The Six Wives of Henry the Eighth

Catherine of Aragon  
m. 1509 - 1533  
Divorced

Anne Boleyn  
m. 1533 - 1536  
Executed

Jane Seymour  
m. 1536 - 1537  
Died

Anne of Cleves  
m. 1540 Jan. - July  
Divorced

Kathryn Howard  
m. 1540 - 1542  
Executed

Katherine Parr  
m. 1543 - 1547  
Widowed
# CHILDREN OF HENRY VIII

## LEGITIMATE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WIFE</th>
<th>CHILD</th>
<th>BORN</th>
<th>DIED</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Miscarried daughter</td>
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<td>Henry Duke of Cornwall</td>
<td>01.01.1511</td>
<td>23.02.1511 (6 weeks)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Unnamed son</td>
<td>Oct 1513</td>
<td>Lived a few hours</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Henry Duke of Cornwall</td>
<td>Dec 1514</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Mary</td>
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<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>07.09.1533</td>
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<td>Miscarried son</td>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Stillborn son</td>
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<td>Jane Seymour</td>
<td>Edward</td>
<td>12.10.1537</td>
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## ILLEGITIMATE  (Acknowledged)

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<td>Henry Fitzroy</td>
<td>1519</td>
<td>Given dukedom</td>
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## (Suspected)

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<td>Catherine Carey,</td>
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<td>Princess Diana</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Henry Carey</td>
<td>1526</td>
<td>brother of Catherine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Berkeley</td>
<td>John Perrot</td>
<td>1528</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Jane Pollard</td>
<td>Thomas Stucley</td>
<td>c. 1520</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mrs. Agnes Edwardes</td>
<td>Richard Edwardes</td>
<td>1523</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joan Dingley</td>
<td>Ethelreda Malte</td>
<td>c. 1527</td>
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The Six Wives of Henry VIII

The Tudor dynasty - or The House of Tudor – was the family of English monarchs who ruled England from 1485 to 1603 – a total of 118 years. It was a family which included probably the best known of all English monarchs, Henry VIII.

It began with a war

Slide 4:

The Wars of the Roses is the collective term for a series of civil wars fought in England from 1455 to 1487 between the Houses of Lancaster and York. Both houses were branches of the Plantagenet royal house and traced their descent from King Edward III. The name “Wars of the Roses” is based on the badges used by the two sides, the red rose of the Lancastrians and the white rose of the Yorkists. The Wars ended with the defeat of the Yorkists by the Lancastrian Henry Tudor, (subsequently King Henry VII, father of Henry VIII) who established the Tudor dynasty and symbolically united the two badges to create the Tudor Rose.

Slide 5: Battle of Bosworth Field

Legend has it that Richard III (in the centre of the picture, wearing a crown) was killed in the battle and Henry Tudor was crowned Henry VII on the battlefield with that very crown.

Slide 6: King Henry VII and Elizabeth of York

Henry Tudor established the Tudor dynasty. He united the two fractious royal houses by marrying Elizabeth of York and took the throne as Henry VII. His policy was to maintain peace and to create economic prosperity. Up to a point, he succeeded in both.

Slide 7: Princes Arthur & Henry Tudor

His eldest son and heir Arthur, Prince of Wales, married Katharine of Aragon, a Spanish princess, in 1501. Four months after the marriage Arthur died and Katharine was betrothed to the second son, Henry, then 10 years old. Henry VII died on April 22, 1509 and Prince Henry Tudor, by then 18 years of age, became King Henry VIII. Following his coronation he married the 23 year-old Katharine.
Here we meet Henry – the man and the King. Everyone recognises this portrait of him: a larger-than-life individual, wearing clothes set with jewels and sporting a neat red beard - the most eligible prince in Europe and a complex man: highly intelligent, boisterous, flamboyant, extravagant, musical, passionate, a poet. In 1520 the Venetian Ambassador to Henry’s Court described him as “... the handsomest potentate I ever set eyes on; above the usual height, with an extremely fine calf to his leg, his complexion very fair and bright, with auburn hair combed straight and short, in the French fashion, his throat being rather long and thick He speaks French, English, and Latin, and a little Italian, plays well on the lute and harpsichord, draws the bow with greater strength than any man in England, and jousts marvellously.”

However it is for his marital history that Henry is best remembered and it is to this that we now turn our attention.

**Katharine of Aragon**

The Wars of the Roses over, Henry Tudor (by now Henry VII) needed to ensure the stability and validity of this new Tudor dynasty. He reasoned that a match with a Spanish princess would give him both, so Katharine of Aragon, proud and solemn and accompanied by a vast dowry, came to England in 1501 and wed Henry’s eldest son Arthur within a few weeks of her arrival. It was a grand celebration and the young couple left soon after for Ludlow Castle, the seat of the Prince of Wales. Within six months Arthur was dead of the dreaded “sweating sickness.”

Katharine returned to London but was not sent home.

Instead the King wrote to her parents (Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile) proposing that the young widow be betrothed to his second son Henry, then 10 years old. Katharine’s father, King Ferdinand II of Aragon (a Spanish kingdom), at odds with France and anxious to please his English ally, agreed. However a papal dispensation was required, as the laws of the Church forbade a man to marry his brother’s wife. Katharine and her duenna, Dona Elvira, both attested that her marriage to Arthur had never been consummated and historians agree that in view of her husband’s chronic ill-health this was quite likely to have been the case. Pope Julius II granted the dispensation. The betrothal was arranged and Katharine remained in England as the young Henry grew towards adulthood.

During this period she was treated shabbily; there was protracted squabbling about payment of her dowry, of which only a half had been forthcoming - money was in short supply in Spain at the time. Powerless to do anything to remedy the situation, the unfortunate young Spanish princess spent seven years in a state of political limbo, reduced to having to sell her jewellery to support, indeed to feed, herself and her household. Henry VII began to contemplate and investigate what he considered could be more suitable (i.e. more
politically advantageous) consorts for his remaining son. He had the young Henry, age 16, repudiate his betrothal to Katharine and moved to isolate her from Court and hence all contact with the Prince. To her credit she confronted the King and said that she considered her betrothal and eventual marriage to Prince Henry “irrevocable”. (In Tudor times “betrothal” was more than a promise to marry – it was legally as well as morally binding.) It must have taken great courage to challenge an absolute monarch in this manner.

Under the circumstances it was scarcely surprising that Katharine’s health gave way and she is reported to have suffered persistent attacks of “low fever” – one suspects it was more a form of depression than any typically feverish ailment. In the Spring of 1509 Katherine’s spirit finally gave way. In a letter to her father on 9th March she broke down and told him that she “could no longer combat the petty persecutions” of the King. Only recently he had told her that he was under no obligation to feed either her or her attendants and added spitefully that her food was being given to her as alms – i.e. charity. She wanted to return to Spain she told her father and “spend the rest of her life serving God.” Preparations began for her departure. Then, suddenly, she was no longer in the King’s power. Henry VII died and the 18 year old Henry became King. Handsome, proud, and imbued with the romantic spirit of chivalry, he promptly married Katharine.

Did he, as he later claimed, marry her out of a sense of obligation? Were political councillors encouraging the Spanish alliance? Or did he love the dignified and lovely young princess? It is impossible to know, but they certainly acted like a loving couple, a relationship far beyond that found in typical royal marriages. There were public displays of affection, declarations of love and respect. For a long while Katharine was also a close political adviser and proved to be the perfect consort.

**Slide 10: the young Princess Mary**

However, Katharine’s primary duty was to bear children, as many as possible and preferably sons. Henry was not unhappy with the birth of a daughter, Mary, in 1516; he assumed that a son would surely follow. But it gradually became clear that there would be no sons, indeed of seven pregnancies only Mary survived. The age difference between Henry and Katherine became noticeable - she was six years older than the King and struggling with frequent pregnancies.

By 1527 the question of the succession was the most pressing issue facing the King. Two years before, he had titled his illegitimate son (by his mistress Mary Blount) the Duke of Richmond and granted him vast estates. Many, Katharine included, believed this was a preliminary step to naming him heir to the throne. This never occurred, however, as Richmond died in 1536 age 17. Henry named Mary as Princess of Wales and his official heir, but even that did not stop the rumours. Katharine confronted Henry. He responded angrily.

**Slide 11: Henry Fitztroy, the King’s illegitimate son**

The Queen’s final pregnancy was at age 39 – the child (a boy) was stillborn. It was now clear there would be no more children and so no male heir. Furthermore Henry had fallen in love with a young Englishwoman, Anne Boleyn. Anne’s sister Mary had been a former mistress of the King. Anne had seen that she had gained nothing from the...
relationship other than scandal and refused to be placed in the same situation. She demanded marriage.

Henry, a student of theology, now took a closer look at his marriage to Katharine and in particular at a biblical text which seemed to have direct reference to his own situation –

\textit{a man shall take his brother's wife it is an unclean thing... they shall be childless. (Leviticus, XX, 21)}

Of course, they were not childless but a daughter was not the heir he needed to ensure the survival of the Tudor dynasty. No woman had attempted to rule England since the disastrous Matilda centuries before. Henry now firmly believed (or chose to believe) that his “incestuous” marriage to Katharine had been doomed from the start. (There was a complication, of course – the text referred to children, rather than lack of sons only. Henry allowed himself to be convinced that the word had been incorrectly translated from the Greek into the Latin of the Bible then commonly in use. “He had heard” he said, “that the word “liberis” – children – should actually have read “filiis” – sons.

On 22nd June, 1503 Henry accosted Katharine “in her closet”, no doubt dreading the upcoming interview and perhaps hoping that the customary cosy domestic setting would somehow soften the blow. If so, he was to be disappointed. He explained as gently as possible to the Queen that “learned and pious men” had come to him and broken the news that they were living in sin. His intention had probably been to persuade the Queen to withdraw from the Court voluntarily, shocked by this theological bombshell. But he had mistaken his woman. Thomas Wolsey, statesman, a cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church. and the King’s chaplain heard later that the Queen became “very stiff and obstinate”, affirming that Prince Arthur “did never know her carnally” (the grounds on which their marriage had been annulled.) The King and she were man and wife, she insisted, and always had been. He might send her away but she would never go of her own accord. In other words, to quote Wolsey, the Queen took it all most “dis pleasantly”. Her marriage to Henry was the one absolute certainty in Katharine’s life, beyond her love of God and of her daughter.

