

The following is a short history relating to Henry's wives distilled from a number of books encyclopaedias and web-sites. The portraits are taken from various web-sites.

### **Why Did Henry VIII Marry Six Times?**



Portraits of Henry VIII throughout his life.

Henry VIII was born on June 28, 1429. His father, Henry VII, and his mother, Elizabeth of York, were loving parents, although they saw little of their children. (*WHY DO YOU THINK THAT WAS?*)

Henry, their second son, was known as the Duke of York. (Our Queen Elizabeth's second son is called the Duke of York). He had his own servants, minstrels and a fool called John Goose. He even had a whipping boy who was punished instead of Henry whenever Henry did anything wrong. Prince Henry enjoyed music and grew up to be an accomplished musician. By the age of ten he could play the fife, harp, viola and drums. He did not, however, write Greensleeves, as is often stated in legend.

Henry's older brother, Arthur, married a Spanish princess, Catherine of Aragon, when he was fifteen years old. This marriage had been arranged by their parents, King Henry VII and King Ferdinand of Spain,

when the children were very young. (*WHY?*). Catherine was considered to be very pretty and was well educated. (Their marriage helped relationships between England and Spain to stay good). At their wedding Arthur was dancing and seemed to be in good health, but a few months later, on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1502, he died. Some historians think he died of tuberculosis, others think it was the plague.

Henry now became heir to the throne. He was guarded at all times and allowed to see only a few select people. He was very tall, athletic and people thought he was handsome. He received very little training to become King and, in his early reign, relied heavily on counsellors to guide and advise him. As a young man Henry was described by one of his contemporaries as, "one of the goodliest men that lived in his time, in all manners more than a man, most amiable, courteous and benign in gestures unto all persons." He enjoyed dancing, gambling, hunting, hawking, horse riding, jousting, tennis, archery, wrestling, writing and composing music.



Following Arthur's death Henry VII arranged for his son, Henry, to marry Catherine of Aragon, to keep relationships with Spain good. Catherine was five years older than Henry and much more sedate. She was interested in politics and during the early years of their marriage Henry often turned to her for advice. In 1513 she ruled as Regent whilst Henry was in France.

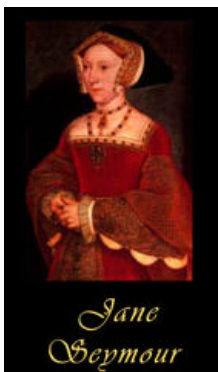
Soon after their marriage Henry VII died. Henry then became King at eighteen; Catherine was twenty-three.

After twenty years of marriage only one of Henry and Catherine's children had survived. She was called Mary and had been born in 1516. Henry VIII wanted a male heir to the throne and his advisors thought that Catherine was too old to have any more children. Henry tried to persuade the Pope, as head of the church, to agree with him that he should never have married his brother's wife, as this was forbidden. The Pope disagreed. After many years of arguments Henry decided to break with the Catholic Church and created a new Church of England, of which he was head. He made Thomas Cranmer the Archbishop of Canterbury and in 1532 Henry had Thomas declare his

marriage to Catherine of Aragon annulled. Catherine was sent away from court. She was not allowed to see Mary and died of a broken heart four years later.



Almost immediately after the marriage to Catherine ended, Henry married Anne Boleyn, with whom he had been fascinated for years. Her character was very confident; she was always plotting and scheming. She became Queen in 1533. Soon after her daughter Elizabeth (the future Queen Elizabeth I) was born. She was in her thirties and becoming very moody and sharp-tongued. Henry was no longer in love with her and became interested in one of her maids of honour, Jane Seymour. In 1536 Anne miscarried a baby boy. Henry was desperate for a son. He was convinced that God thought that his marriage to Anne was wrong and that God was cursing him by not giving him a son. He charged Anne with treason, after making up false evidence against her. She was beheaded on 19<sup>th</sup> May 1536 in the Tower of London.



On 30<sup>th</sup> May 1536 Henry married Jane Seymour. Many historians believe that Jane was his favourite wife, and they cite two reasons why they think this. a) He had himself buried next to her when he died and, b) she gave him a son, Edward, born in 1537. She was described as gentle, calm and quiet, the exact opposite of Anne Boleyn. She mostly obeyed Henry. Just once she fell on her knees in public and begged the King to change one of his policies. The King was furious and Jane never tried this again.



Twelve days after the birth of Edward Jane died. Henry was said to be heart-broken but his advisors were keen for him to marry again quickly. Thomas Cromwell, his chief minister, wanted him to marry someone for political advantage and persuaded him to marry Anne of Cleves in order to improve relations with Germany. Anne was the daughter of Duke William of Cleves. She had had a protected upbringing and was less worldly wise than Henry's other wives. Henry had asked to see a portrait of her before he agreed to marry her. The portrait made her

look very attractive. Henry liked the portrait and signed an agreement to marry her in 1539. He rushed to meet her when she landed in England. She was not as pretty as the portrait had made her look and she virtually ignored him. Henry commented, "I like her not!" However, he could not get out of the treaty with Germany to marry her and reluctantly, on Henry's part, the ceremony went ahead on 6<sup>th</sup> January 1540.

Eventually, Anne realised that her husband wanted to get rid of her. She knew her life was in danger and co-operated with his wish for a divorce. Henry was relieved and gave her money and property and treated her like a sister. She was often invited back to court. She was the most fortunate of Henry's wives.



Less than twenty days later Henry married Katherine Howard. Katherine was Anne Boleyn's cousin. She was a lively, pretty and kind teenager. Henry described her as a, "a rose without a thorn." By now Henry was nearly 50 and Katherine made him feel young again. However, Katherine had had an affair with Francis Dereham before she married the King. She also had a relationship with her music teacher, Thomas Culpepper. The king found out and had her arrested. He was horrified that she had cheated on him. Dereham and Culpepper were executed in December 1541 and Katherine was beheaded in February 1542.



In 1543 Henry married Katherine Parr. She was really in love with Jane Seymour's brother, Thomas, but didn't dare to refuse the King and so married him on 15<sup>th</sup> July 1543. By now Henry was old and ill. Katherine became his friend and nurse. She was good to his children who all came back to court. However, she had strong ideas of her own and argued with Henry about religion. He ordered her arrest. She burst into tears and Henry changed his mind. She took care not to argue with him again.

Henry died on 28<sup>th</sup> January 1547, possibly from gout. He was succeeded by his son Edward VI. Within months Katherine married Thomas Seymour. She died on 7<sup>th</sup> September 1548 in childbirth.

Why did Henry marry six times?

love  
political alliances  
need for a male heir  
friend and companion  
power

How important are these?

Henry's wives and their fates :-

Catherine of Aragon	Divorced
Anne Boleyn	Beheaded
Jane Seymour	Died
Anne of Cleves	Divorced
Katherine Howard	Beheaded
Katherine Parr	Survived