

'Divorced, beheaded, died; divorced, beheaded, survived': this saying sums up the relationship Henry VIII had with his wives. Henry VIII's wives were: Catherine of Aragon, Anne Boleyn, Jane Seymour, Anne of Cleves, Catherine Howard, and Catherine Parr. Catherine Parr. Catherine Howard, and Catherine Parr. Catherine of Aragon, Anne Boleyn, Jane Seymour, Anne of Cleves, Catherine Howard, and Catherine Howard, and Catherine Parr. Catherine of Aragon Soon after his accession, in June 1509, Henry married his brother's widow, Catherine of Aragon. Their marriage was carried out in order to strengthen the relation between England and Spain. In fact, Catherine was the daughter of Isabella I of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon, and was born on December 16, 1485. During her childhood, the young Catherine travelled much around Spain since her parents were fighting. against the Muslims in Granada (Lewis 2017). As a consequence, she was not able to officially engage her time studying and educating herself. Nonetheless, she was mentored by 'European humanists' (Lewis 2017). The young girl was able to speak in several languages including Latin, Spanish, English, and French; and was also instructed in theology and philosophy. In 1498, a marriage was arranged between Catherine and the Prince Arthur, and their union was officialise in November 1501. However, their marriage was arranged between Catherine and the Prince Arthur, and their union was officialise in November 1501. However, their marriage was arranged between Catherine gave birth to six children, yet, only one of them survived: Mary I of England. Henry VIII was desperate for a male heir, and not having obtained one by Catherine, he sought to annul their marriage. The marriage is annulment was not easy to obtain: in fact Cardinal Thomas Wolsey attempted to gain the pope's permission for divorce. However, Catherine did not want to divorce her husband and thanks to the 'speech of her life', the pope did not give such concession. As a consequence, Thomas Cromwell took the lead and suggested the king to break with the Church of England through the Act of Supremacy (1534). Thanks to Cromwell's intervention, Henry VIII managed to divorce from Catherine of Aragon. They had been married for over twenty years. Anne Boleyn Born in 1501, Anne Boleyn is the indirect cause of the Reformation in England. She was the daughter of Thomas Boleyn, the Earl of Wiltshire. She carried out her education in the Netherlands and in France, were she became main of honour of Francis I's wife. Although Anne was engaged to the 5th Earl of Northumberland, Cardinal Wolsey refused to marry them, and Anne was obliged to make her way back to her home in Hever Castle. In 1526, Henry VIII was struck by Anne's 'beauty and charm' (Pettinger 2017). The king tried to seduce the young girl numerous times, but she refused his 'advances' since she did not want to become a mistress Anne claimed she would succumb to his love only if Henry ended his marriage with Catherine of Aragon. The future queen of England supported the reform movement as well as William Tyndale's translation of the Bible (it is necessary to remember, however, that Henry VIII was Catholic and strongly averse to Protestantism). In 1528, Anne contracted the sweating disease and almost died. On January 25, 1533, Henry VIII and Anne married, and she was crowned queen of England six months later. In September of the same year, the queen gave birth to Elizabeth I, and all her following pregnancies were miscarriages. The love affair between the two 'quickly soured' not only because Anne was not able to birth a male heir, but also because she disagreed with the religious reforms that the king was enacting (Pettinger 2017). In April 1536, Anne Boleyn was arrested for high treason: she was charged with the accuse of 'adultery, incest, and plotting to kill the king' (Pettinger 2017). In April 1536, Anne Boleyn was arrested for high treason: she was charged with the accuse of 'adultery, incest, and plotting to kill the king' (Pettinger 2017). accusations above, she was executed and her last words were 'Jesus receive my soul; O Lord God have pity on my soul' (Pettinger 2017). Jane Seymour Jane Seymour Jane Seymour Jane Seymour Jane 'was known for her quiet and sooting manner' (English History), and, although the king knew who she was, he became enamoured with her in 1536 and Henry's son was greatly celebrated all throughout England. However, Jane did not live long, and 'the christening ceremony had begun in her bed chamber' (English History). Before dying, the queen suffered from weakness, exhaustion, high fever, and delirium. According to some historians, Jane died because of puerperal sepsis, i.e. childbed fever. At her death, Jane received a solemn funeral and her body was embalmed. Anne of Cleves Following Jane Seymour's premature death, the king wore black until 1538, and did not marry consisted in the fact that the king had gained a mission to his closest advisors: that of travelling Europe with the intention of finding him a new consort. Thomas Cromwell suggested Anne of Cleves as a possible candidate: she was German and fully supported Protestantism. According to Cromwell, such union would reinforce the reformation in England. Therefore, on the January 6, 1540, the two officially married: however, Henry declared that he was not able to consume the marriage since he did not find her attractive. He was repulsed by her, and could not get around fulfilling his marital duties: in fact, when Cromwell asked the king 'how liked you the Queen?', he replied 'I liked her before not well, but now I like her much worse'. Protestants, Henry VIII executed Cromwell on July 28, 1540. Henry VIII divorced from her only four months after their marriage. However the two consorts divorced, Henry VIII was incredibly grateful for Anne's collaboration, and decided to reward her by offering her manors, estates, and an income of three-thousand pounds per year The king also defined her as a 'good sister' and guaranteed her 'precedence over all ladies in England, except the Queen and [his] daughters' (Hanson 2015). Furthermore, thanks to the financial stability that her divorce had brought her, Anne spent much of her money on gambling and beautiful gowns. She was also allowed to visit the king, spend time with his children and was always welcomed to his banquets. Katherine Howard Katherine is perhaps one of the most controversial wives of Henry VIII. In fact, she is known to having had numerous love affairs. on July 28, 1540. On the same day of Thomas Cromwell's execution, Henry VIII married Katherine Howard, a beautiful and very young woman: she was gifted expensive jewellery by her new husband, and she officially became queen on August 8. However, little did Henry know about her past: in fact, when she lived in her grandmother's residence at Tilney, she entertained a love affair with her music teacher, Henry Manox; and subsequently with Francis Dereham. Moreover, she entertained an amorous liaison with one of her husband's favourites, Thomas Culpeper, and brought to court her former lovers Manox and Dereham. On November 2, 1541, Katherine's reckless behaviour was denounced by Archbishop Cranmer to Henry VIII. Howard was not forgiven by the king, and heavy charges were imposed upon her: in fact, she was accused of (I) 'unchastity' before her marriage; (II) the 'concealing' of sexual relations before her marriage (considered treason); (III) and engaging in adulterous behaviours (also considered treason); (III) and engaging in adulterous behaviours (also considered treason); (III) and engaging in adulterous behaviours (also considered treason); (III) and engaging in adulterous behaviours (also considered treason); (III) and engaging in adulterous behaviours (also considered treason); (III) and engaging in adulterous behaviours (also considered treason); (III) and engaging in adulterous behaviours (also considered treason); (III) and engaging in adulterous behaviours (also considered treason); (III) and engaging in adulterous behaviours (also considered treason); (III) and engaging in adulterous behaviours (also considered treason); (III) and engaging in adulterous behaviours (also considered treason); (III) and engaging in adulterous behaviours (also considered treason); (III) and engaging in adulterous behaviours (also considered treason); (III) and engaging in adulterous behaviours (also considered treason); (III) and engaging in adulterous behaviours (also considered treason); (III) and engaging in adulterous behaviours (also considered treason); (III) and engaging in adulterous behaviours (also considered treason); (III) and engaging in adulterous behaviours (also considered treason); (III) and engaging in adulterous behaviours (also considered treason); (III) and engaging in adulterous behaviours (also considered treason); (III) and engaging in adulterous behaviours (also considered treason); (III) and engaging in adulterous behaviours (also considered treason); (III) and engaging in adulterous behaviours (also considered treason); (III) and engaging in adulterous behaviours (also considered treason); (III) and engaging in adulterous behaviours (also considered treason); (III) and engaging in adulterous behaviours (also considered treason); (III) and engaging in adulterous behaviours (also considered tr December 10 of the same year, they were executed: their heads were exposed on London Bridge. On January 21, 1542, Katherine Howard was condemned to death with the charge of treason. Therefore, on February 10, she was brought to the Tower of London, and three days later, she was beheaded and buried in the charge of St. Peter ad Vincula. Catherine Parr Born in 1512, Catherine was the daughter of Sir Thomas Parr (who was a descendant of Edward III), and Maud Green, one of Catherine about learning and had strong knowledge of French, Italian, and Latin. Throughout her life,
