marriages

Henry is infamous for having had six wives during his lifetime. They were as follows:



Catherine of Aragon

Anne Boleyn

Jane Seymour

Anne of Cleves

Catherine Howard

Catherine Parr

Date of marriage	11th June 1509	25th January 1533	30th May 1536	6th January 1540	28th July 1540	12th July 1543
Offspring:	Mary (daughter)	Elizabeth (daughter)	Edward (son)	no children	no children	no children with Henry
Context of marriage:	Henry became impatient waiting for a son, so divorced her.	Henry became impatient waiting for a son, so accused her of being unfaithful, and ordered her to be executed.	Jane Seymour gave Henry exactly what he wanted – a son. Henry was ecstatic at finally having a son. Jane died less than two weeks after giving birth due to complications.	Henry and Anne did not get on very well, so Henry divorced her. They remained great friends.	Catherine was a cousin of Anne Boleyn. She was much younger than Henry and ended up having an affair with Thomas Culpeper, the king's groom.	The key achievement of his final wife was she successfully reunited Henry with his daughters Mary and Elizabeth. They were reinstated to the succession of the throne.
How their marriage ended:	divorced	beheaded	died after childbirth	divorced	beheaded	outlived King Henry VIII
Date of death	7th January 1536, aged 50	19th May 1536, aged 35	24th October 1537, aged 28	16th July 1557, aged 42	13th February 1542, aged 19	5th September 1548, aged 36