As a mere girl, unsupported and in a foreign country, she had defied Henry VII so she was unlikely after twenty years as Henry VIII’s consort to agree for convenience sake – the King’s convenience - that she had been a “harlot” all those years. The King’s fury can be imagined – he was not accustomed to being defied. Katharine also encouraged Mary to be obstinate in protecting her rights as Princess. As a result Mary lost her father’s favour and was forbidden to visit her mother. Antonia Fraser argues in \textit{The Six Wives of Henry VIII} that much of Henry’s subsequent cruelty to the Princess Mary can be seen as revenge for her mother’s behaviour, that if Queen Katharine had been more amenable and had voluntarily gone into a convent (as Henry had suggested) the Princess would have been better treated.

\textbf{Slide 12: Biblical texts}

\begin{table}
\begin{tabular}{|l|}
\hline
\textbf{Leviticus 18:16} & Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy brother's wife: it \textit{is} thy brother's nakedness. \\
\textbf{Leviticus 20:21} & And if a man shall take his brother's wife, it \textit{is} an unclean thing: he hath uncovered his brother's nakedness; they shall be childless. \\
\textbf{Deuteronomy 25:5} & If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her. \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}
Henry needed to convince the incumbent pope, Clement VII, that the dispensation granted by his predecessor had been granted in error. This should have been a simple enough matter; Royal marriages had been annulled for far less. But Katharine’s nephew, Charles V, was the powerful Holy Roman Emperor and he had no intention of allowing his aunt to be cast off.

So Henry was left with a question - how could he annul the marriage? He needed to convince the incumbent pope, Clement VII, that the dispensation given by his predecessor had been granted in error. This should have been a simple enough matter; Royal marriages had been annulled for far less. But Katharine’s nephew, Charles V, was the powerful Holy Roman Emperor and he had no intention of allowing his aunt to be cast off.

Anne Boleyn was not popular either at Court or among the English people and Katharine was a respected and beloved queen. The King soon came under popular scorn for his plans. It was stalemate: Henry was as firmly convinced of the righteousness of his cause as Katharine was of hers. Pope Clement could have granted the annulment without troubling his conscience and with the spread of Lutheranism in the German states he had no wish to antagonize the loyal and devoted King of England. However it was abundantly clear that Clement could not risk incurring the wrath of Katharine’s powerful nephew. The Pope procrastinated for several years and what came to be referred to as “The King's Great Matter” consumed England and fascinated Europe.

Henry inevitably tired of the endless parade of papal legates and repetitious hearings. He was growing older and Anne was growing impatient. Finally, in 1533, he did the only thing he could to end the marriage - he rejected the authority of the Holy See and declared himself Supreme Head of a new Church in England. His Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, issued the long-awaited decree of nullity. Katharine was no longer Queen of England but “Princess Dowager of Wales”. Princess Mary was now illegitimate. Rumours spread that Anne Boleyn had finally succumbed to the King and was pregnant.

Katharine was exiled from court to a succession of damp and unpleasant castles with just a handful of servants. While she remained meek, deeply pious and believed in obedience to her husband she was also a proud and intelligent princess of Spain. She would never allow her dignity, or that of her daughter, to be destroyed. In the end, this stubborn spirit did both her and Mary far more harm than good.

Katharine died at Kimbolton Castle on 7th January 1536, three weeks after her 50th birthday. She was buried at Peterborough Abbey with due ceremony, albeit one befitting the widow of a Prince of Wales (Arthur) and not a Queen. Henry did not attend the funeral and we do not know if he read Katharine's last letter to him. It was a love letter:
Slide 15: Katharine's last letter

My most dear lord, king and husband, The hour of my death now drawing on, the tender love I owe you forceth me, my case being such, to commend myself to you, and to put you in remembrance with a few words of the health and safeguard of your soul which you ought to prefer before all worldly matters, and before the care and pampering of your body, for the which you have cast me into many calamities and yourself into many troubles. For my part, I pardon you everything, and I wish to devoutly pray God that He will pardon you also. For the rest, I commend unto you our daughter Mary, beseeching you to be a good father unto her, as I have heretofore desired. I entreat you also, on behalf of my maids, to give them marriage portions, which is not much, they being but three. For all my other servants I solicit the wages due them, and a year more, lest they be unprovided for. Lastly, I make this vow, that mine eyes desire you above all things. Katharine the Queene.

The tragedy of the annulment was that both Henry and Katharine were equally convinced of their causes and for us today both arguments are persuasive. Furthermore it is an ironic footnote to her life story that Katharine, such a devoted and pious Catholic, unintentionally brought the Protestant Reformation to England.

Anne Boleyn

Slide 16: Anne Boleyn – portrait

Anne Boleyn's birth-date is unknown; even the year is widely debated. General opinion now favours 1501 or 1502. She was probably born at Blickling Hall in Norfolk; her father Sir Thomas Boleyn was a minor courtier with a talent for foreign languages, of merchant stock and eager to advance in the world. He chose to marry well, his bride being Elizabeth Howard, daughter of the 2nd Duke of Norfolk. In 1514, Henry VIII had married his youngest sister Mary to the aged king of France and Anne accompanied the Tudor princess as a very young lady-in-waiting. She remained in France when Mary returned to England but in 1521 or early 1522, with war between England and France imminent, Anne returned also, bringing with her something which was to be of great value once she returned to the English court – a uniquely French emphasis upon fashion and flirtation! It is not known when she first caught Henry VIII's eye. He had originally been attracted to her sister, Mary who came to court before Anne and was the king's mistress in the early 1520s. However Mary herself would leave court with only a dull marriage as her reward.

Anne learned from her sister's experience. Anne was not considered a great beauty – some chroniclers, while almost reluctantly noting her large dark eyes and long black hair, described her as plain, sallow, and possessing two distinct flaws - a large mole on the side of her neck and an extra finger on her left hand. However, she was spirited and possessed style, wit and charm. The king's attraction became focused upon her sharp and teasing manner and most significantly (and effectively) her oft-stated unavailability. What he couldn't have, he desired all the more.

Slide 17: Henry Percy

Anne was also at this time seriously involved with Henry Percy, the son and heir of the Earl of Northumberland; there were rumours of an engagement and declarations of true love. However, it was an uneven competition - the king ordered his great minister, Cardinal Thomas
Wolsey, to end the match. Wolsey did so and Percy accepted it, albeit reluctantly. The consequences of defying an absolute monarch were dire! From Anne’s point of view Henry's jealousy revealed the depth of his feelings, and she understandably thought - if she could not be an Earl's wife, why not try for Queen of England?

When Anne avoided Henry's company, or when she was sullen and evasive towards him, he sent her from court, hoping that a few months in the country would persuade her of his charms. It didn’t work. Anne was already playing a far more serious game – known colloquially as “hard-to-get”. Later, Henry was to claim he had been 'bewitched' and that term wasn't used lightly in the 16th century. But perhaps a large part of Anne’s charm for him arose simply from the contrast between her vivacity and Katharine's solemnity.

It is impossible to fully explain the mystery of attraction between two people. How Anne was able to capture and maintain the king's attention for such a long while despite great obstacles and the constant presence of malicious gossip can’t really be explained. What is known, however, is that for over six years Henry remained faithful to his feelings for Anne.

And of course there was his ever-present, desperate desire for a legitimate male heir to secure the Tudor dynasty. One cannot separate the king's desire for a son, indeed its very necessity, from his passion for Anne. The two interests were to merge perfectly in 1527. Henry had, as we have already seen, discovered the “invalidity” of his marriage to Katharine. Now it seemed it would be possible to annul his marriage and secure his two fondest hopes - Anne's hand in marriage and the long-desired heir.

Cardinal Wolsey had long advocated an Anglo-French alliance and for that reason he disliked the Spanish Katharine of Aragon. He now set about securing his monarch's annulment with the intention of marrying Henry not to Anne but to a French princess or, if one was not available, perhaps a great lady of the English court. Wolsey also disliked Anne, and the feeling was mutual - she despised him for his role in dispensing with her early love, Percy. She set out to work against Wolsey and Thomas Cromwell became her close ally. However Anne alone did not cause Wolsey's eventual fall from grace. No one - not Wolsey, not Cromwell and certainly not Anne Boleyn - ever controlled Henry VIII, or made him do other than exactly what he wanted. He was a king who knew the extent of his power, enjoyed it and used it ruthlessly.

As the king's desire for an annulment became the gossip of all Europe, Anne was roundly criticized and condemned. She was unpopular at the English Court, her unique position and her oft-times abrasive personality offended many. On the other hand Katharine's solemn piety had impressed the English court for three decades. However while Katharine’s supporters were numerous, they were not inclined to face the king's formidable anger. Anne was secure in the King's affection, she was aware of it and she was talented at managing his notoriously mercurial temper. As the struggle for an annulment continued and the Pope procrastinated between placating Henry and Katharine's nephew, the Holy Roman Emperor, Anne's position at the English court became steadily more prominent. There were at first little signs. The king would eat alone with her; she received expensive gifts; she began to dress in the most fashionable and expensive gowns; the king paid her gambling debts - Anne, like most courtiers, enjoyed cards and dice. Henry was not too outlandish at first for he had no desire to prejudice the Pope against his case by flaunting a new love. But as the delays mounted, and rumours of his new love spread, Henry realized there was no point in hiding the truth.