Catherine married four times. Nonetheless, on July 12, 1543, she became Henry VIII's final wife: the two held a 'small ceremony at Hampton Court Palace' (Ridgway no date). Thanks to her influence, Henry VIII's final wife: the two held a 'small ceremony at Hampton Court Palace' (Ridgway no date). his wife. Nonetheless, 'the quick-thinking Catherine Parr managed to save her head by pleading with Henry and persuading him that she had only argued with him in an attempt to help him forget about the pain caused by his leg ulcer' (Ridgway no date). In 1547, the king died, and Catherine Parr married her former lover Thomas Seymour. Bibliography [1.] Frable, B. (1998). Catherine of Aragon. Queen of England. [online] Available from: [2.] Lewis, J.J. (2017). Catherine of Aragon - Early Life and First Marriage. [online] Available from: [2.] Lewis, J.J. (2017). Biography of Katerhine Howard of England. Thought Co. [3.] Lewis, J.J. (2017). Catherine of Aragon - Early Life and First Marriage. [online] Available from: [4.] Pettinger, T. (2017). Biography of Anne Boleyn. [online] Available from: [5.] Ridgway, C. (no date) Catherine Parr. The Anne Boleyn Files. Image sources: [1.] [2.] [3.] [4.] 27s reconciliation with Anne Boleyn Collection%29, JPG [8.] 2C attributed to Master John.jpg (Clockwise from yellow) Divorced, Boleyn Collection%29, JPG [8.] 2C attributed to Master John.jpg (Clockwise from yellow) Divorced, Boleyn Collection%29, JPG [8.] 2C attributed to Master John.jpg (Clockwise from yellow) Divorced, Boleyn Collection%29, JPG [8.] 2C attributed to Master John.jpg (Clockwise from yellow) Divorced, Boleyn Collection%29, JPG [8.] 2C attributed to Master John.jpg (Clockwise from yellow) Divorced, Boleyn Collection%29, JPG [8.] 2C attributed to Master John.jpg (Clockwise from yellow) Divorced, Boleyn Collection%29, JPG [8.] 2C attributed to Master John.jpg (Clockwise from yellow) Divorced, Boleyn Collection%29, JPG [8.] 2C attributed to Master John.jpg (Clockwise from yellow) Divorced, Boleyn Collection%29, JPG [8.] 2C attributed to Master John.jpg (Clockwise from yellow) Divorced, Boleyn Collection%29, JPG [8.] 2C attributed to Master John.jpg (Clockwise from yellow) Divorced, Boleyn Collection%29, JPG [8.] 2C attributed to Master John.jpg (Clockwise from yellow) Divorced, Boleyn Collection%29, JPG [8.] 2C attributed to Master John.jpg (Clockwise from yellow) Divorced, Boleyn Collection%29, JPG [8.] 2C attributed to Master John.jpg (Clockwise from yellow) Divorced, Boleyn Collection%29, JPG [8.] 2C attributed to Master John.jpg (Clockwise from yellow) Divorced, Boleyn Collection%29, JPG [8.] 2C attributed to Master John.jpg (Clockwise from yellow) Divorced, Boleyn Collection%29, JPG [8.] 2C attributed to Master John.jpg (Clockwise from yellow) Divorced, Boleyn Collection%29, JPG [8.] 2C attributed to Master John.jpg (Clockwise from yellow) Divorced, Boleyn Collection%29, JPG [8.] 2C attributed to Master John.jpg (Clockwise from yellow) Divorced, Boleyn Collection%29, JPG [8.] 2C attributed to Master John.jpg (Clockwise from yellow) Divorced, Boleyn Collection%29, JPG [8.] 2C attributed to beheaded, died, divorced, beheaded, survived. | (Background) Peter Zelei Images/Moment/Getty Images; (Paper doll outfits) The Print Collector/Getty Images the love life of King Henry VIII, who ruled England from 1509 to 1547, quite literally changed the course of history. Though the story of his six wives has been told in countless books, shows, and other media, the most memorable version just might be the shortest: "divorced, beheaded, died, divorced, beheaded, survived." Catchy as it is, that slant-rhymed summary leaves more than a few questions unanswered. For example: What were their names? So here's a slightly more detailed rundown of the infamous Tudor king's three Catherines, two Annes, and one Jane.King Henry VIII's Wives in Order1. Catherine of Aragon (Christopher Columbus's loop of a portrait of Catherine of Aragon (Christopher Columbus's loop) of a portrait of Catherine of Aragon (Christopher Columbus's loop) of a portrait of Catherine of Aragon (Christopher Columbus's loop) of a portrait of Catherine of Aragon (Christopher Columbus's loop) of a portrait of Catherine of Aragon (Christopher Columbus's loop) of a portrait of Catherine of Aragon (Christopher Columbus's loop) of a portrait of Catherine of Aragon (Christopher Columbus's loop) of a portrait of Catherine of Aragon (Christopher Columbus's loop) of a portrait of Catherine of Aragon (Christopher Columbus's loop) of a portrait of Catherine of Aragon (Christopher Columbus's loop) of a portrait of Catherine of Aragon (Christopher Columbus's loop) of a portrait of Catherine of Aragon (Christopher Columbus's loop) of a portrait of Catherine of Aragon (Christopher Columbus's loop) of a portrait of Catherine of Aragon (Christopher Columbus's loop) of a portrait of Catherine of Aragon (Christopher Columbus's loop) of a portrait of Catherine of Aragon (Christopher Columbus's loop) of a portrait of Catherine of Aragon (Christopher Columbus's loop) of a portrait of Catherine of Aragon (Christopher Columbus's loop) of a portrait of Catherine of Aragon (Christopher Columbus's loop) of a portrait of Catherine of Aragon (Christopher Columbus's loop) of a portrait of Catherine of Aragon (Christopher Columbus's loop) of a portrait of Catherine of Aragon (Christopher Columbus's loop) of a portrait of Catherine of Aragon (Christopher Columbus's loop) of a portrait of Catherine of Aragon (Christopher Columbus's loop) of a portrait of Catherine of Aragon (Christopher Columbus's loop) of a portrait of Catherine of Aragon (Christopher Columbus's loop) of a portrait of Catherine of Aragon (Christopher Columbus's loop) of a portrait of Catherine of Aragon (Christopher Columbus's loop) of a portrait of Catherine of Aragon (Christopher Columbus's loop) eventual sponsors) and married off to King Henry VII's eldest son and heir, Arthur, in 1501. Upon Arthur's death the very next year, Catherine got engaged to Arthur's death the very next year shy of 18; she was 23. Though their relationship was strong—Catherine even ruled England for a few years while Henry was off warring with France—they were wretchedly unsuccessful in growing their family. Just one of their six children (Mary Tudor, a.k.a. Mary I) lived beyond infancy, and Henry VIII's impatience for a male heir soon eclipsed his love for Catherine. In 1527, he asked Pope Clement VII for an annulment, claiming that Catherine's previous marriage to his brother made his own current one unlawful in the eyes of God. Catherine maintained that she'd never consummated her union with Arthur, and the pope-mainly worried about the political consequences of angering Catherine's nephew, Holy Roman Emperor Charles V—denied Henry's petition.So Henry broke from the Catholic Church and fashioned himself head of the Church of England in order to legitimize his divorce from Catherine and his marriage to her lady-in-waiting, Anne Boleyn. Catherine was both banished from court and prevented from seeing her daughter, and the Church of England officially annulled her marriage in 1533. She lived out her final few years at Kimbolton Castle in Cambridgeshire and died, possibly from cancer, in January 1536 at age 50.2. Anne Boleyn (Beheaded)Anne Boleyn as depicted on a cigarette card issued by John Player & Sons in 1935. | Print Collector/GettyImagesAnne Boleyn's birth year is unknown: Some historians date it to 1501 or thereabouts, though others have argued for 1507. Her father, Thomas Boleyn, was an influential earl and a knight in Henry VIII's court; her mother, Elizabeth Howard, was one of Catherine of Aragon's ladies-in-waiting. Anne was educated under royalty in present-day Belgium and then France, and by the time she joined her family back in English court in 1522, her sister, Mary, had already become a mistress of Henry VIII. The sisters were both ladies-in-waiting to Catherine of Aragon, and Anne—a skilled dancer with an alluring French air about her—soon caught the king's eye. They started courting around 1526, kicking off Henry VIII's storied battle to make her his second wife. They married in secret in January 1533, before Henry VIII's first marriage had even officially been annulled. That finally happened in May, and Anne was crowned queen the following week. She
