

Sommaire

Close-up of civilisation

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1

Henry VIII

DOMINATION

INFLUENCE

OPPOSITION

RÉVOLTE



Henry VIII (1540), by Hans Holbein

1. Henry VIII (1491-1547), king of England (1509-1547)

1. Read Henry VIII's biography first, then cover the text and answer the questions below.

The early part of Henry's reign

In the early years of his reign, Henry preferred hunting, games, mistresses and music and was content to leave governing in the hands of his chancellor, Cardinal Thomas Wolsey, Archbishop

5 of York. Later though, the young king invaded France and defeated Scottish forces at the battle of Flodden Field (in which James IV of Scotland was killed). In 1520, Henry VIII and Francis I held peace talks at the Field of the Cloth of Gold¹.

10 Wolsey fell from favour in 1529 and was arrested for high treason when he failed to obtain papal consent for the annulment of the king's marriage to Catherine of Aragon, who had not given Henry a male heir². Henry had the marriage annulled in

15 1533 and, the same year, married Anne Boleyn who was already pregnant³ with the future Elizabeth I. Three years later, Anne Boleyn was accused of adultery and beheaded⁴.

The Church of England

In 1534, after the Pope had refused to grant⁵

20 Henry VIII a divorce, the king decided to cut all ties with Roman Catholicism. He proclaimed himself official head of the Church of England in the Act of Supremacy, thus supplanting the power of the pope in Rome.

25 The Reformation, however, would undoubtedly have taken place without the divorce question because of the European context and growing distrust⁶ of the Catholic hierarchy among the English people.



Anne Boleyn

Dissolution of the monasteries (1537-1539)

30 After Henry VIII's break with Rome, Thomas Cromwell, the Lord Chancellor, set up a commission to examine the state of every monastery and convent in England, with a view to possible closure and appropriation of its wealth⁷ by

35 the Crown. Many were found to be infested by corruption. Henry, who urgently needed money to finance his extravagant⁸ lifestyle, ordered their dissolution.

The end of Henry's reign

In 1536 Henry married Jane Seymour, who died in

40 1537, giving birth to the future Edward VI. In 1540 Henry married Anne of Cleves, but the marriage was annulled six months later. In 1540 Thomas Cromwell was charged with⁹ treason and executed. Henry married Catherine Howard, who was

45 executed two years later for adultery. In 1543 Henry married Catherine Parr, his sixth and last wife.

1. *Camp du Drap d'Or* - 2. *héritier* - 3. *enceinte* -
4. *décapitée* - 5. *accorder* - 6. *méfiance* - 7. *richesses* -
8. *dispendieux* - 9. *accuser de*

2. Say whether the following ten statements are true or false. Justify.

- a. Henry VIII was 24 when he became king.
- b. Governing did not appeal to Henry VIII at the beginning of his reign.
- c. Thomas Cromwell looked after England's affairs until 1529.
- d. Henry VIII negotiated peace with Louis XI of France.

- e. The Pope agreed to annul Henry's marriage to Catherine of Aragon.
- f. The Pope was the head of the Church of England.
- g. The Church of England means *la religion anglicane* in French.
- h. Henry VIII abolished the monasteries and confiscated their property.
- i. Anne Boleyn gave birth to Edward VI.
- j. Two of Henry's wives were beheaded.

2. Sir Thomas More (1478-1535)

Read Thomas More's biography below first, then describe the picture opposite, using the following words:

Nouns: scaffold *échafaud* – stage *estrade* – block of wood – executioner [ˌɛksɪˈkjuːʃənə] – hood *cagoule* – in one's shirtsleeves *en bras de chemise* – axe *hache* – priest [priːst] – blessing *bénédiction*

Verbs: kneel [niːl] (knelt, knelt) *s'agenouiller* – clasp *serrer* – bow [baʊ] one's head *baisser la tête* – raise *lever*

Sir Thomas MORE – English statesman, humanist, and Roman Catholic saint. He was Lord Chancellor to Henry VIII from 1529 to 1532. His opposition to the annulment of Henry's marriage to Catherine of Aragon and his refusal to recognise the Act of Supremacy resulted in his execution on a charge of treason. In 1516, he wrote a book, *Utopia*, in which he explained his concept of the ideal state.