**Slide 18: Henry presents Anne at Court**

By 1530, Anne was openly honoured by the King at court. She was accorded precedence over all other ladies and sat with him at banquets and hunts while Katharine was virtually ignored. While the pretence of his first marriage was maintained - Katharine continued to personally mend his shirts
and send him gifts and notes - it was an untenable situation which grated on both women. Anne challenged the king about it. To placate her, she was titled Marquess of Pembroke and installed in the position at Windsor Castle, wearing “a beautiful crimson gown” and with “her hair hanging loose.” She was now a peer in her own right, but when she accompanied Henry to France on a state visit a short while later, the ladies of the French court refused to meet with her and turned their backs on her as she passed by. It is believed that her elevation to the peerage marked the physical consummation of Anne and Henry's relationship, as well as a secret wedding. After waiting for years to be together it is unlikely they would suddenly have sex and risk an unplanned and, most importantly, illegitimate pregnancy. The circumstantial evidence for such a ceremony having taken place is compelling.

It soon became clear that the king now had his fondest wish within his grasp. Anne was pregnant with his long-awaited son, - or so he had convinced himself - and this son must be legitimate. He could no longer wait upon the Pope. Henry rejected the authority of the Holy See and Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, annulled his marriage to Katharine. Henry and Anne married again in January 1533 in a small ceremony. But still, though they were now husband and wife, few acknowledged the fact.

**Slide 19: Anne’s coronation**

Anne’s coronation was a lavish affair; but the people of London were noticeably unimpressed. They cried out 'HA! HA!' mockingly as tapestries decorated with Henry and Anne's entwined initials passed by in procession. Henry asked Anne, 'How liked you the look of the City?' She replied, 'Sir, I liked the City well enough - but I saw a great many caps on heads, and heard but few tongues.'

**Slide 20: Sir Thomas More**

An interesting sideline to Anne’s coronation is that it brought about the end for one of the most notable figures of the age - Sir Thomas More, an important councillor to Henry VII and to Henry VIII early in his reign. Lawyer, scholar, author, statesman and author of “Utopia”, in which he described an imaginary island with an ideal political system, More maintained that the greatest danger to the health of the society as he saw it was the challenge that heretics posed to the established faith. It was inevitable that he would fiercely oppose both Protestantism and the break with Rome.

In 1533, More refused to attend the coronation of Anne Boleyn as Queen of England. Technically, this was not an act of treason as More had written to Henry acknowledging Anne's right to be Queen and expressing his desire for the King's happiness and the new Queen's health. Despite this, his refusal to attend was widely interpreted as a snub against Anne herself and a vengeful Henry took action against him. More was asked to appear before a commission and swear his allegiance to the parliamentary Act of Succession. More accepted Parliament's right to declare Anne Boleyn the legitimate Queen of England, but he
steadfastly refused to take the oath because of an anti-papal preface to the new Act asserting Parliament's authority to legislate in matters of religion, so challenging the authority of the pope. Despite the clear illegitimacy of the charge, More was charged with treason, convicted and beheaded on July 6, 1535 - quite a price to pay for “snubbing” the new Queen. Anne enjoyed her triumph as best she could. She was pious, though not as rigid and inflexible as Katharine. Anne's sympathies naturally lay with the progressive thought now challenging Catholic orthodoxy and with Henry's rejection of the papacy and his creation of a new Church of England. Anne well knew that her marriage and future children would never be recognized as legitimate by Catholic Europe - she had to support the new church, otherwise she was no more than the King's mistress. In effect the Reformation had come to England but it was not as revolutionary as Luther's movement in Germany. Henry actually remained a devout Catholic all his life, only denying what he now regarded as the illegitimate authority of the papacy.

Slide 21: Anne Boleyn in the Tower

Anne’s first child was born on 7th September 1533. The physicians and astrologers had been mistaken; it was not a prince but a healthy baby girl who was named Elizabeth. The birth had been very easy, the Queen recovered quickly and Henry was not as disappointed as one might have expected, he had every reason to believe that strong princes would follow. In the interim he promptly declared Elizabeth his heir, thus according her precedence over her 17 year old half-sister, the Princess Mary. Anne could breathe a sigh of relief, recover, and become pregnant again. It was only when she miscarried two sons that Henry began to question the wisdom of his second marriage.

Immediately after Elizabeth's christening, Henry wrote to Mary and demanded that she relinquish her title of Princess of Wales. The title, he said, belonged to his heiress, Elizabeth. He also demanded that Mary acknowledge the validity of his new marriage and legitimacy of her half-sister. But Mary could be as obstinate as her mother. She refused. When told to pay her respects to the baby Princess, she said that she knew of no Princess of England but herself and burst into tears. Henry was infuriated.

In the two and a half years she lived after Elizabeth's birth, Anne proved herself a devoted mother. Soon after the birth, London was rife with a variety of illnesses - sweating sickness, smallpox and plague and Elizabeth and Mary were sent to Hatfield and safety. Both Henry and Anne visited their daughter often, occasionally taking her back with them to Greenwich or the palace at Eltham. During these visits, Mary was kept alone in her room.

The conflict with Mary was a concern. In January 1534, the king's new chief minister, Thomas Cromwell, went to visit Mary at Hatfield. He urged her to renounce her title and warned her that her behaviour would lead to her ruin. Mary replied that she simply wanted her father's blessing and the honour of kissing his hand. Mary and indeed most of England, believed Anne to be the cause of Henry's rejection of his eldest child. However, after Anne's execution it was revealed that this was not so; in fact she had invited Mary to come to court and “visit me as Queen.” Mary responded with a cruel insult – “I know no Queen in England but my mother. But if you, Madam, as my father's mistress, will intercede for me with him, I should be grateful.” It is reported that Anne did not lose her temper, instead pointing out the absurdity of the request and repeating her offer. Mary then refused to answer. From then on the Queen made no attempts to gain Mary's friendship. It was a form of political stalemate and many of Henry's subjects did not know who to call Princess, who was the rightful heir and who was the true wife. Katharine of Aragon lived on, still calling herself Queen, and Mary still called herself Princess.
In September 1534, Anne miscarried a six-month-old foetus. It was a boy. Henry was bitterly disappointed. Anne was likewise. She was also angry, for Henry had begun a casual affair that summer. She reproached him and Henry replied, ominously, “You have good reason to be content with what I have done for you - and I would not do it again, if the thing were to begin. Consider from what you have come.” The furious argument was overheard by her attendants. While seemingly this storm soon passed over, there were other signs that things were not progressing smoothly. For example, Henry had hoped to cement his relationship with Francis I of France by betrothing Elizabeth to Francis’ son the Duc d'Angouleme but Francis sensed a growing instability - Henry had dismissed one wife because she had no sons – would he do the same to Anne? And, if he did, then what was to be gained by a marriage to Elizabeth? Francis decided to hedge his bets in the mercurial Tudor court. In other words, he would remain friendly with the Protestant Anne and also with the Catholic Mary Tudor.

Anne was also well aware of her lack of support at Court. She was reminded of this when in late 1534, accompanied by the Duke of Suffolk, her uncle Norfolk, and other courtiers, she visited Richmond Palace, where both Elizabeth and Mary were living. Anne entered her daughter's rooms only to realize that the two dukes had not accompanied her. Instead they were paying court to Mary and remained with her until Anne had left the Palace. Such snubs were becoming more frequent. It was a tedious and frightening dance for Anne. During the two and a half years after Elizabeth's birth, she was rarely secure or certain of her position and the king's affections. She was surrounded by fair-weather friends who, at the slightest sign of Henry's disfavour, ignored her. She trusted only her brother, George, (whose wife, Jane Rochford, was to prove a viper in their nest.) Henry was again flirting openly with another woman, this time it was Anne's cousin and lady-in-waiting, Madge Shelton.

While Anne still had influence over her husband she knew only one way to make his favour permanent. She must bear a son. Henry would never dismiss the mother of his long-awaited heir. Her enemies would at last be silenced. Meanwhile, Henry's health had begun to worsen. The first signs of the illness which would kill him (occluded sinus on the leg - we’d probably call it a DVT – deep vein thrombosis) appeared. Headaches became frequent and severe. Now unable to indulge his love of sports, he instead indulged his fear of pain and illness - he became a hypochondriac. In his mid-forties and increasingly obese his continued virility was questionable. The lack of an heir and Anne's miscarriages must have reminded him of Katharine.

The political wheels were turning. Like Francis I, Thomas Cromwell - that influential and brilliant man - was keeping his options open. He visited Mary and was rumoured to promise support for her reinstatement. Anne was terrified at this loss of her onetime supporter who was also the king's most trusted advisor. But Anne had one last chance; in June 1535 she became pregnant again. When she lost that child in January 1536 she was reported to have said, “I have miscarried of my saviour.”

When her destruction came, it was rapid and unbelievable. Henry had always been one to plot against people while he pretended affection. Anne knew he was dissatisfied with her but he maintained their lifestyle together while seeking the best way to destroy her. Katharine of Aragon had died just a few days before Anne's miscarriage and seemingly these events, taken together, prompted the King to action. While Katharine lived, most of Europe and many Englishmen had regarded her as his rightful wife, not Anne. Now he was rid of Katharine and if he were to rid himself of Anne, he could marry again - and this third marriage would never be tainted by the spectre of bigamy! Henry's decision to thoroughly destroy Anne baffled even her enemies. As Antonia Fraser writes in *The Six Wives of Henry VIII,*

“The trial of Queen Anne Boleyn was a cynical operation intended to have only one result: her death. She was certainly not guilty. Queen Anne herself never admitted to any offence and the evidence to the contrary was a patchwork of half-truths and outright lies. The sexual fascination of Anne Boleyn, to which her career bears witness, was not founded on indiscriminate sharing of her favours, rather on her ability to manage herself – and her own attractions.. Tantalising mystery, even withdrawal can after all exert as much fascination as sexual generosity, if not more. As a young girl her behaviour was never recklessly
promiscuous but, if anything, calculating. (Lord Percy had been one of the most eligible young men in England.) There is no evidence that Anne Boleyn changed once she became Queen.”

Nevertheless the King had her arrested, charged with treason, adultery, witchcraft and incest. The charges were ludicrous even to her enemies. (Jane Rochford, the universally despised wife of Anne’s brother George, testified about a supposed incestuous love affair between Anne and her husband.)