and Henry VIII's first marriage had even officially been annulled. September.But Anne's two subsequent pregnancies ended in tragedy: She had a miscarriage in 1536. With Henry VIII growing ever desperate for a male heir, his close advisor, Thomas Cromwell, began mounting an adultery case against Anne. She was imprisoned in the Tower of London in early May 1536, and convicted of adultery, treason, and even incest (one of her purported paramours was her own brother) during a trial that lacked any evidence of her alleged crimes. On May 19, Anne was beheaded.3. Jane Seymour (Died)A portrait of Jane Seymour by Hans Holbein the Younger, circa 1536. | Kunsthistorisches Museum, Wikimedia Commons // Public DomainThe day after Anne's death, Henry VIII got engaged to Jane Seymour, who had served as a lady-in-waiting to Anne Boleyn and Catherine of Aragon before her. Jane was devout, docile, and very virtuous, once even turning down money from Henry on the grounds that "she had no greater riches in the world than her honour, which she would not injure for a thousand deaths." Her moralistic streak appealed to Henry, and they married on May 30, 1536. Jane's motto was "Bound to obey and serve," which she carried out in a big way by giving Henry to reconcile with Mary Tudor, who had been ousted from court along with her mother. Jane and Mary, only about eight years apart in age, remained close throughout Jane's tenure as queen. Jane Seymour is often cited as Henry's favorite wife, and he definitely did love her. But we have no way of knowing whether their relationship would have soured in some way had she lived longer: She died from childbirth complications less than two weeks after Edward was born.4. Anne of Cleves (Divorced)A portrait of Anne of Cleves (Divorced)A portrait of Anne of Cleves by Hans Holbein the Younger, circa 1539. | Heritage Images/GettyImagesHenry soon began to worry that the Holy Roman Catholic ally France were plotting against England, which compelled him to marry a woman who could earn him some allies of his own. Thomas Cromwell chose the bride-to-be—Anne of Cleves, from the powerful German y to paint a portrait of her. Henry agreed to the union after seeing the image, and 24-year-old Anne met her 48-year-old future husband in England in January 1540. Though Henry was much less impressed with her appearance in person, he went through with the marriage for political reasons anyway. But they never consummated their union, and when the threat of war fizzled out, Henry decided to divorce her. Their annulment was finalized on July 9, 1540. Anne didn't protest—a shrewd move that set her up to live out the rest of her life in luxury and comfort, free from all the queenly pressures that had led to the downfall of three wives before her. Henry VIII gave her a liberal annual stipend, two houses in England, and several other properties to rent out. She remained in the country stayed on good terms with her ex-husband—they even called each other "brother" and ended up becoming friends with Elizabeth I. Though Anne was only 41 years old when she died in 1557, she had already outlived Henry by a decade, and she's the only wife of his to be buried at Westminster Abbey.5. Catherine Howard (Beheaded)A portrait by Hans Holbein the Younger believed to be of Catherine Howard, circa 1540. | Royal Collection, Wikimedia Commons // Public DomainFor wife number five, Henry VIII returned to his M.O. of selecting from the powerful Duke of Norfolk and a first cousin of Anne Boleyn. Catherine's exact birth date is unknown, but she may have been born as late as 1524—meaning she was likely still a teenager when the middle-aged monarch married her on July 28, 1540, mere weeks after the ink had dried on his and Anne's annulment papers. During her (even) younger years, Catherine had been sexually abused by her music teacher—in her words, she "suffered him at sundry times to handle and touch the secret parts of [her] body"—and later had sexual relationships with her grandmother's secretary, Francis Dereham, and one of Henry's courtiers, Thomas Culpeper. In short, Catherine hadn't entered her marriage to Henry as a virgin, and she's also believed to have continued her affair with Culpeper during her marriage. When the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer—who generally had it out for Catherine's Catholic family—clued Henry into his wife's history in October 1541, the king launched a full investigation, and Catherine herself copped to the accusations the following month. She was stripped of her title and beheaded at the Tower of London on February 13, 1542. Modern historians have pointed out that Catherine's young age essentially makes it impossible to hold her accountable for her relationships, all of which were with significantly older and more powerful men. But at least Culpeper and Dereham didn't live happily ever after: They were executed for treason a couple months before Catherine's death.6. Catherine Parr (Survived)A copy of a portrait of Catherine Parr, born in 1512, was the daughter of one of Henry VIII's advisors, Sir Thomas Parr, and one of Catherine of Aragon's ladies-in-waiting, Maud. (In fact, she was actually named after the queen.) By spring 1543, she was twice widowed, working in Mary Tudor's household, and looking forward to marrying Thomas Seymour (brother of the late Jane Seymour). Unfortunately, Henry VIII wanted her for himself, and Catherine, knowing that becoming queen would benefit her loved ones, eventually agreed to the union. They said "I do" on July 12, 1543. Catherine became a member of the family. She was also a wonderful stepmother to Henry's two younger children, Elizabeth and Edward, and an eager student of theology: In 1545, she even published a book called Prayers or Meditations—England's first English-language book plainly credited to a female author. Her Protestant faith skewed radical, according to the standards of the era, and English conservatives did try to get her executed for heresy in 1546. But Catherine convinced Henry that she was innocent, and he ultimately did away with the warrant against her. Overall, Catherine was a dedicated partner and pretty successful queen. Henry VIII died on January 28, 1547, following a period of deteriorating health, and Catherine married Thomas Seymour later that year. Their marital bliss was short-lived. For one thing, Thomas caused a public scandal by trying and failing to woo the teenage princess Elizabeth, who he thought would be a more strategic match for him. Then, after Catherine gave birth to their daughter in late August 1548, she fell ill with puerperal fever and died within the week. Save shows to listen to later, subscribe to your favourites and get fresh recommendations everyday. View all Stations & SchedulesLISTEN NOWMixes & sets to get you festival-ready (Clockwise from yellow) Divorced, beheaded, survived. | (Background) Peter Zelei Images/Moment/Getty Images; (Paper doll outfits) The Print Collector/Getty ImagesThe love life of King Henry VIII, who ruled England from 1509 to 1547, quite literally changed the course of history. Though the story of his six wives has been told in countless books, shows, and other media, the most memorable version just might be the shortest: "divorced, beheaded, died, divorced, beheaded, died, divorced, beheaded history." uestions unanswered. For example: What were their names? So here's a slightly more detailed rundown of the infamous Tudor king's three Catherine of Aragon (Divorced)A copy of a portrait of Catherine of Aragon with her pet monkey by Lucas Horenbout, circa 1525 Heritage Images/GettyImagesCatherine of Aragon was born in 1485 to Spanish co-rulers Isabella I of Castile and Ferdinand II of Aragon (Christopher Columbus's eventual sponsors) and married off to King Henry VII's eldest son and heir, Arthur, in 1501. Upon Arthur's death the very next year, Catherine got engaged to Arthur's younger brother: the future Henry VIII. Due to a protracted dowry dispute with Catherine's father, the two didn't tie the knot until Henry became king of England in 1509. He was just shy of 18; she was 23. Though their relationship was strong—Catherine even ruled England for a few years while Henry was off warring with France—they were wretchedly unsuccessful in growing their family. Just one of their six children (Mary Tudor, a.k.a. Mary I) lived beyond infancy, and Henry VIII's impatience for a male heir soon eclipsed his love for Catherine. In 1527, he asked Pope Clement VII for an annulment, claiming that Catherine's previous marriage to his brother made his own current one unlawful in the eyes of God. Catherine maintained that she'd never consummated her union with Arthur, and the pope-mainly worried about the political consequences of angering Catherine's nephew, Holy Roman Emperor Charles V-denied Henry's petition. So Henry broke from the Catholic Church and fashioned himself head of the Church of England in order to legitimize historical consequences of angering Catherine's nephew, Holy Roman Emperor Charles V-denied Henry's petition. divorce from Catherine and his marriage to her lady-in-waiting, Anne Boleyn. Catherine was both banished from court and prevented from seeing her daughter, and the Church of England officially annulled her marriage in 1533. She lived out her final few years at Kimbolton Castle in Cambridgeshire and died, possibly from cancer, in January 1536 at age 50.2. Anne Boleyn (Beheaded)Anne Boleyn as depicted on a cigarette card issued by John Player & Sons in 1935. | Print Collector/GettyImagesAnne Boleyn, was an influential earl and a knight in Henry VIII's court; her mother, Elizabeth Howard, was one of Catherine of Aragon's ladies-in-waiting. 