

Fact Sheet 1: Henry Marries Anne Boleyn (1533)

In **January 1533**, Henry VIII secretly married **Anne Boleyn** in a small ceremony at Whitehall Palace. This was shocking because **he was still legally married to Catherine of Aragon**, his wife of 24 years. Henry had already begun breaking from the Catholic Church because Pope Clement VII refused to allow his divorce. In May 1533, the new Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, **officially declared Henry's marriage to Catherine invalid**. He used a Bible verse (Leviticus 20:21) that said a man must not marry his brother's widow. Catherine had first been married to Henry's older brother, Arthur, who died young.

Anne was crowned Queen of England in a grand ceremony at Westminster Abbey on June 1, 1533. Many English people were angry because they loved Catherine and believed Anne was not the true queen. In September 1533, Anne gave birth to a daughter, the future **Queen Elizabeth I**. Henry was furious because **he desperately wanted a son** to inherit his throne. Anne's failure to have a male heir made Henry lose interest in her. By 1536, Henry had fallen in love with **Jane Seymour**, and **Anne was arrested and executed on false charges of treason and adultery**.

This marriage changed England forever. To marry Anne, Henry broke from the Pope and made himself Head of the Church of England. This started the **English Reformation**, a religious revolution that would divide England for decades. Many people were unhappy, but Henry ignored them. He wanted complete control over his kingdom and his personal life, no matter the cost.

Fact Sheet 2: The Act of Supremacy (1534)

In **November 1534**, the English Parliament passed the **Act of Supremacy**, one of the most important laws in English history. This law declared Henry VIII the **Supreme Head of the Church of England**, replacing the Pope. Everyone in England, including priests, nobles, and even ordinary citizens, had to swear an oath accepting Henry's new religious authority. Those who refused were punished severely. Sir **Thomas More**, Henry's former friend and advisor, and Bishop John Fisher were **executed in 1535 for refusing the oath**.

The Church kept most Catholic traditions, but now Henry controlled everything. **He appointed his own bishops and took the taxes that used to go to Rome**. This law allowed Henry to finally make his marriage to Anne Boleyn legal and keep all religious power in his hands. It also gave him an excuse to attack the monasteries, which were loyal to the Pope. Over the next few years, **Henry would close every monastery in England and take their wealth**.

The Act of Supremacy made England completely independent from the Catholic Church. Kings in France and Spain, as well as the Pope, were furious, but Henry did not care. He wanted England to follow his rules, not Rome's. This was the beginning of the **Church of England, a new Protestant church that still exists today**. Henry's decision would lead to religious violence and rebellion, but it also made England a stronger, more independent nation.

Fact Sheet 3: The Dissolution of the Monasteries (1536-1541)

Between **1536** and **1541**, Henry VIII ordered the **destruction of all monasteries in England**. His chief minister, **Thomas Cromwell**, sent inspectors to every religious house to write reports about the monks. Many reports claimed the monks were lazy, corrupt, or breaking their vows. Some of these accusations were true, but many were exaggerated to give Henry an excuse to take the monasteries' wealth.

Over 800 monasteries were closed forever. The monks were sent away with small pensions, and the beautiful buildings were destroyed or sold to Henry's noble friends. This caused terrible **suffering for poor people** because monasteries had provided food, medicine, and education for centuries. In **1536**, a huge **rebellion** called the **Pilgrimage of Grace** broke out in northern England. About 30,000 people demanded that Henry bring back the monasteries and stop his religious changes. Henry pretended to listen but later **arrested and executed the rebel leaders**.

By 1540, every monastery in England was gone. Henry became incredibly rich from their gold, land, and treasures, but ordinary people lost the help they needed. The destruction of the monasteries was one of the biggest changes in English history. It ended Catholicism as the main religion in England and made Henry the richest king in Europe. But it also caused poverty, rebellion, and lasting anger among the people.

Fact Sheet 4: Henry's Death and Legacy (1547)

Henry VIII died on January 28, 1547, at the age of **55**. He was very **sick**—extremely overweight, with painful leg wounds that would not heal. His nine-year-old son, **Edward VI**, became king, but because he was too young, Protestant advisors ruled for him. Henry was buried in St. George's Chapel at Windsor Castle, next to his third wife, Jane Seymour, the mother of his only son.

Henry's will stated that if Edward died without children, his daughter **Mary** (Catherine of Aragon's child) would become queen. If Mary had no heirs, then **Elizabeth** (Anne Boleyn's daughter) would rule. **All three would eventually wear the crown**, leading England through years of **religious conflict between Catholics and Protestants**.

Henry left behind a **completely changed England**. There was no more Pope—the king now controlled the Church of England. All the monasteries were gone, their wealth taken by the crown. The monarchy was more powerful than ever, with the king ruling both the government and religion. Henry's reign was brutal and selfish, but it made England independent from Catholic Europe. Later, his daughter **Elizabeth I** would use Henry's changes to build a strong, Protestant England that defied the Pope and Spain. Henry's decisions shaped English history for centuries.