As Queen of England, Anne was tried by her peers; the main charge being adultery, an act of treason for a queen. No member of the nobility would help her; indeed her Uncle Norfolk pronounced the death sentence. She had prayed for exile, to end her days in a nunnery, but this was refused. As a concession she was not beheaded with a clumsy axe. A skilled swordsman was brought over from France. It is reported that she met her fate with courage and wit. When assured that there would be little pain; she replied, with typical spirit, ‘I have heard that the executioner is very good. And I have a little neck.’

**Slide 22: Tower of London – site of execution**

Anne Boleyn was brought to the scaffold at 8 o’clock in the morning on 19th May 1536. It was a previously unknown spectacle, the first public execution of an English queen. Anne, who had defended herself so ably at her trial, chose her last words carefully.

“Good Christian people, I am come hither to die, for according to the law, and by the law I am judged to die, and therefore I will speak nothing against it. I am come hither to accuse no man, nor to speak anything of that, whereof I am accused and condemned to die, but I pray God save the king and send him long to reign over you, for a gentler nor a more merciful prince was there never: and to me he was ever a good, a gentle and sovereign lord. And if any person will meddle of my cause, I require them to judge the best. And thus I take my levee of the world and of you all, and I heartily desire you all to pray for me. O Lord have mercy on me, to God I commend my soul.”

She was blindfolded and knelt at the block. A sword flashed. So departed this life Anne, Queen of England. She was buried in an old arrow box since no coffin was provided. The box was too short and her head was tucked beside her. The remains were taken to St Peter ad Vincula, the church of the Tower of London, where they would later be joined by those of her cousin and Henry's fifth wife, Catherine Howard and later still the tragic Lady Jane Grey.

The secret betrothal of Henry VIII and Jane Seymour took place at Hampton Court early in the morning of 20th May, twenty-four hours after Anne’s execution. The King was wasting no time in his quest for a son and heir. One can only feel sympathy for Anne. After all, what crime had she actually committed, other than the dreadful crime of not producing a son?

**Jane Seymour**

**Slide 23: Jane Seymour**

Jane Seymour's father was Sir John Seymour of Wolf Hall in Wiltshire. The Seymour rise to prominence at Henry's court mirrored that of the Boleyns; it was the path sought by all English families with a minor pedigree...
or a clever son or, as in the case of Anne and Jane, a daughter to catch the eye of the King. Jane first came to court as a lady-in-waiting to Katharine of Aragon and remained in that position when Anne Boleyn was Queen. She was known for her quiet and soothing manner. Certainly Henry would at least have known of her at Court during this time. In September 1535 the royal progress stopped at Wolf Hall. Many historians have argued this was the beginning of Henry's infatuation, but it seems unlikely. Anne Boleyn was not completely out of favour just yet; she was pregnant again, though she would suffer a miscarriage in January and in any case Henry's flirtations at the time were confined to Anne's cousin, Madge Shelton. The gentle Jane may perhaps have been in the king's thoughts but if so he did nothing for several months.

In February 1536, however, foreign ambassadors began to report rumours of the King's romance with Jane and speculated upon her chances of becoming queen. Henry quickly made his affection (and intentions) clear, Jane received costly gifts (which she prudently returned) and her brothers were promoted at court. The king was well aware of the vicious rumours and public outrage which had accompanied his open courtship of Anne Boleyn while still married to Katharine. He was far more discreet with Jane; her brother Edward Seymour and his wife moved to rooms which connected through a hidden passage with the king's apartments. Henry could now continue his courtship in relative privacy. Indeed, this suited Jane's character - she was content to remain unknown. There were rumours that she would not dine alone with the king, insisting always upon a chaperone, and that she responded to a particularly bold episode of flirtation by reminding the king of his marriage, not that he needed to be so reminded - it had become a bitter disappointment to him. He was determined to rid himself of Anne Boleyn and Jane's presence was merely further impetus for action. Another impetus was the death of Katharine of Aragon on 7th January 1536. All of Europe, and most Englishmen, had regarded her as the king's rightful wife and Anne as merely his concubine.

On 29th January, Anne miscarried a son; and the king ominously declared that he would have no more children by her. For Henry, it was suddenly made clear that if he could rid himself of Anne and marry Jane, he would have a legitimate marriage recognized by all and above all another possibility for that longed for son.

As we have already seen, Henry wasted no time. On 2nd May, Anne was arrested and taken to the Tower of London, put on trial, found guilty and on 15th May condemned to death. Henry sent a personal message to Jane with the news. Four days later Anne was executed. The day after the king was formally betrothed to Jane. They married ten days later on 30 May and Jane was publicly declared Queen on 4th June.

The whole exercise bears the hallmarks of manipulation by her ambitious family. The Seymour family's power grew during Henry VIII's marriage to Anne Boleyn and when Anne failed to give King Henry a son, the Seymour brothers Edward and Thomas saw an opportunity to push their sister Jane in the King's direction. As we have already seen, Edward, shall we say, made his sister accessible to the King. We wonder just how much say she had in proceedings.

Queen Jane was never granted the lavish coronation which Anne had enjoyed. It was summertime and minor plagues were sweeping through London. The King said that for her safety she must wait until the spring to be crowned. It is, one suspects, more likely that Henry had no intention of crowning wife number three until she had proved her worth and produced a son. If she proved barren, he could annul their marriage with hopefully little fanfare.

Henry was becoming obsessed with the need for a son to ensure the future of the Tudor dynasty. Almost a decade had passed since the “King's Great Matter” (as his dilemma was called) first began and still Henry did not have a legitimate heir. Then on 20th July 1536 he received devastating news - his only acknowledged illegitimate son, Henry Fitzroy, Duke of Richmond, had died at the age of 17. There had always been the possibility that Fitzroy could have succeeded him, but now Henry VIII was left with only two daughters, both by now declared illegitimate.
We are obliged to accept that if Jane had not provided a son, she would have been quickly discarded. Personal affection could not, would not, have overcome political necessity. Indeed the whole country wished for an heir; they had no desire to return to ruinous civil war as memories of the Wars of the Roses still lingered. The new Queen quickly adopted the role of kindly and benevolent “mother” to the two Princesses (the word stepmother was not used.)

However, there was briefly one small blot on the serene surface of the King’s new marriage. The dissolution of the monasteries (following the break with Rome) was at its height and the compassionate Jane was distressed. She threw herself on her knees before her husband in open court and begged him to restore the abbeys. But the King had not rid himself of the sharp tongued Anne Boleyn and married the gentle Jane to listen to and tolerate this. It was reported by the French Ambassador that he told his wife to stand up, reminded her that he had often told her not to meddle with his affairs and made a pointed allusion to “the late Queen Anne, who had died in consequence of meddling too much in state affairs.” One would suspect Jane would have been careful not to push her luck again – not with Henry VIII! It seems Queen Jane understood the rules of the game – her motto was, after all, “Bound to Obey & Serve” - and she was about to prove herself the perfect spouse.

Early in January 1537, at the end of the New Year and Twelfth Night festivities at Greenwich, - O wondrous event!– King Henry succeeded in getting his third wife pregnant. The London chronicler Edward Hall recorded the public rejoicing at news of Jane's quickening:; "On 27 May 1537, Trinity Sunday, there was a Te Deum sung in St Paul's cathedral for joy at the queen's quickening of her child, my lord chancellor, lord privy seal and various other lords and bishops being then present; the mayor and aldermen with the best guilds of the city being there in their liveries, all giving laud and praise to God for joy about it’’

**Slide 24: Prince Edward age 2**

Bonfires were lit, celebrations were held throughout England and prayers were offered for a safe delivery. As in the case of earlier royal pregnancies (now of course officially erased from the imagination), everyone knew that the coming baby would be a boy. By October the people were being told to “look daily for a Prince.” The King even had a Garter stall made ready for his son in St. George’s Chapel, Windsor. There were astrologers on hand to assure the Queen that the King’s instinct was correct. And on this occasion the prophets had got it right. In early October, Queen Jane gave birth at Hampton Court Palace to the wished-for son. It was the eve of St Edward’s day and he was baptized by that name on 15th October. His two half-sisters, Mary and Elizabeth, attended the ceremony; Mary stood as godmother; Elizabeth was carried in the arms of Thomas Seymour, who would later plan, unsuccessfully, to marry her – there are those scheming Seymours again!

After 29 years as King of England, Henry VIII finally had a legitimate male heir. Past grievances could be forgotten at this grandest of all moments. Jane did not savour her success for long. The christening ceremony had begun in her bedchamber but then she was wrapped in robes and carried on a litter to the King’s chapel, where she managed to participate in the remainder of the lengthy and tiring ritual. The ordeal proved too much. Already weak and exhausted from a long and arduous delivery (two days and three nights) what she needed was quiet and rest. She received neither. Only a day later, it was reported that the queen was very ill. Her condition quickly worsened - she became delirious and ran a high fever; doctors bled her and attendants hastened to fulfil her craving for sweets and wine. The king’s chief minister Cromwell would later blame the sweets for her death but they did little to harm Jane. Modern historians believe she had developed puerperal sepsis, or ‘childbed fever’, all too common in the 16th century. Queen Jane Seymour died close to midnight on 24th October, 1537.
Her early death at the moment of her great triumph and her gentle character seemingly had an enduring hold on Henry VIII's memory. The king wore black until well into 1538 and waited more than two years to marry again - the longest interval between marriages during his reign.

**Slide 25: tomb in St George’s Chapel, Windsor**

In her short time as Queen, Jane had attempted to reconcile Henry and his stubborn daughter Mary and been the only mother the small Elizabeth really knew. Her body was embalmed and laid to rest in the tomb at Windsor Castle which Henry was building for himself.

**Slide 26: family portrait including Queen Jane, mother of the heir**

Years after her death, even while he was married to others, Jane continued to appear in royal portraits as Queen Consort. An example is Lucas de Heere’s “Allegory of the Tudor Succession”, 1546, showing, from the left, The Princess Mary, Prince Edward, King Henry, Queen Jane Seymour and the Princess Elizabeth. Jane’s special status as mother to the heir was never forgotten.