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Catherine of Aragon, and Anne—a skilled dancer with an alluring French air about her—soon caught the king's eye. They started courting around 1526, kicking off Henry VIII's first marriage had even officially been annulled. That finally happened in May, and Anne was crowned queen the following week. She and Henry VIII welcomed their first child, the future Queen Elizabeth I, in September. But Anne's two subsequent pregnancies ended in tragedy: She had a miscarriage in 1534 and a stillborn baby boy in 1536. With Henry VIII growing ever desperate for a male heir, his close advisor, Thomas Cromwell, began mounting an adultery case against Anne. She was imprisoned in the Tower of London in early May 1536, and convicted of adultery, treason, and even incest (one of her purported paramours was her own brother) during a trial that lacked any evidence of her alleged crimes. On May 19, Anne was beheaded.3. Jane Seymour (Died) portrait of Jane Seymour by Hans Holbein the Younger, circa 1536. | Kunsthistorisches Museum, Wikimedia Commons // Public DomainThe day after Anne's death, Henry VIII got engaged to Jane Seymour, who had served as a lady-in-waiting to Anne Boleyn and Catherine of Aragon before her. Jane was devout, docile, and very virtuous, once even turning down money from Henry on the grounds that "she had no greater riches in the world than her honour, which she would not injure for a thousand deaths." Her moralistic streak appealed to Henry, and they married on May 30, 1536. Jane's motto was "Bound to obey and serve," which she carried out in a big way by giving Henry his muchcoveted male heir: the future Edward VI, born on October 12, 1537. She's also credited with convincing Henry to reconcile with Mary Tudor, who had been ousted from court along with her mother. Jane and Mary, only about eight years apart in age, remained close throughout Jane's tenure as queen. 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Though Anne was only 41 years old when she died in 1557, she had already outlived Henry by a decade, and she's the only wife of his to be buried at Westminster Abbey.5. Catherine Howard, circa 1540. | Royal Collection, Wikimedia Commons // Public DomainFor wife number five, Henry VIII returned to his M.O. of selecting from the pool of his current gueen's ladies-in-waiting. One of Anne of Cleves's attendants was Catherine Howard, a niece of the powerful Duke of Norfolk and a first cousin of Anne Bolevn. Catherine's exact birth date is unknown, but she may have been born as late as 1524—meaning she was likely still a teenager when the middle-aged monarch married her on July 28, 1540, mere weeks after the ink had dried on his and Anne's annulment papers. During her (even) younger years, Catherine had been sexually abused by her music teacher—in her words, she "suffered him at sundry times to handle and touch the secret parts of [her] body"—and later had sexual relationships with her grandmother's secretary, Francis Dereham, and one of Henry's courtiers, Thomas Culpeper. In short, Catherine hadn't entered her marriage to Henry as a virgin, and she's also believed to have continued her affair with Culpeper during her marriage. When the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer—who generally had it out for Catherine's Catholic family—clued Henry into his wife's history in October 1541, the king launched a full investigation, and Catherine herself copped to the accusations the following month. She was stripped of her title and beheaded at the Tower of London on February 13, 1542. Modern historians have pointed out that Catherine's young age essentially makes it here to be accusations the following month. impossible to hold her accountable for her relationships, all of which were with significantly older and more powerful men. But at least Culpeper and Dereham didn't live happily ever after: They were executed for treason a couple months before Catherine's death.6. Catherine's death.6. Catherine Parr (Survived)A copy of a portrait of Catherine Parr by Master John, circa 1545. | Historical Picture Archive/GettyImagesCatherine Parr, born in 1512, was the daughter of one of Henry VIII's advisors, Sir Thomas Parr, and one of Catherine of Aragon's ladies-in-waiting, Maud. (In fact, she was actually named after the queen.) By spring 1543, she was twice widowed, working in Mary Tudor's household, and looking forward to marrying Thomas Seymour (brother of the late Jane Seymour). Unfortunately, Henry VIII wanted her for himself, and Catherine, knowing that becoming queen would benefit her loved ones, eventually agreed to the union. They said "I do" on July 12, 1543. Catherine was only about four years older than Mary Tudor, and the two stayed close once Catherine became a member of the family. She was also a wonderful stepmother to Henry's two younger children, Elizabeth and Edward, and an eager student of theology: In 1545, she even published a book called Prayers or Meditations—England's first English-language book plainly credited to a female author. Her Protestant faith skewed radical according to the standards of the era, and English conservatives did try to get her executed for heresy in 1546. But Catherine was a dedicated partner and pretty successful queen. Henry VIII died on January 28, 1547, following a period of deteriorating health, and Catherine married Thomas Seymour later that year. Their marital bliss was short-lived. For one thing, Thomas caused a public scandal by trying and failing to woo the teenage princess Elizabeth, who he thought would be a more strategic match for him. Then, after Catherine gave birth to their daughter in late August 1548, she fell ill with puerperal fever and died within the week. Henry VIII: Britain's most famous king. Big, bold and brash, he is the epitome of 'Merrie England'. Ruling between 1509 and 1547, his marriages to a succession of six women became something of a Tudor soap opera and probably his most talked-about legacy. So, as king of England and one of Europe's most eligible royals, what did he want in a wife, and, more specifically, a queen? A family portrait of the first Tudor kings by Remi van Leemput, painted 1669. Clockwise from back left: Henry VIII's parents Henry VIII's parents to the first Tudor kings by Remi van Leemput, painted 1669. continuing the royal line and securing the kingdom. It was probably the queen's most fundamental responsibility. Henry was only the second Tudor monarch, and it was a dynasty founded primarily on conquest rather than heritage. A female heir was not good enough - in England there'd never been a ruling queen and a daughter's accession could be challenged.Catherine of Aragon, his first wife, became pregnant six times. Only one pregnancy produced a child that survived to adulthood - a daughter, Mary. This became intolerable to Henry. In his crusade for a male heir he divorced her, creating the Church of England to do so.Unfortunately, Anne Boleyn, the woman he married instead, also only one pregnancy produced a child that survived to adulthood - a daughter, Mary. This became intolerable to Henry. In his crusade for a male heir he divorced her, creating the Church of England to do so.Unfortunately, Anne Boleyn, the woman he married instead, also only one pregnancy produced a child that survived to adulthood - a daughter, Mary. This became intolerable to Henry. 