

Henry VIII



Henry VIII (1491-1547) is probably the most controversial King of all times. The second monarch of the House of Tudor, he is most famous for his six wives, but he was also responsible for the creation of the Church of England and the union of England and Wales. Young Henry was an excellent

sportsman, musician, writer and poet. He could also speak fluent Latin, French and even Spanish.

His Wives

Henry's father (Henry VII) wanted to establish a strong alliance between England and Spain, so Henry was forced to marry his older brother's widow, **Catherine of Aragon** and became King at the age of 17.

Catherine, though, could not give him a son and Henry became more and more attracted to the beautiful **Anne**



Boleyn. The King asked the Pope permission to divorce Catherine and marry a second time, but Clement VII did not want to grant the King's request and anger the Spanish royal family. Henry decided to marry Anne Boleyn anyway. She was crowned Queen of England and later gave birth to a daughter, Elizabeth (the future Queen Elizabeth I).

The Church of England

When the Pope excommunicated him, Henry VIII severed the Church of England from the Roman Catholic Church and proclaimed himself the supreme **Head of the Church of England**.

King Henry was obsessed with the idea of continuing the Tudor dynasty and married six times to try and have a son. Only Jane Seymour, his third wife, had a boy but he was ill and died as a teenager.

Henry was a typical Renaissance king, and his court was a centre of innovation and culture. The discovery of **The New World** took place during his reign and Henry was among the first European monarchs to learn about the New World (American).



speaking about his wife Anne of Cleves and her bad physical appearance: "You have sent me a Flanders mare!"¹

speaking about himself and his role in England: "We are (...) Kings of England, and the Kings of England in times past never had any superior but God."

¹ **mare:**
asina, giumenta

1 Now answer these questions.

- 1 How many Tudor Kings were there before Henry VIII?
- 2 What was Henry VIII responsible for, in religious and political terms?
- 3 Where did Henry VIII's first wife come from and what was her name?
- 4 What was discovered during Henry's reign?
- 5 How many sons did Henry have?
- 6 Who was the third Tudor Monarch?
- 7 Why do you think Henry VIII had to ask the Pope for permission to marry again?
- 8 Why, in your opinion, is Henry VIII such a controversial figure?