**Anne of Cleves**

**Slide 27: Anne of Cleves – portrait**

Anne of Cleves, Henry VIII's fourth wife, was not his first choice for the role by far. His ambassadors sought out all the eligible heiresses of Europe and discovered that their King had a very nasty marital reputation. He was said to have bullied his first wife, Katharine of Aragon, to her death and the tragic tale of his second queen, Anne Boleyn, was still keeping European gossips busy. As rumours have a habit of doing, they grew more colourful with the telling, one creative (but totally untrue) tale being that in his desperation for a male heir he had ordered his third wife, Jane Seymour cut open, mangled and killed to deliver the child safely.

In the end, it was a mixture of religion and politics which brought Anne of Cleves to England. Henry's influential advisor, Thomas Cromwell, wanted England to ally
herself with a nation that had also rejected papal authority. Cromwell recognized the inexorable Catholic decline which was only just beginning to occur; the king's assumption of supreme authority had merely been the first and most spectacular opening shot in a new religious war. Raised to be a churchman until his brother's untimely death and deeply interested in theological debate, Henry VIII didn't appreciate the Pandora's box of change he had opened. However Cromwell, younger and more philosophically in tune with the attitudes of the rising middle class, did appreciate it and approved of it. A marriage to Anne of Cleves, he believed, would openly ally England with a Protestant duchy, thus making the “reformation” even more settled.

When marrying for the second and third times Henry had freely chosen women from his own court. But this fourth marriage was necessarily a diplomatic exercise – a return to the traditional role of kings when searching for brides. He also understood that, since the passing of the Act of Supremacy in 1534, England stood dangerously isolated amongst the Catholic powers of Spain and France.

There was to be a gap of over two years between Jane Seymour's death in October 1537 and Anne of Cleves' arrival in England in late December 1539. Romantics believe the king waited such a long while to marry again because he loved Jane so much. Whether he loved her or not is beside the point; Henry actually waited so long (and he did so quite impatiently) because marriage negotiations took an unexpectedly long time. He had sent out instructions regarding the search for a new wife barely a month after Jane's death. But, as already mentioned, many of the suitable candidates said “thanks but no thanks” and refused to assemble for his perusal. But, busy with his paperwork and contacts throughout Europe, Cromwell sought to arrange a Protestant alliance.

During all of these negotiations, one must not forget the king's own views regarding his future wife. Henry was used to making his own decisions about the women in his life; he set high standards for female beauty and insisted that his next wife be physically attractive. To that end, he told his ambassadors that no official overtures were to be made to certain ladies until he had approved of their looks. “The thing touches me too near,” said the king, which was true enough but not the sort of thing kings were supposed to say. After all, he was not merely a man but a monarch; he was not supposed to marry for himself alone.

The ambassadors were often placed in embarrassing positions, commissioning portraits and sending back detailed descriptions of pock marks and hairstyles. Finally, the choices were narrowed down to four serious contenders. Marie de Guise, the widow of the duc de Longueville, was tall, beautiful and already proven in childbirth but she chose the Scottish king James V. Henry then looked to her younger sister, but she also became otherwise engaged. Then there was the beautiful and intelligent Christina of Milan, just sixteen and one of the most sought-after heiresses of her generation. When it was suggested that she consider becoming Henry’s next bride this young lady is said to have responded by saying that if she had two heads, “one should be at the King of England's disposal.”

The year 1538 passed with no alliance. Henry had intended to use his fourth marriage as a balance between France and the Hapsburg Empire but it now seemed as if those two enemies might be intending to join forces against him in defence of the papal supremacy. (We need to remember that to his dying day Henry considered himself a Catholic: his quarrel was not, he insisted, with the Church, it was the authority of the Pope that he refused to accept.)

Suddenly Cromwell's moment arrived. The fourth serious contender was the sister of the Duke of Cleves. The duke was not a Protestant himself but was allied through marriage with Saxony and the league of Lutheran princes; he was also at odds with the Hapsburg emperor Charles V over the duchy of Gelderland. There was also the possibility that the Duchy of Cleves might one day rival the Netherlands in terms of trade and strategic advantage. So Henry was persuaded to send his favourite court painter, Hans Holbein the Younger, to the German duchy. There he painted both Anne and her sister Amelia. Henry, who by this time was wearying of the endless rounds of negotiation, consulted the painting and expressed interest.
Anne was 24 years old and had spent most of her life at the ducal court of Dusseldorf. She was well-educated in domestic skills but was neither intellectual nor flirtatious - both qualities the king admired. She had no musical skills - music was one of Henry's passions. She had no interest in books. – Henry was a scholar. On the trip to England, her escort (perhaps sensing disaster ahead) tried to teach her the king's favourite card games but Anne either wouldn’t or couldn’t develop the skill. In summary, it was not her fault, nor that of Henry VIII, that she had been raised in a different country and as things turned out was given no opportunity to acclimatise herself to the ways of a new one before she set out to marry the King.

Slide 28: Hans Holbein the younger – portrait

As we have seen Henry had sent Hans Holbein to paint the potential brides. The artist was a man of vast talent; his best portraits are simply astounding, beautifully composed and possessing great psychological insight. However, either by chance or design, with the portrait of Anne of Cleves it seems that Holbein was more fascinated with the embroidery of her gown than with Anne's personality. Her eyes are downcast and her features lost beneath the ornate trappings of her dress and hood.

Negotiations gained a momentum of their own. A proxy marriage was conducted and Anne left her home in late November. She reached Calais on 11th December; during the journey, she was addressed as Queen of England and treated accordingly. For a fortnight she waited at Calais until the weather settled. On 27th December she set sail across the English Channel. It was a stormy crossing. It seems that at this point the King’s thin patience snapped; it has been said that his “boyish romantic nature” – on which he prided himself – got the better of him. In order to “nourish love”, as he told Cromwell, he decided to pay a surprise visit to his future bride the next day and “greet her warmly”. What he didn’t tell his chief minister is that he intended to appear in disguise. In true fairy-tale fashion the King rode into Rochester (where the Lady Anne was staying in the Bishop’s Palace) attended by some of the gentlemen of his Court, all disguised alike in hooded, multi-coloured cloaks. On arrival he sent one of the nobles up to the Lady’s chamber to say that a messenger would shortly be arriving with a gift from the King. The newly-arrived Anne of Cleves found herself confronted with a strange looking fellow in a “mottled cloak” and a hood which hid most of his face. He swept a low bow and made a speech of which she understood not a word - she neither spoke nor understood English. This impertinent fellow then embraced her. Startled and no doubt offended, Anne turned her back on him. The King retired to another room, assumed the purple cloak of royalty and returned.

Trivial though this incident may seem, its true significance lies with the King’s comment to Cromwell immediately afterwards. “I like her not!” he exclaimed. Apparently he was unimpressed by his future bride’s looks, and he was certainly not accustomed to having anyone, woman or man, turn their back on him. Everything, as we might say today, was downhill from there.

What actually happened to drive Anne and Henry apart was a simple matter of attraction, or in this case, lack of it. Almost five hundred years later, we still don't understand why certain people are physically attracted to each other; it simply happens. And it didn't happen with Anne and Henry; in fact, quite the opposite occurred and the King was repulsed by her. Anne's feelings on the matter are not known but suffice to say that Henry was no longer the strong, athletic king of years past; various injuries had reduced his exercise but not his appetite. He was by this stage obese and subject to its attendant problems.

However Henry honoured the betrothal and on 6th January the marriage took place. But the King was already looking for ways out. He had said to Cromwell just prior to the ceremony 'My Lord, if it were not to satisfy the world, and my Realm, I would not do that I must do this day for none earthly thing.' These were
ominous words. When Cromwell asked him the next morning, 'How liked you the Queen?', Henry replied, 'I liked her before not well, but now I like her much worse.' It is also possible that around this time the king became aware of the lively, curvaceous Catherine Howard, a cousin of his second wife, Anne Boleyn and now destined to be lady-in-waiting to the new Queen when her Flemish attendants were dismissed.

Slide 29: Thomas Cromwell – portrait

Members of the nobility who resented the power and influence of Cromwell welcomed this opportunity to discredit him. They gleefully reminded Henry that Cromwell had pushed him into the Cleves marriage. The by now furious King turned against his former friend and advisor. Cromwell was executed on 28th July 1540, a decision Henry almost instantly regretted.

Henry sought a way in which to shed wife number four and found it. Some intense investigation by his advisers revealed that Anne had been betrothed for a brief period in the mid-1530s to Francis, Duke of Lorraine. The English had to date not explored the issue too deeply. Now they looked more closely, with the King waiting impatiently for the right response. It was discovered; there had been no dispensation from the pre-contract; Anne was still officially betrothed to Francis. Ergo, Henry's marriage to Anne of Cleves was legally invalid from the start. For once, his decision to end a marriage was legally valid.

But what about Anne in all of this? Luckily for her, she had virtually no knowledge of English and an equivalent level of understanding of the physical relationship between a man and wife. Her English ladies were astounded by her innocence. She told them ‘When he [Henry] comes to bed, he kisses me and teeth me by the hand, and biddeth me 'Goodnight, sweetheart,' and in the morning, kisses me, and biddeth me, 'Farewell, darling.' Is this not enough?’’ asked Anne. No, she was told emphatically, it most certainly was not. So Henry’s claim that the marriage had not been consummated – that “as a husband he had bravely slept in the same bed at least every other night” but that at the end of a month Anne “was still as good a Maid.... as ever her Mother bare her” - was well supported.

In the end, Anne ruled as Queen for just four months; her last official appearance as the royal consort being during the May Day celebrations. Suddenly in May there was a fierce new determination to annul the marriage. Henry was deeply in love with his 'Rose without a Thorn', Catherine Howard. Anne had to go.

Anne succumbed to the inevitable with surprising grace. Perhaps she was afraid of the royal temper, or remembered the king's marital history, or she simply didn't care. Henry was very grateful. He knew, from the example of Katharine of Aragon, what could happen if a queen fought an annulment. However Anne of Cleves was amenable. The King’s representatives visited her at Richmond Palace, where she had gone to escape the threat of plague. They brought an interpreter so there would be no misunderstanding but Anne quickly grasped the situation. She had no advisers and the King had already executed one wife. Certainly she enjoyed the role of Queen and had taken a liking to her new country, but did she dare fight Henry? Of course not.