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daughter, the woman he married instead, also only a daughter, the woman he married instead, also only a daughter, the woman he married instead, also only a daughter, the woman he married instead, also only a daughter, the woman he married instead, also only a daughter, the woman he married instead, also only a daughter, the woman he married instead, also only a daughter, the woman he married instead, also only a daughter, the woman he married inste provided him with a daughter - Elizabeth. To make matters worse for Anne, one of the children she miscarried was believed to have had a deformity. This was associated with unfaithful or abnormal sexual practices and signalled the beginning of the end for her. She was executed in 1536. When Henry finally did father a healthy son, Edward, thee have had a deformity. celebration was followed by sorrow. Jane Seymour, his third wife, died of postnatal complications 12 days later. A family portrait of the first Tudor kings by Remi van Leemput, painted 1669. Clockwise from back left: Henry VIII's parents Henry VIII's parents Henry VIII's parents Henry VII and Queen Elizabeth, Jane Seymour, Edward VI as Prince of Wales, and Henry VIII's parents Henry VIII's parents Henry VIII's parents Henry VII and Queen Elizabeth, Jane Seymour, Edward VI as Prince of Wales, and Henry VIII's parents Henry VIII's parents Henry VII and Queen Elizabeth, Jane Seymour, Edward VI as Prince of Wales, and Henry VIII's parents Henry VII and Queen Elizabeth, Jane Seymour, Edward VI as Prince of Wales, and Henry VIII's parents Henry VII and Queen Elizabeth, Jane Seymour, Edward VI as Prince of Wales, and Henry VIII's parents Henry VIII's parents Henry VII and Queen Elizabeth, Jane Seymour, Edward VI as Prince of Wales, and Henry VIII's parents Henry VII and Queen Elizabeth, Jane Seymour, Edward VI as Prince of Wales, and Henry VIII's parents Henry VII and Queen Elizabeth, Jane Seymour, Edward VI as Prince of Wales, and Henry VIII's parents Henry VIII's parents Henry VII and Queen Elizabeth, Jane Seymour, Edward VI as Prince of Wales, and Henry VIII's parents Henry VII's pare British School (c18th Century). Henry liked beautiful women. A desirable queen was an asset, and it was expected that a king of his stature should have an attractive wife. Anne Boleyn was considered highly alluring. Her striking dark looks and sophisticated manners from the French court enchanted the king. They married in a secret ceremony in 1533 with Anne already pregnant. Catherine Howard, Henry's fifth wife, was perceived to be beautiful, young and innocent. She was only about 19 when they married and Henry called her his "rose without a thorn". Henry had never met Anne of Cleves, wife number four, before she landed in England to be his wife. Tempted into marrying her after seeing a beautiful portrait by Hans Holbein, he was disappointed to discover she wasn't as enchanting as he'd anticipated. He famously went on to call her the "Flanders Mare". The marriage was annulled almost immediately on the grounds it was never consummated. It was claimed he'd chosen to wait whilst he ensured she wasn't contracted to marry someone else. However, Henry treated Anne kindly after the annulment and they stayed on good terms. Anne Boleyn by British School (c18th Century). Cranmer Endeavouring to Obtain a Confession of Guilt from Catherine Howard by William Lindsay Windus (1849). Just being beautiful was not enough - Henry's wives had to be loyal, trustworthy and faithful too. As king, Henry had a reputation, a court and a kingdom to uphold. Any indiscretions - alleged or otherwise - had to be dealt with severely. For a queen, there was an etiquette to navigate between being attractive to courtiers, but definitely not available to them. Both executed because of their extra-marital activities. Catherine's dalliance with courtier Thomas Culpeper earned her a conviction for adultery and treason. Henry is said to have publicly cried on hearing she'd been unfaithful. It also transpired she'd previously been engaged to Francis Dereham, another of Henry's courtiers. She was executed in 1542. Anne Boleyn's reported affairs were even more scandalous. She was accused of not only being unfaithful with other members of court but also her own brother in an apparently desperate attempt to produce a male heir. She denied the accusations to the end. Some historians think the allegations were masterminded by Thomas Cromwell, Henry's 'fixer', to hasten the end of their marriage. She was beheaded at the Tower of London in 1536.Cranmer Endeavouring to Obtain a Confession of Guilt from Catherine Howard by William Lindsay Windus (1849).Language:EnglishCymraegGaeilgeGàidhlig (Clockwise from yellow) Divorced, beheaded, died, divorced, beheaded, survived. | (Background) Peter Zelei Images/Moment/Getty Images; (Paper doll outfits) The Print Collector/Getty Images the course of history. Though the story of his six wives has been told in countless books, shows, and other media, the most memorable version just might be the shortest: "divorced, beheaded, died, divorced, beheaded, survived." Catchy as it is, that slant-rhymed summary leaves more than a few questions unanswered. For example: What were their names? So here's a slightly more detailed rundown of the infamous Tudor king's three Catherines, two Annes, and one Jane.King Henry VIII's Wives in Order1. Catherine of Aragon (Divorced)A copy of a portrait of Catherine of Aragon with her pet monkey by Lucas Horenbout, circa 1525. | Heritage Images/GettyImagesCatherine of Aragon with her pet monkey by Lucas Horenbout, circa 1525. | Heritage Images/GettyImagesCatherine of Aragon with her pet monkey by Lucas Horenbout, circa 1525. | Heritage Images/GettyImagesCatherine of Aragon with her pet monkey by Lucas Horenbout, circa 1525. | Heritage Images/GettyImagesCatherine of Aragon with her pet monkey by Lucas Horenbout, circa 1525. | Heritage Images/GettyImagesCatherine of Aragon with her pet monkey by Lucas Horenbout, circa 1525. | Heritage Images/GettyImagesCatherine of Aragon with her pet monkey by Lucas Horenbout, circa 1525. | Heritage Images/Getty eldest son and heir, Arthur, in 1501. Upon Arthur's death the very next year, Catherine got engaged to Arthur's younger brother: the future Henry VIII. Due to a protracted dowry dispute with Catherine's father, the two didn't tie the knot until Henry became king of England in 1509. He was just shy of 18; she was 23. Though their relationship wasn't end to a protracted dowry dispute with Catherine's father, the two didn't tie the knot until Henry became king of England in 1509. He was just shy of 18; she was 23. Though their relationship wasn't end to a protracted dowry dispute with Catherine's father, the two didn't tie the knot until Henry became king of England in 1509. He was just shy of 18; she was 23. Though their relationship wasn't end to a protracted dowry dispute with Catherine's father, the two didn't tie the knot until Henry became king of England in 1509. He was just shy of 18; she was 23. Though their relationship wasn't end to a protracted dowry dispute with Catherine's father, the two didn't tie the knot until Henry became king of England in 1509. He was just shy of 18; she was 23. 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Mary I) lived beyond infancy, and Henry VIII's impatience for a male heir soon eclipsed his love for Catherine. In 1527, he asked Pope Clement VII for an annulment, claiming that Catherine's previous marriage to his brother made his own current one unlawful in the eyes of God. Catherine maintained that she'd never consummated her union with Arthur, and the pope-mainly worried about the political consequences of angering Catherine's nephew, Holy Roman Emperor Charles V-denied Henry's petition. So Henry broke from the Catholic Church and fashioned himself head of the Church of England in order to legitimize his divorce from court and prevented from seeing her daughter, and the Church of England officially annulled her
marriage in 1533. She lived out her final few years at Kimbolton Castle in Cambridgeshire and died, possibly from cancer, in January 1536 at age 50.2. Anne Boleyn's birth year is unknown: Some historians date it to 1501 or thereabouts, though others have argued for 1507. Her father, Thomas Boleyn, was an influential earl and a knight in Henry VIII's court; her mother, Elizabeth Howard, was one of Catherine of Aragon's ladies-in-waiting. Anne was educated under royalty in present-day Belgium and then France, and by the time she joined her family back in English court in 1522, her sister, Mary, had already become a mistress of Henry VIII. The sisters were both ladies-in-waiting to Catherine of Aragon, and Anne—a skilled dancer with an alluring French air about her—soon caught the king's eye. They started courting around 1526, kicking off Henry VIII's storied battle to make her his second wife. They started courting around 1526, kicking off Henry VIII's storied battle to make her his second wife. They started courting around 1526, kicking off Henry VIII's storied battle to make her his second wife. They started courting around 1526, kicking off Henry VIII's storied battle to make her his second wife. They started courting around 1526, kicking off Henry VIII's storied battle to make her his second wife. They started courting around 1526, kicking off Henry VIII's storied battle to make her his second wife. They started courting around 1526, kicking off Henry VIII's storied battle to make her his second wife. They started courting around 1526, kicking off Henry VIII's storied battle to make her his second wife. They started courting around 1526, kicking off Henry VIII's storied battle to make her his second wife. They started courting around 1526, kicking off Henry VIII's storied battle to make her his second wife. 