

# HENRY VIII





(1491–1547). England had eight kings named Henry, all in the first 500 years after the Norman Conquest in 1066. The last of them, Henry VIII, was a larger-than-life figure, remembered for his six wives and his conflict with the Roman Catholic church.





Henry VIII was born in England on June 28, 1491. He was an excellent student, skilled in languages, as well as a musician and composer. He was handsome and athletic in his youth. When his father died in 1509, Henry became king; he was not yet 18.



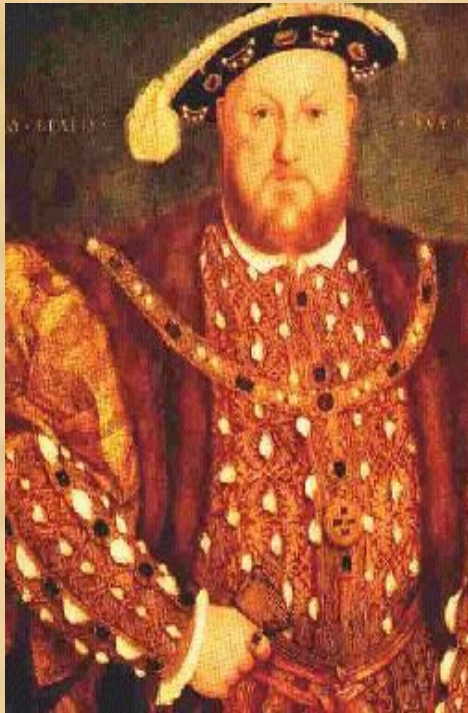




**Later that year he married Catherine of Aragon. During the first 20 years of his reign, Henry mostly left the shaping of his policies in the hands of his great counselor, Cardinal Wolsey. Henry devoted himself to leading troops in battle and to supporting the Roman Catholic faith.**



Trouble came in 1527 when Henry decided to divorce his wife. Catherine of Aragon had delivered six children but only one of them, Mary, survived past infancy. Henry was determined to produce a male heir. He asked the pope, the head of the Catholic church, to annul his marriage, which would release him so that he could marry another woman.





**When the pope refused, Henry appealed to the archbishop of Canterbury. The archbishop granted the annulment despite the pope's decision. This act cut all ties between England and the Roman Catholic church.**







**Henry then took control of the nation's churches. He made changes to the services and had the Bible translated into English and published—placing it in the hands of the common people. The Christian teachings remained unchanged.**



**This marked the beginning of the Church of England, or Anglican church, with the English monarch at its head. So determined was Henry to rule the church, he severely punished those who followed Catholic beliefs.**







The king soon married Anne Boleyn, a lady of the court. She gave him one child, Elizabeth. In 1536 he charged Anne with unfaithfulness and had her put to death. A few days later he married his third wife, Jane Seymour. She died a year later, after giving birth to a son and heir, the future Edward VI.

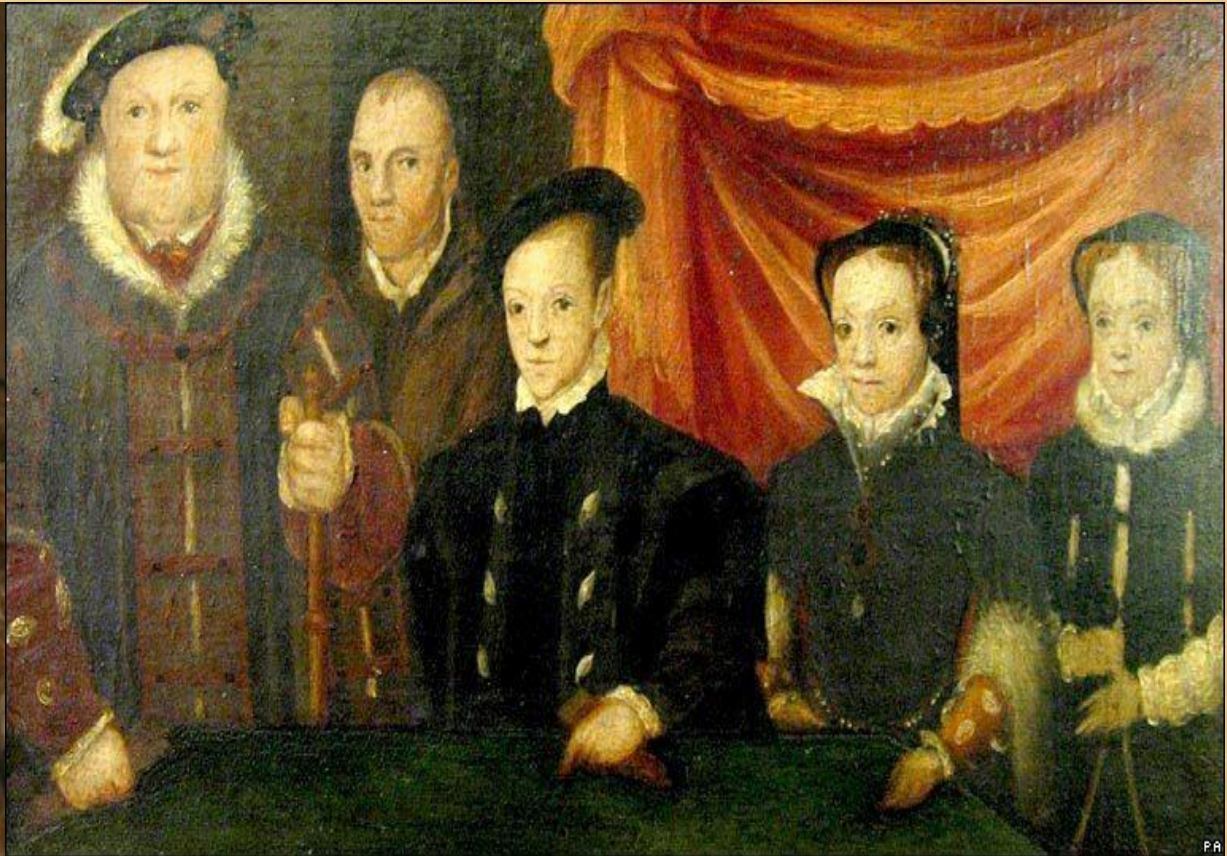


**A marriage was then arranged with a German princess, Anne of Cleves. Henry soon divorced her. Later that same year, 1540, he married again. His fifth wife was Catherine Howard, who met the same fate as Anne Boleyn. Henry had her put to death.**





**In 1543 Henry took his last wife, Catherine Parr, who outlived him. The king died on January 28, 1547. Henry's stormy personal life often overshadows his official acts. During his reign he united England and Wales and made Ireland a kingdom of the crown. Three of his children—Edward VI, Mary, and Elizabeth I—succeeded to the English throne.**





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