Slide 30: properties granted to Anne of Cleves

In her official “letter of submission” she signed herself “daughter of Cleves”, not “Queen of England”. She agreed the marriage had never been consummated and signed all the necessary documents. For his part, Henry was now prepared to be generous. Anne was to enjoy precedence over all the ladies in England, except the
Queen and the King's daughters. She was to be known as the King's “good sister” and received a very nice settlement of manors and estates (some of which had belonged to Cromwell.) This guaranteed her an income of 3,000 pounds a year, making her one of the wealthiest women in England. All this depended upon her remaining in England, and this Anne was more than willing to do. *The King's highness whom I cannot have as a husband is nevertheless a most kind, loving and friendly father and brother,*' she wrote to her brother.

Why after all should she return home in ignominy, dependent upon her brother's generosity, when she could remain in England and live a comfortable, independent life? So Anne, it seems, was as content with the arrangement as Henry. She grew to enjoy English ale and gambling; spent large amounts of money on gowns, visited with the King's children and occasionally with the King himself. The French Ambassador was suitably impressed with Anne's handling of what was undeniably a delicate situation, observing that she was “truly contented.” The various steps necessary for the King’s next divorce were set in motion. Through the process the fiction that the clergy had themselves become uneasy about this marriage and had petitioned the King to have it "examined” was blandly maintained.

So it was that Anne of Cleves was formally removed from the position of Queen of England which she had occupied for six months and a few days, an even shorter period than the tragic Jane Seymour who had been Queen for a year and a half. Anne was subsequently to occupy a nebulous place in English society, unmarried but wealthy and independent. She was still honoured as a royal. She answered to no male authority but that of the King, and he did not choose to trouble her. She was content and happy. Her last public appearance was riding alongside the Princess Elizabeth at Mary Tudor’s coronation in 1553. She died in 1557 of a 'declining illness' and was buried with appropriate honour at Westminster Abbey. Her Last Will and Testament reflected her genuine kindness. In it, she provided gifts to everyone who had ever served her, no matter how humble or so far in the past.

**Catherine Howard**

**Slide 31: Catherine Howard – portrait**

Catherine Howard's short life is one of the great cautionary tales of Henry VIII's reign; there is something strangely pathetic and small but also powerful and moving about it. Catherine was neither particularly beautiful nor intelligent, rather she was a charming, flirtatious girl who rose virtually overnight from obscurity to become Queen of England. She was the daughter of the 2nd Duke of Norfolk's youngest son, Edmund who was something of a nonentity and like most younger sons spent most of his life in constant need of money. While he was an aristocrat, a member of one of the greatest noble families of England, he could do little but beg for help from one relation or another. He sent his daughter to live with her grandmother, the Dowager Duchess of Norfolk at Lambeth Palace and thus avoided responsibility for (and cost of) her upbringing. While Catherine's grandmother complained ceaselessly about the expense of supporting numerous grandchildren, she did provide a comfortable albeit poorly disciplined home and Catherine grew into a merry and vivacious girl, not conventionally beautiful but graceful and charming. She possessed all the vitality of youth, something which was to prove irresistible to her ageing King. Raised in a type of dormitory at Lambeth Palace, crowded in with other young girls (some of them servants to her grandmother) her education was certainly not intellectual. Rather, her days were spent passing the time in the most pleasant manner possible. She combined a love of luxury and a lack of both self-control and awareness that certain things should not be done, must not be risked, no matter how much she wanted something.

While she remained one of many daughters of an impoverished lord, this immaturity did not matter. When she became Queen it did.
The only part of her sporadic education which she had seemed to enjoy were her music lessons and in particular the attentions of her music teacher, Henry Mannox. They first met in 1536, when Catherine was just fifteen years old. Hired to teach her the virginal and lute, Mannox soon began a practiced seduction of his young pupil. Catherine later swore the relationship was not consummated. “At the flattering and fair persuasions of Mannox being but a young girl I suffered him at sundry times to handle and touch the secret parts of my body which neither became me with honesty to permit nor him to require,” she was later to tell her interrogators. As a mere music teacher, Mannox was too far below her in social status for a serious relationship to develop. Though he followed the Duchess's household to London in 1538, Catherine's attentions soon turned from him to a gentleman-pensioner in her grandmother's household named Francis Dereham. This relationship was far more serious and undoubtedly consummated; there is ample evidence on this point, including Catherine's own confession: Their affair continued throughout 1538 and the couple became secretly betrothed. An infuriated and jealous Mannox, still with the household, sent an anonymous note to the Dowager Duchess, who discovered Catherine and Dereham together. There was a frightful scene and Dereham was banished for a time to Ireland. However, Catherine and Dereham parted with some understanding of marriage (perhaps even qualifying as a pre-contract or betrothal) when he returned.

Slide 32: Thomas Culpepper

Unluckily for Dereham, absence did not make Catherine’s heart grow fonder. In 1539, having moved to stay at her uncle’s home (which was close to Court) she met one Thomas Culpepper. A gentleman of the King's Privy Chamber, he was a handsome and charming young man; with a position at Court which allowed personal access to the king. Catherine fell madly in love with him. Culpepper's own feelings are not known; however as Catherine's family was powerful and she was an attractive girl it is likely that he was at least interested in her. But then came the great event which was to change Catherine's life forever. She was called to Court in late 1539 or early 1540 as a lady-in-waiting to Anne of Cleves and Henry VIII fell madly in love with her.

It is clear from Catherine's life before meeting the king that she was a flirtatious and emotional girl. It is also clear that she possessed the charm and sexual allure to attract men. These were now to prove both her greatest strengths and her greatest weaknesses, for while they attracted the King, they also led her into increasingly reckless behaviour. If she had married Dereham or Culpepper, or any other social climber, she would have remained a gossip and flirt, perhaps she would have succumbed to adultery. But behaviour that could be tolerated in the poor niece of a Duke was treason in a Queen of England.

Catherine's family was torn between elation and trepidation in the face of Henry's infatuation. The Norfolk name was one of the oldest in England. They had supported Richard III against the first Tudor king, Henry VII, but eventually managed to win back favour through military prowess and servile devotion to the new dynasty. However Henry VIII never fully trusted Thomas Howard, the 3rd Duke of Norfolk, though ironically he was to wed two of Norfolk's nieces. (Anne Boleyn and Catherine Howard.) Their grand name, then, was both blessing and curse. As an old family in a Court inhabited by what they (secretly) regarded as “upstarts” Catherine's relatives had made some friends but even more bitter enemies. And Catherine's personality worried them. Could she sustain the king's interest? And, if so, could she become a mature and successful Queen?

It is important to remember here that Henry's previous English queens, Anne Boleyn and Jane Seymour, had spent years in royal service before marrying their King. They were veterans of the English court and knew the intricacies and dangers of their position. Catherine was a mere child by contrast. While there were many
at court who questioned her maturity, they were not willing to risk the king's fury by raising the issue openly. Henry VIII's behaviour was becoming increasingly mercurial and dangerous, and his latest marriage had been a bitter disappointment. Woe to the courtier who spoke ill of his latest attraction! It was left to the Norfolk clan to coach Catherine as best they could, cross their fingers and hope their triumph would last.

The king soon openly favoured young Mistress Howard. She was, he announced, his “Rose Without a Thorn”. Her first gift was lands seized from a felon; a few weeks later she received an expensive cloak of quilted sarcenet (fine silk.) It is possible their relationship was consummated around this time for there was a sudden urgency to annul the ill-fated marriage to Anne of Cleves. The King's advisors soon found a valid impediment to the fourth marriage and on 13th July 1540, the royal marriage was officially ended by Parliament.

Meanwhile, the French ambassador reported rumours that Catherine was pregnant. The king had one son and heir but the vagaries of life in the 16th century made another heir necessary. Henry had just turned forty-nine years old (half his subjects were eighteen or younger.) The security of the realm was his greatest concern and it could only be guaranteed by legitimate heirs. As a second son himself, he knew the importance of “an heir and a spare”? Henry married Catherine on 28th July 1540 at Oatlands Palace in Surrey in a ceremony lacking the usual pomp and display of royal unions. Catherine was never crowned, perhaps once again Henry wished to wait until the marriage proved successful in the most important way and Catherine bore him a son.

The king consulted his council on creating a new succession should the blessed event occur, pushing his daughters Mary and Elizabeth even further from the throne. The next year was an Indian summer in the King's life. Catherine did her best to amuse and distract him and he certainly needed her ministrations. The waste of lives and exorbitant cost of fighting France had depressed the English treasury and the Reformation had cost him the love of the common people. He was increasingly suffering from the ailments which would kill him a few years later. English politics had become another headache; his great champion and friend Thomas Cromwell was gone, executed as we have seen earlier for his role in the Anne of Cleves debacle. The King was openly lamenting the loss of his “most faithful servant”.

Despite early rumours Catherine was not pregnant in the summer of 1540 nor did she ever become so, but the king was so physically affectionate with her in public that none doubted the happy event would occur. Still, warning signs about this hasty marriage had already appeared. Catherine's previous relationship with Dereham had never been kept secret, though the doting Henry seemed unaware of it. His courtiers gossiped and wondered.

In August 1541, Dereham (by now back from Ireland) was made Catherine’s secretary, perhaps as a bribe to keep quiet about their former relationship. So even as she collected rich gifts of gowns, jewels, fur cloaks, and golden clocks, Catherine’s indecorous past lurked in the background. Was she worried? As her later behaviour was to show, it seems not.

Catherine took great care to ensure her aged husband's happiness. Many biographers have speculated on Catherine's true feelings for Henry VIII. She probably did not love him in the most romantic sense of the word, but she did love him for the affection and generosity he showed her and she also approached him with something of an awed reverence, for he was the king and thus a quasi-mystical figure to her, all-knowing and all-powerful.