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She and Henry VIII welcomed their first child, the future Queen Elizabeth I, in September. But Anne's two subsequent pregnancies ended in tragedy: She had a miscarriage in 1534 and a stillborn baby boy in 1536. With Henry VIII growing ever desperate for a male heir, his close advisor, Thomas Cromwell, began mounting an adultery, treason, and even incest (one of her purported paramours was her own brother) during a trial that lacked any evidence of her alleged crimes. On May 19, Anne was beheaded.3. Jane Seymour (Died)A portrait of Jane Seymour (Died)A portrait of Jane Seymour, who had served as a lady-in-waiting to Anne Boleyn and Catherine of Aragon before her. Jane was devout, docile, and very virtuous, once even turning down money from Henry on the grounds that "she had no greater riches in the world than her honour, which she would not injure for a thousand deaths." Her moralistic streak appealed to Henry, and they married on May 30, 1536. Jane's motto was "Bound to obey and serve," which she carried out in a big way by giving Henry to reconcile with Mary Tudor, who had been ousted from court along with her mother. Jane and Mary, only about eight years apart in age, remained close throughout Jane's tenure as queen. Jane Seymour is often cited as Henry's favorite wife, and he definitely did love her. But we have no way of knowing whether their relationship would have soured in some way had she lived longer: She died from childbirth complications less than two weeks after Edward was born.4. Anne of Cleves (Divorced)A portrait of Anne of Cleves by Hans Holbein the Younger, circa 1539. | Heritage Images/GettyImagesHenry soon began to worry that the Holy Roman Empire and its fellow Roman Catholic ally France were plotting against England, which compelled him to marry a woman who could earn him some allies of his own. Thomas Cromwell chose the bride-to-be—Anne of Cleves, from the powerful German Protestant House of Cleves, and 24-year-old Anne met her 48-year-old future husband in England in January 1540. Though Henry was much less impressed with her appearance in person, he went through with the marriage for political reasons anyway. But they never consummated their union, and when the threat of war fizzled out, Henry decided to divorce her. Their annulment was finalized on July 9, 1540. Anne didn't protest—a shrewd move that set her up to live out the rest of her life in luxury and comfort, free from all the queenly pressures that had led to the downfall of three wives before her. Henry VIII gave her a liberal annual stipend, two houses in England, and several other "brother" and "sister"—and ended up becoming friends with Elizabeth I. Though Anne was only 41 years old when she died in 1557, she had already outlived Henry by a decade, and she's the only wife of his to be buried at Westminster Abbey.5. Catherine Howard, circa 1540. Royal Collection, Wikimedia Commons // Public DomainFor wife number five, Henry VIII returned to his M.O. of selecting from the pool of his current queen's ladies-in-waiting. One of Anne of Cleves's attendants was Catherine Howard, a niece of the powerful Duke of Norfolk and a first cousin of Anne Boleyn. Catherine's exact birth date is unknown, but she may have been born as late as 1524—meaning she was likely still a teenager when the middle-aged monarch married her on July 28, 1540, mere weeks after the ink had dried on his and Anne's annulment papers. During her (even) younger years, Catherine had been sexually abused by her music teacher—in her words, she "suffered him at sundry times to handle and touch the secret parts of [her] body"—and later had sexual relationships with her grandmother's secretary, Francis Dereham, and one of Henry's courtiers, Thomas Culpeper. In short, Catherine hadn't entered her marriage to Henry as a virgin, and she's also believed to have continued her affair with Culpeper during her marriage.When the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer-who generally had it out for Catherine's Catholic family-clued Henry into his wife's history in October 1541, the king launched a full investigation, and Catherine herself copped to the accusations the following month. She was stripped of her title and beheaded at the Tower of London on February 13, 1542. Modern historians have pointed out that Catherine's young age essentially makes it impossible to hold her accountable for her relationships, all of which were with significantly older and more powerful men. But at least Culpeper and Dereham didn't live happily ever after: They were executed for treason a couple months before Catherine's death.6. Catherine Parr (Survived)A copy of a portrait of Catherine Parr, born in 1512, was the daughter of one of Henry VIII's advisors, Sir Thomas Parr, and one of Catherine of Aragon's ladies-in-waiting, Maud. (In fact, she was actually named after the queen.) By spring 1543, she was twice widowed, working in Mary Tudor's household, and looking forward to marrying Thomas Seymour (brother of the late Jane Seymour). Unfortunately, Henry VIII wanted her for himself, and Catherine, knowing that becoming queen would benefit her loved ones, eventually agreed to the union. They said "I do" on July 12, 1543. Catherine was only about four years older than Mary Tudor, and the two stayed close once Catherine became a member of the family. She was also a wonderful stepmother to Henry's two younger children, Elizabeth and Edward, and an eager student of theology: In 1545, she even published a book called Prayers or Meditations-England's first English-language book plainly credited to a female author. Her Protestant faith skewed radical, according to the standards of the era, and English conservatives did try to get her executed for heresy in 1546. But Catherine convinced Henry that she was innocent, and he ultimately did away with the warrant against her. Overall, Catherine was a dedicated partner and pretty successful queen. Henry VIII died on January 28, 1547, following a period of deteriorating health, and Catherine married Thomas Seymour later that year. Their marital bliss was short-lived. For one thing, Thomas caused a public scandal by trying and failing to woo the teenage princess Elizabeth, who he thought would be a more strategic match for him. Then, after Catherine gave birth to their daughter in late August 1548, she fell ill with puerperal fever and died within the week. The simplest answer as to what Henry wanted from women may be the most obvious: a son. But a rational response to desiring and not receiving a legitimate male heir, even in the 16th century, wasn't to form your own religion or behead your wife. Furthermore, Henry went through three more wives after his son, the future Edward VI, was born in 1537. Clearly "a son" wasn't the only factor at play in Henry's motivations for taking and discarding wives. So, what was going on? A primer for those that aren't familiar with the history: Katherine of Aragon: A princess of Spain, Henry married her in 1509 just before his 18th birthday. Despite several pregnancies, the only living child she delivered him was a daughter, the future Mary I, in 1516. By 1520 her childbearing years were behind
her, her figure and looks had long been lost due to the physical toll of pregnancy and childbirth and she became increasingly religious. She refused to step aside when Henry sought a divorce, leading to a seven year battle royale that ended in their divorce and England's break from Rome. She died, still maintaining she was the true queen, in 1536. Anne Boleyn: The most famous of Henry's wives and rightfully so. Educated in France and sympathetic to the "reformed" faith, she arrived in England in the early 1520s just as Henry was beginning to contemplate measures to leave Katherine. They began an emotional affair that reportedly stayed non-physical because Anne refused to sleep with Henry before marriage. She managed to keep his attention and inspire the King to move mountains for the better part of a decade before a brief three-year marriage that ended in her arrest and execution on charges of adultery and incest. Like Katherine, she had multiple pregnancies, but only delivered one healthy child, the future Elizabeth I. Jane Seymour: A lady-in-waiting to Katherine and Anne before her, she was approaching spinsterhood at the Tudor court before she caught Henry's eve during one of Anne's pregnancies. Like her predecessor, she refused to sleep with Henry's one and only legitimate son, Edward VI, in October 1537 before succumbing to childbed fever. Anne of Cleves: The second foreign alliance made by Henry, she was shipped in from Cleves, Germany for her Protestant faith by the members of the English government who were keen to sideline the Catholic faction. Henry took a quick dislike of her for reasons that aren't entirely clear, tried to back out of the marriage before the wedding, and then refused to consummate it on the grounds she was too unappealing. Unlike Katherine, Anne didn't fight a