3. Spring 1521

I could hear a roll of muffled drums¹. But I could see nothing, the lady standing in front of me blocking my view of the scaffold.

By stepping to one side a little and craning my
 5 neck, I could see the condemned man, accompanied by his priest, walk slowly from the Tower toward the green where the wooden platform was waiting, the block of wood placed centre stage, the executioner dressed all ready for work in his shirtsleeves with a
 10 black hood over his head. It looked more like a masque than a real event, and I watched it as if it were a court entertainment². The king, seated on his throne, looked distracted³, as if he was running through his speech of forgiveness in his head. Behind
 15 him stood my husband of one year, William Carey, my brother, George, and my father, Sir Thomas Boleyn, all looking grave. I wished the king would hurry up and grant clemency so that we could all go to breakfast. I was only thirteen years old, I was always hungry.

The Duke of Buckinghamshire was close enough kin⁴ for me to call him
 20 uncle. My father told me that he had offended the king a dozen ways: he had royal blood in his veins and he kept too large a retinue⁵ of armed men



1. Who is the narrator (full name, age, family status)?
2. When (date, time of day) and where does the story take place?
3. List the other characters present in the scene and say how they are related.
4. Why has the man been condemned?
5. What does the narrator expect at the beginning? Why?
6. Describe and analyse the narrator's feelings at the end of the text.
7. What does the mother's remark reveal?
8. What image of the king is given in these opening pages of the novel?

for the comfort of a king not yet wholly secure on his throne; worst of all he was supposed to have said that the king had no son and heir now, could get no son and heir, and that he would likely die without a son to succeed him to the throne. 25

Such a thought must not be said out loud. The king, the court, the whole country knew that a boy must be born to the queen, and born soon. To suggest otherwise was to take the first step on the path that led to the wooden steps of the scaffold which the duke, my uncle, now climbed, firmly and without fear. 30

Uncle Stafford came to the front of the stage to say his final words. I was watching the king, waiting for his cue⁶ to step forward and offer the royal pardon. This man standing on the scaffold, in the sunlight of the early morning, had been the king's partner at tennis, his rival on the jousting field⁷, his friend at a hundred bouts⁸ of drinking and gambling, they had been comrades since the king was a boy. The king was teaching him a lesson, a powerful public lesson, and then he would forgive him and we could all go to breakfast. 35

The little faraway figure turned to his confessor. He bowed his head for a blessing and kissed the rosary. He knelt before the block and clasped it in both hands. I wondered what it must be like, to put one's cheek to the smooth waxed wood, to smell the warm wind coming off the river, to hear, overhead, the cry of seagulls⁹. 40

The executioner raised his axe. I looked toward the king. He was leaving his intervention very late. I glanced back at the stage. My uncle, head down, flung wide his arms, a sign of his consent, the signal that the axe could fall. I looked back to the king, he must rise to his feet now. But he still sat, his handsome face grim¹⁰. And while I was still looking toward him there was another roll of drums, suddenly silenced, and then the thud of the axe, first once, then again and a third time: a sound as domestic as chopping wood. 45 50

The king rose slowly from his seat and I thought, childishly, "Dear God, how awfully embarrassing this is going to be. He has left it too late. It has all gone wrong. He forgot to speak in time."

But I was wrong. He did not leave it too late, he did not forget. He wanted my uncle to die before the court so that everybody might know that there was only one king, and that was Henry. And there would be a son born to this king – and even to suggest otherwise meant a shameful death. 55

The court returned quietly to Westminster Palace. My mother was seated near me. In a rare moment of interest she glanced at me and remarked, "You're very pale, Mary, are you feeling sick?" 60

"I didn't think he would be executed," I said. "I thought the king would forgive him."

My mother leaned forward so that her mouth was at my ear and no one could have heard us. "Then you are a fool," she said shortly. "And a fool to remark it. Watch and learn, Mary. There is no room for mistakes at court." 65

Philippa GREGORY, *The Other Boleyn Girl* (2001)

1. *tambour* – 2. *divertissement* – 3. *distrain* – 4. *parent* – 5. *escorte* – 6. *réplique* – 7. *terrain de joute* – 8. *séance* – 9. *mouette* – 10. *sombre*