But sooner or later the idyll had to end. In the spring of 1541, the King fell ill with a serious fever and Catherine was sent away for her own safety. It was around this time that she began her affair with Culpepper, the handsome young man who had caught her fancy two years before. We know this from a letter – a very indiscreet letter – she wrote to him in April 1541. When the king recovered both from the fever and a particularly nasty infection in his ulcerated leg he took Catherine on a royal progress through the north of England. Thomas Culpepper travelled with the party as one of the royal household. Catherine had
always boasted that she could “meddle with a man” without pregnancy, which she obviously thought made her relationship with Culpepper safe. In her rather simple view of marriage, as long as she and the King were happy, nothing else mattered. And since the king would be happy as long as he was ignorant, all would be well. It’s known as naivety!

The king remained ignorant for a surprisingly long time. For his part, Culpepper was increasingly using Catherine's infatuation to further his own ambitions. We do not know a great deal about him but the little we do know is unpleasant. He was not a particularly “gentlemanly” gentleman. In fact, he had brutally raped a park-keeper's wife, ordering three of his servants to hold her down during the attack and also murdered a villager who tried to save her. For this he had been pardoned by the King. His ambitions regarding Catherine undoubtedly stemmed from Henry VIII's ill health. If the king died, then the Queen Dowager would maintain some influence and power at Court. Before that inevitable day, she could give him as many expensive gifts as she wished and she did.

Did Catherine love Culpepper? She undoubtedly did, at least as much as her immature view of love allowed. He was handsome, could be very charming, if only in a superficial manner and he flattered and pleased her. She became increasingly open in her affection, enough to worry Culpepper himself and he took care to become more circumspect. As a gentleman of the Privy Chamber he knew the king's moods better than most.

Slide 33: Hampton Court Palace

But there were those at Court who knew of the relationship and they would not keep quiet. When the northern progress finally ended on 1st November, and the royal couple settled at Hampton Court Palace, Catherine's past and present indiscretions caught up with her. She had been safe enough during the northern progress, for a travelling Court was not nearly as gossip-ridden as a settled one; there were, after all, far more practical matters to attend to as the King moved from city to city. But once they were home, other matters could take precedence - matters like the Queen's infidelity.

Catherine’s fall from grace was so rapid that foreign ambassadors were at a loss to explain it. On 2nd November, when Henry was at Mass for All Souls’ Day, Archbishop Cranmer passed him a letter with the charges against the Queen listed. The King was immediately ”perplexed” and at first declared the letter to be a forgery. Catherine had deceived him well. However, ordering Cranmer to keep the matter private he began an investigation. It took only a few days for Catherine's house of cards to come tumbling down. Dereham was tortured; he confessed his earlier relationship and named Culpepper as the Queen's current lover. Culpepper was then arrested, tortured, and confessed. When confronted with the confessions, Henry’s confusion gave way to fury and self-pity.

Slide 34: The “Haunted Gallery” at Hampton Court Palace

Catherine was confronted with the accusations on 12th November and her tearful pleas to see the king were ignored. She is said to have run screaming along the corridor of Hampton Court Palace leading to the King’s chambers (hence the legendary “Haunted Gallery” with its ghost) to plead with him but was dragged back before reaching him. She was never to see the King again.

Cranmer was given the distasteful task of interrogating the terrified girl. She was hysterical, even the archbishop felt pity
for her condition. Perhaps he suggested an option to Henry VIII that he had first proposed for Anne Boleyn –

let Catherine admit her sins, annul the marriage, and send her away. The Dereham pre-contract was the perfect excuse. Catherine need only admit its existence and her life would be spared. It was the king's “most gracious mercy” and her only possible chance for survival. But Catherine failed to understand what was being suggested - she was convinced that to openly admit her guilt would mean death and she refused to take Cranmer’s advice. It is possible, of course, that Henry VIII had never intended to spare her life. Indeed, with each day that passed, Henry was less inclined to show mercy.

The floodgates had opened and ever more scurrilous rumours about his “Rose Without a Thorn” surfaced. Catherine was formally indicted for leading an “abominable, base, carnal, voluptuous and vicious life.” Dereham paid an horrific penalty for his “crimes”; he was hung, drawn, and quartered (disembowelled and castrated while still conscious) as a traitor. Culpepper was also executed but because of his higher rank and personal service in the King’s household he suffered a more merciful beheading. Their heads were fixed on spears atop London Bridge and were still there as late as 1546.

Perhaps the executions of Dereham and Culpeper brought a newfound maturity to Catherine. She remained quietly locked in her rooms. On 21st January the House of Lords passed an Act of Attainder and it received the King's approval. It was intended to answer the question vexing them all - of what exactly was Catherine Howard guilty? If she had been precontracted to Dereham, then she was never married to the king - and thus not guilty of adultery. But in a speech on 6th February, a vengeful Henry made it clear that the new Act could punish those who intended to commit treason (or adultery, since adultery in a queen was treason.) It was this which sealed Catherine's fate.

On Friday, 10th February 1542, the Duke of Suffolk arrived to take Catherine to the Tower of London. She struggled hysterically and had to be forced aboard the barge. Around seven o'clock on the morning of Monday, 13th February Catherine was taken to her execution, so weak and frightened that she had to be helped up the steps to the scaffold. The actual execution was over quickly. Her body was interred at the nearby chapel of St Peter ad Vincula.

Catherine Howard did not have an impact upon English history. She is perhaps the most inconsequential of Henry VIII's six wives, her reign as Queen a very brief eighteen months. She bore no children and made no lasting impression upon those who knew her. But it should be remembered that she was thirty years younger than her husband, a silly young girl who never understood the dangers of royal resolve. Her life was over before it had truly begun; we can only wonder how it might have ended differently.

**Katherine Parr**

**Slide 35: Katherine Parr – portrait**

The position of Queen was the greatest honour for an Englishwoman; but in the last years of Henry's reign, it had proved to be a distinctly dangerous honour. After the humiliation of Catherine Howard's infidelity, Henry was determined that his next wife would not dare cuckold him, so there was an interesting clause in the Act of Attainder which had condemned Catherine to death. It stated that “to avoid doubts for the future” anyone who knew anything “incontinent” about the Queen must reveal it or be condemned for treason. In addition, if the King chose to marry a woman whom he “took to be a pure and clean maid” and she turned out to be otherwise, the charge of treason would apply to both the woman and
“all who knew it and did not reveal it”. In other words, speak up either before or after the royal marriage or die.

**Slide 36: portrait of “an ageing and ailing monarch”**

An ageing and ailing monarch

We see here the King as he was the year Catherine Howard was executed - obese, often bedridden, in great pain and in a dark mood. After the debacle of his fifth marriage to a girl thirty years his junior, Henry VIII found himself in an unusual position; for the first time in his reign there was not a future wife waiting to be claimed. The Tudor court vacillated between the opposing factions of Catholicism and the Reformed Faith and waited expectantly for Henry to choose his next wife, knowing she would tip the balance in favour of one party. But which? Was there a woman at Court who would risk marrying the ageing and ailing king? This new law was enough to frighten even the most seasoned courtier. Previously, the chance to parade a young girl before the King had provided an opportunity to make a family's fortune; now, it was merely a chance to risk death, for who could be completely certain of a young woman’s chastity? Furthermore, who could trust the old king’s judgment on the matter?

Henry had declared that he had believed Catherine Howard to be a virgin when she was not. Understandably enough, the mood at court was hesitant and fearful, so when the King's eye turned favourably to one Lady Latimer, thirty-one years old and twice widowed, courtiers breathed a sigh of relief and her family could safely encourage the royal interest. After all, a widow need not prove her virginity.

Katherine Parr, Lady Latimer, had many admirable personal qualities which attracted the King. She was tall, vivacious and witty, with a kindly and sensible nature; history shows her to have been a doting step-mother to Henry’s three children. An intelligent woman with a love of scholarship, it was she who encouraged the education of the Princess Elizabeth, thus helping to produce one of the most learned monarchs in English history. She also had her lighter side and was as dedicated to finery and amusements as any of Henry's previous wives.

Katherine's first marriage, in 1529, had been to young Edward Borough, son of a minor lord in Lincolnshire. The marriage was childless and Edward, who had a history of lingering illness, died in 1532. Her next husband, John Neville, Lord Latimer, was forty years old, twice Katherine's age and had been married twice before. They married in late spring 1533. Latimer was a wealthy northern landowner and Katharine quickly adapted to her new lifestyle as mistress of a large household. Then in 1536 they moved to London, where her husband's health began to deteriorate. Katherine spent her time nursing her husband and visiting her younger sister Anne Parr who was a lady-in-waiting to the new Queen, Anne of Cleves. Katherine was still a young woman and her sister’s position gave her entrée to court. This opened her eyes to a new way of life. She was at last in the presence of healthy, dynamic men her own age and, unlike her invalid husbands, these men were flirtatious and charming. However there was never a hint of impropriety on Katherine’s part and she continued to nurse the ailing Lord Latimer with great care and compassion. But she would have been less than human if she failed to notice the contrast between her previous life in northern England and the glittering, challenging court of Henry VIII. She became increasingly interested in the theological debates at Court but also enjoyed its less intellectual pleasures - dancing, music, banquets, grand costumes.

While Lord Latimer lingered on his deathbed throughout 1541 and 1542, Katherine realistically assessed her future. She would soon be a very wealthy widow, finally free to make her own choices and with the youth to enjoy them. She had fallen in love with the charming Thomas Seymour, brother of the late Queen Jane and uncle to Henry VIII’s only male heir, (those Seymours once again!) But she had also caught Henry VIII's jaded eye. The King’s first gifts to Katherine were delivered on 16th February 1543, a year after Catherine
Howard’s execution. On 2nd March, her husband Lord Latimer died and. Katherine looked to Seymour as her future husband and to a life of passionate fulfilment rather than duty. Seymour, however, took note of the King's interest and shrewdly stepped back.

So Katherine Parr once again followed a dutiful course, entering into a third marriage with an older, sickly husband. “It was not an easy choice.” she wrote to Seymour, “As truly as God is God, my mind was fully bent.... to marry you before any man I know.” But, she continued, the will of God differed from her own and after a great spiritual struggle, she had no choice but obedience. She and Seymour parted, expressing their love for each other and making some promises for the future – after all, the king was ill and failing.