divorce and accepted a deal that included an allowance and the role of the "King's sister" at his court. She lived out the rest of her days in England with varying theories as to whether she was happy or unhappy to be rid of Henry. Katherine Howard: Henry's child bride and a younger cousin of Anne Boleyn's, Katherine came to court as a lady-in-waiting to Anne of Cleves. She likely caught the King's eye before or during his fourth marriage and he married her once his divorce was finalized in the summer of 1540. Uneducated, naive and possibly the victim of child abuse, she was essentially framed in the autumn of 1541 and arrested and executed in the winter of 1542 for premarital relationships and adultery. More on that here. Katherine Parr: Henry's last wife and for whom he was her third husband. As a widow, she neatly sidestepped the question as to whether she was a virgin or not and managed to outlive Henry, but only by a hair. She came very close to her own arrest towards the end of 1546 and saved herself with some smooth talking. She is most famous for reconciling Henry with all of his children, but she *should* be known for her authorship and scholarship. She went on to marry Thomas Seymour, Jane Seymour's brother, after Henry's death (because things weren't incestuous enough) and died of childbed fever in 1548. So, there you have it - the six wives of Henry VIII. But the most important woman in Henry's life wasn't one of his two famous daughters: It was the least well-known of the lot, his mother. In my opinion (shout out to Freud), much of this comes back to the mysterious figure of Elizabeth of York. And if you aren't familiar with her trajectory, then I would point you here. Elizabeth of York Henry was, rather famously, born a second son and I think that's key for a number of reasons. First and foremost, it meant that he, unlike his elder brother, Arthur, was brought up by his mother and raised with his sisters. For a man that had such a complicated and violent relationship with women, Henry grew up surrounded by them in a court dominated by their influence. His father, Henry VII, was devoted to his own mother, Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond, and his mother had three sisters who circled in and out of court giving him a plethora of female relations. Secondly, it meant that for the first 10 years of Henry's life, he was intended for the church. The great irony, then, is that he was raised for celibacy and trained for the masculine hierarchy of the Catholic Church. There is sometimes a hesitancy to give Elizabeth too much weight in Henry's life, to offer too much of an armchair analysis. To that I say, why? It's impossible to discuss a man with Henry's marital history and not look at his mother, and then once you've done so and realize she died when he was young, not raise your eyebrows at least a little bit. Her death was a shadow of what was to come. In 1501 Henry first truly careened on to the public stage when Katherine of Aragon arrived in England to marry his brother, Arthur. He stole the show at the wedding banquet by throwing off his doublet and dancing to the delight of the assembled guests. Five months later Arthur was dead, Katherine returned to London and Henry's life was forever altered. No longer was he meant for the church; he was the next king of England. Henry VII and Elizabeth were devastated by their son's death, but (chillingly with hindsight) when comforting her husband Elizabeth told him they were still young and could beget more children. Within weeks she was pregnant again, despite there being a several-year gap since her last pregnancy, indicating she went about having another child solely to provide her husband with a backup male spare. The infant was a girl who didn't live long and Elizabeth died a few days after giving birth on her 37th birthday. In the span of less than a year England had lost its Prince of Wales and its queen, but Henry had lost his brother and his mother. It was the biggest blow and it begs the question, what did he understand and what did he take away from the fact that attempting to provide another boy cost his beloved mother her life? Jane Seymour Not for nothing, but his third wife, Jane, died in similar circumstances. Henry would later refer to her as his favorite wife and, even after taking other wives, it was she that he featured in portraits that glorified the Tudor dynasty as the mother of his son. We don't know enough about her personality to glean whether her demeanor was similar to Elizabeth's, but for that matter, we don't know much about Elizabeth's. In short, they were two women who largely stayed out of the frame and were sacrificed at the altar of the House of Tudor. But Jane wasn't the great love of Henry's life, not really. Anne Boleyn was. It wasn't a romantic love, though it started out the way, but it was a passion. A passion that made Henry turn the world upside down, break away from the Church to which he had once adored and execute any and all friends who dared stand in his way. But like many passions, it took an ugly turn when Anne didn't hold up her end of the bargain and, for all intents and purposes, he had her murdered. It is worth considering two things: 1) The woman who drove the greatest intensity in Henry was the one least like Elizabeth and 2) His irritation stemmed, in large part, from her inability and unwillingness to assume the same role that Elizabeth had - a mother of sons, a domestic force, a quiet, feminine presence. Anne Boleyn It's the second point that gets interesting, for it draws up that what Henry by any means. But what is evident from Henry and Anne's relationship prior to their marriage is that it was one of equals. Henry respected Anne. He admired her advice. Yes, he was king and she was courtier. Yes, there was a power imbalance. And perhaps she was playing a game. But their courtship was the most egalitarian relationship Henry ever had with a woman and when it soured, his rejection of her, her memory and their dynamic set the course for all the wives that came after. Namely, Jane. In shunning what he actually desired he moved to what was safe - obedience, docility, dependence and placidity. His marriage to her was a reaction, but it was also going against the grain of his own temperament and his still lingering inclination to what we would today describe as "strong women" remained apparent. Katherine Parr, his sixth wife, was highly intelligent and sought to influence him. It nearly cost her her life, but she tried her hand at it anyway. Marie of Guise, who went on to marry his nephew, James V of Scotland, was bandied about as a possible bride at one point and would have been a force at his court. His widowed daughter-in-law (via his illegitimate son, Henry Fitzroy) Mary Howard was yet another such woman his wife. (A relief to her, no doubt). In short, he was attracted to what he grew to loathe. A challenge excited him, but at the end of the day he wanted to get his way. To put it bluntly, he liked being the prettiest girl at the party. His wives were ornaments to his own cult of personality. that enticed him to the sort of woman he saw himself married to - an updated version of his mother. Katherine Howard There is another thread that weaves its way through all six of Henry's wives: virginity and/or female virtue. In seeking to divorce Katherine of Aragon he claimed that her marriage to Arthur had been consummated when she said it hadn't. Anne Boleyn was charged with adultery and incest after playing the long game in refusing to sleep with him before marriage. Jane followed the same course, arguing she would enter her marriage a virgin. Anne of Cleves was considered repugnant on the grounds that here). Katherine Howard was charged with lying about her virginity and adultery. Katherine Parr was safe because she was a widow; in that case her lack of virginity actually preserved her "virtue." So, what does this tell us? Well, to say Henry had a virgin/whore complex is putting it mildly and, again, that isn't unique to him by any means, particularly in the 16th century. But, more precisely, what does this tell us
about Henry viewed sexuality? Most men in his position, as his predecessors, peers and worked something out re: the succession with a cousin or the existing Princess Mary. Henry didn't, but he also wasn't a known philanderer. Yes, he took mistresses during his marriages to Katherine of Aragon and Anne Boleyn, but as far as we know, it was a modest number and they were relationships, not flings. Granted, there very well could have been shorter-term assignations to which we're not privy, but the pattern that emerges is of Henry pursuing young, virginal girls and offering them love by way of the "respectable" position of his mistress. A mistress to whom he would be "faithful." his marriage not withstanding. He first approached Anne Bolevn in a similar manner. He offered her fidelity, love and respect, but not marriage. She, for whatever reason, demurred (more on that some other time.) It was this break in the pattern that set off all the rest. Her virginity and comparative youth promised fertility, a thing the King needed. Her intelligence, wit and personality made up the woman Henry wanted. The problem with what Anne signified wasn't just the unbelievable crash and burn of one of the most famous (if abusive) love stories in history, it's that it created a tyrant. The Catholic Church was a good moderator of its Europeans monarchs and without its check Henry could pick up and put down lives as though they were chess pawns. Anne of Cleves and Katherine Howard were easy to discard. Katherine Parr very nearly met a similar fate, but had the good fortune to outlive him. Katherine of Aragon Which brings us to Katherine of Aragon and Jane Seymour, the two women who most closely fulfilled Henry's ideal of "wife." Katherine was married to Henry for 26 years, far outstripping her successors. For all practical purposes she was the true queen consort of his reign, her marriage a valuable alliance between England and Spain, her relations scattered about Europe. She was raised a princess and she knew what role was expected of her. She filled it well, save her ability to give Henry a son, and in the early years I believe that he loved her. She was no Anne Boleyn, but she was highly intelligent and strong and knew how to both lead and give way. She was the only wife Henry didn't originally choose for himself and the only one who truly served him well. What did her in were the usual, boring things: She aged and he fell in love with another woman. As for Jane, hers is an incomplete story. We don't know what would have preserved her, but we can't say that for certain because she was the only wife who did and she died so quickly afterwards. Her death mirrored Elizabeth's 34 years before and Henry mourned her deeply - for her or what she represented is unclear. Perhaps, too, the deaths of all three of his wives - Katherine, Anne and Jane - hit him at the same time, whether he knew it or not (he likely didn't). The magnitude of what he had done or, rather, undone causing a break between "king" and "man," which he wasn't able to articulate or address. Though, to reach the last point, one has to essentially project a thoroughly modern line of thinking, which causes problems. So, what did Henry want from women? I think he wanted Anne Boleyn, but an Anne who could fulfill what she had promised him: a son. Her inability to do that as he broke from Rome, the Church to which he was fervently devoted, caused a violent break. Her failure to keep up her end of the "bargain" made her a woman who had disappointed him, like a mother who died too soon or any other wife who failed to reflect what he needed her to - his virility, his chivalry and his superiority. Had Anne given birth to a son in September 1533 (instead of the daughter who grew into Elizabeth I), I think it likely she would have survived. I reference that first pregnancy and not her later ones, because I think the birth of a daughter in that moment, when he had been so sure it would be a boy, so confident in Anne's ability to provide him with an heir, was in many ways the fatal blow to their relationship. After that, it was never quite the same; more precisely, he never saw her as the same ways the fatal blow to their relationship. impact Henry's increasing tyranny as the head of his own church would have had on their relationship, but that is my estimate. Henry didn't necessarily spend his life chasing down his mother, but her absence informed what he believed an ideal wife should be, even as his own fell short. Elizabeth of York lived and died in service to the Tudor succession. Ironically, so did all six of Henry's wives. Edward VI, Henry VIII, King of England and Ireland, who was born on June 28, 1491. But despite his place in history books and pop culture, there are likely a number of things most people don't know about this enigmatic monarch.1. Henry VIII was a talented dancer. According to Alison Weir in her book Henry VIII: The King and His Court, his doublet and hose." He frequently cut a rug during the group dances involved in Tudor life and "exercised himself daily in dancing" as a young man. In 1515, one ambassador commented that the young king "does wonders and leaps like a stag." 2. Henry VIII was not supposed to be king. While dancing away at his brother's wedding, Henry had no idea that he was going to be king. Arthur was his older brother and the heir to the throne. Named for the legendary king and born in what was believed to be Camelot, Arthur was his older brother and the new heir to the throne. Henry.3. Henry VIII was an avid musician and composer, but he didn't write "Greensleeves." With heaps of high culture at his fingertips from birth, Henry became passionate about music at a very young age. He collected and played a variety of instruments over the years. According to the British Library, he also composed at least a couple dozen songs and instrumental pieces during his lifetime, many of which have remained popular examples of the era's music. However, despite popular belief, his many musical accomplishments do not include composition of the tune "Greensleeves."4. Before rejecting the Catholic Church, Henry VIII wrote a bestseller defending it. Before his request for annulment of his marriage to Catherine of Aragon was denied (a request based on the belief that the Bible forbids a man to marry his brother's widow) and he split from the church in 1533, Henry was an outspoken supporter of the Roman Catholic Church. His 1521 bestseller Assertio Septem Sacramentorum attacked Martin Luther and his Protestant proposals, earning Henry the title of "Defender of the Faith" from Pope Leo X.5. Henry VIII became the Head of the Church of England—but never strayed far from Catholicism. After marrying then-pregnant Anne Boleyn and being excommunicated by the Pope, Henry took on Thomas Cromwell as his minister and longtime partner in crime. Cromwell soon convinced him that breaking with Rome would be in the empire's best interest. With Henry as its Supreme Head, the Church of England disbanded and dissolved the assets of hundreds of monasteries in the next few years, providing an influx of treasures for the Crown and prime land for gentry and churches to purchase. Nevertheless, Henry himself remained faithful to most of Catholicism's tenets (except submitting to the Pope), despite growing Protestantism in England and at court.6. Henry VIII became known as "the father of the Royal Navy" thanks to his enormous investment in developing the royal fleet. In his 37-year reign, he increased the number of royal warships from five to around 50, refitted others with new guns, established the Navy Board, and created the first British naval dock at Portsmouth.7. Henry VIII fell for Anne Boleyn's personality—but it took a few years. According to Tudor historian Suzannah Lipscomb, "The love affair between Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn is shrouded in historical myth, romantic legend, cliché and half-truths ... and remains fiercely debated by historians." Case in point: Evidence from a wealth of personal letters and documents suggests that Henry was already well

enamored with her older sister Mary, and it would be another four years before his gaze would land on Anne. Lipscomb points out, too, that Henry likely became enthralled by her intelligence, charm, and the worldliness she'd acquired through travel, rather than by her looks, which records suggest weren't the stuff of Tudor legend. 8. Henry VIII was related to all of his wives ...Henry VIII and his wives Jane Seymour, Catherine Parr, Anne Gleves, and Catherine Howard had all served as ladies in waiting to the queen, i.e. each other. IN. Henry VIII sentenced more men and women to death than any other monarch. The later period of Henry's reing saw the king becoming increasingly pars were king that time, he sentenced an unusually large number of people to imprisonment in the Tower of London or to death, typically by beheding, According to some estimates, upwards of 72,000 people were excuted during his reign. 11. Henry VIII excuted Thomas Cromwell after the minister's matchmaking efforts failed. For many years, Thomas Cromwell was Henry's ruthless right hand (and a bit of a party animal himself), but not even he was immune to Henry's temper. When Cromwell, animg to build up relations with the German Protestations with the German Protestations and of the aparty animal himself). But not even he was immune to Henry's ruthless right hand (and becoment VIII excuted to the sevent de to the sevent de to the sevent devent the was instance to Henry's ruthless right hand (and bas executed for traeson. 12. Henry VIII event her years. Thome Sciences, and anything with an uncertain outcome, Weir Writes, Henry VIII was the leader of the pack. Ang given evening, the was hetwence the pack. Ang given evening, the was hetwence the advent of the sevent sevent sevent as baids in the particle. The sevent sevent sevent sevent sevent as baids in the sevent sev