Slide 37: Marriage of the King & Katherine Parr at Hampton Court Palace.

Events moved quickly. Katherine and Henry were married by Archbishop Stephen Gardiner at Hampton Court Palace on 12 July 1543, with all the royal children present.

The marriage was an immediate success. Katherine had a truly endearing personality, as shown by the genuine affection which a wide range of people felt for her. To the King, she was the perfect companion and nursemother; to his children, she was a loving stepmother. As Queen, she attracted those courtiers sympathetic to the reformed faith and her rooms became famous for their theological debates, a fact which soon incensed the influential Catholics at court. However Henry held her in high regard and when he left for France on an expensive military campaign in July 1544, Katherine - his “most dearly and most entirely beloved wife” - was made Regent of England. The only other wife given this honour had been Katharine of Aragon. Henry returned to find his affairs in good order.

Their marriage had its physical side as well. Though Henry was occasionally impotent, the marriage was consummated and Katherine was fond of ordering black satin nightdresses. She would often sit with the king's sore leg in her lap, or in his lap herself. Henry enjoyed her dancing and they both loved music. It was only when Katherine waded into the complicated morass of Tudor theology that she roused the King’s temper.

The king's religious beliefs remain confusing even centuries later; one can only sympathise with his contemporaries who had to guess at them and hope for the best. Raised a Catholic, Henry was forced to repudiate the papacy in order to marry Anne Boleyn; it must be remembered that it was the authority of the pope Henry challenged, not the Church itself. For several years after the break with Rome both Protestant and Catholic were cut down by the King - those who leaned too far one way or the other risked certain death. It is clear that as he grew older, he came to appreciate the mess he had created. Where did he stand? Was he an ally of the Lutheran princes? Or did he miss the faith of his youth? It is probable that even Henry did not know the answer. However, even if he didn't know what he believed, he did know heresy when he heard it - or so he thought.

Katherine was becoming dangerously attracted to evangelical Protestantism. Her companions were of a younger generation than the King and had grown up in the decades following Martin Luther's triumph in Germany. Furthermore theology was no longer only the province of churchmen; the laity - and women especially - could now question and debate the most important issues for themselves. Katherine was an intelligent woman with a deep love of scholarship, and the new faith appealed to her. (She wrote several books on the subject.) There was no room for her in Catholicism, she decided, but she could be a guiding light for the reformers. Perhaps the central belief of this new faith was the need for everyone to personally
study the Bible. This was a truly revolutionary idea; but it also lessened the power of Henry VIII as Supreme Head of the Church of England since it encouraged his subjects to think for themselves. Conservatives argued that reading the Bible only encouraged heresy. Katherine disagreed and wrote angrily, “Is it not extreme wickedness to charge the holy sanctified word of God with the offences of man? To allege the Scriptures to be perilous learning because certain readers thereof fall into heresies?”

By May 1543, the king's council had grown sufficiently alarmed by this permissive climate to pass the Act for the Advancement of the True Religion. It was initially directed against the 'lower sort' who wished to study the Bible in English, either alone or in public. However it was later amended to allow noblewomen the right to read the Bible but it was set down that they must do so alone and not engage in religious debate. Katherine, however, seemed content to ignore this warning.

The King was openly affectionate; foreign ambassadors wrote home in praise of her kindness; her stepchildren loved her - she was secure in her position and seemingly unaware of any danger. As patroness, she favoured the reformers and also sought to protect those who fell from favour. But in 1546, Baron Thomas Wriothesley was made Lord Chancellor and he was a conservative especially interested in stamping out heresy. The Queen was on dangerous ground. There were rumblings at Court about what some saw as the Queen’s dangerous reformist views and her influence on the King. Sensing (correctly, as it happened) that the King was growing increasingly irritated by his wife’s open involvement in theological debate, a group of conservatives, among them Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, decided to act and have her charged with heresy. They sought and obtained the support of the Lord Chancellor, Thomas Wriothesley.

Around this time, it so happened that Henry was in a more irritable mood than usual, his ulcerated leg had grown worse as had the blinding headaches. As the royal couple sat in their usual position in the evening - the king's sore leg resting on his wife's lap - Katherine began to lecture her husband on religion. The King was in no mood for what he considered heresy, nor did he wish to be lectured by his wife. It seemed Katherine's enemies had won. But then the old king threw all into confusion; he told his doctor, Thomas Wendy, that the Queen was about to be arrested. Was he serious or is it possible that he knew that palace gossip being what it was, the news would reach his wife and give her a fright? Sure enough an anonymous courtier passed the message on to the Queen. She was devastated and in fear for her life. Katherine hurried to the King's rooms where he immediately began to discuss religion with her, in particular contradicting many of her reformist beliefs. Recognising the test, Katherine agreed with it all, telling Henry that “women by their first creation were made subject to men” and that “men set out to instruct their wives, who would do all their learning from them”. The King was “a prince of such excellent learning and wisdom” and she would gladly follow his counsel. But Henry was not finished. “You are become a doctor able to instruct us and not to be instructed by us?” he asked, referring to her earlier lecture, to which Katherine replied that he had “much mistaken the freedom she had taken to argue with him”, for she had only done it to learn from him and distract him from his illness. “And is it even so?” asked Henry, with a smile. “Then Kate, we are friends again.” Katherine Parr no doubt heaved an immense sigh of relief.

But no-one told the king's Council. When Wriothesley and forty yeomen-of-the-guard arrived to arrest Katherine the next day, the King himself beat them about their heads and shoulders, abusing them loudly and “calling them foul names”. Katherine was thus saved in a most public and spectacular fashion and was soon gifted with more jewels. Her appeal to Henry's vanity had saved her life. The whole incident had also allowed the King to remind everyone, including his wife, who was the real master.

[The above incident is often dismissed as historical fiction. Not so, it is well documented fact. Sometimes history itself provides the best stories]

But Henry was not indestructible. His health began to decline in the spring of 1546 and by the winter, he was dangerously ill. Katherine's own position gained new prominence since upon Henry's death she would be Dowager Queen and she already had great influence over her step-son Prince Edward. She continued to
nurse Henry assiduously, but was sent away to Greenwich Palace with Mary and Elizabeth for extended Christmas celebrations.

Slide 38: Henry on his deathbed

She never saw her husband again. Henry VIII, the second Tudor monarch, died in the early hours of 28th January, 1547. After Henry's death, Thomas Seymour's elder brother Edward assumed the title Protector of the Kingdom, ruling in the name of his nine year old nephew Edward.

Katherine, meanwhile, married Thomas Seymour with what others (including her royal stepchildren) felt was indecent haste. For once, the always dutiful Katherine had acted impulsively. She had given up Seymour once and would not do so again. The actual date of the marriage is not known but Seymour referred to himself as her husband in a letter dated 17th May. Other letters show that it was the ambitious Seymour who had pressed for a quick union. Surprise, surprise!

For the new King's councillors the marriage was a disaster. They well recognized Seymour's blazing ambition. Edward Seymour's wife Anne Stanhope, now the Duchess of Somerset, engaged in a petty battle of precedence with Katherine and there were arguments over the Queen’s possessions, particularly the jewellery which Henry VIII had given her.

Still, there was soon far happier news to distract her. In late November 1547, thirty-five years old and childless through three previous marriages, Katherine Parr became pregnant. However, her pregnancy was not all she had hoped it would be. Her husband proved too forward with the young Princess Elizabeth (he had always planned to marry her) and Katherine was forced to send her step-daughter away. The breach hurt both of them deeply. Katherine gave birth to a girl, named Mary, at Sudeley Castle in Gloucestershire on 30th August. Jane Grey stood as godmother to the infant but the happy occasion took a quick turn for the worse. Katharine fell victim to puerperal sepsis, the “childbed fever” which had killed Jane Seymour. Despite suffering painful delusions she managed to dictate her will and final wishes. She died on 5th September and was buried at Sudeley in St Mary's Church.

Slide 39: Katherine’s tomb

Thomas quickly appropriated her estate, leaving his infant daughter homeless and penniless. The last mention of Mary Seymour on record is on her second birthday in the care of the Dowager Duchess of Suffolk, a close friend of Katherine’s. Most historians believe she died as a child. A year after Katherine’s death Thomas Seymour was executed for his part in a plot to replace the boy-king Edward VI with Lady Jane Grey, whose guardian was – yes, the scheming, ambitious Edward Seymour who was himself executed a year later on a charge of sedition (conduct or language inciting rebellion against the authority of a state.) To employ modern idiom, they got what was coming to them!
Katherine Parr’s life was always one of duty and kindness. She left behind a formidable tradition of scholarship and religious devotion, as shown by her own books. The great tragedy of her life was that when finally able to marry for love, her happiness was all too brief.

**The legacy of Henry & his wives**

Henry VIII and his wives were followed by three more Tudor monarchs.

**Slide 40: portrait of Edward**

Edward VI, son of Henry and Jane Seymour was crowned King on 20th February, 1547. During his short reign he attempted to strengthen Protestantism, however as he died just before his 16th birthday it is difficult to gauge whether history would have judged him to be a successful Tudor monarch had he lived to reign in his own right.

**Slide 41: portrait of Mary**

Mary I, Edward’s half-sister and successor, was a devout Catholic, inflexible and lacking the “common touch.” She attempted to reverse Edward’s Protestant reforms, burning hundreds of Protestants at the stake for heresy during her five-year reign, so earning herself the name “Bloody Mary”. She died on November 17th 1558.

**Slide 42: portrait of Elizabeth**

Elizabeth I, Mary’s half-sister, was to reign for 45 years. In both intellect and temperament, Elizabeth was well-suited to the role of monarch. She was a religious pragmatist and her policy of toleration extended to politics, serving to give her country the religious and political peace it needed to thrive, and thrive it did. Her years on the throne provided valuable stability and helped forge a sense of national identity. While Elizabeth was the last of the Tudor monarchs, with her the Tudor dynasty went out in style.
Catherine of Aragon
Anne Boleyn
Jane Seymore
Anne of Cleves
Catherine Howard
Catherine Parr