

Chopping and changing

6

What happened when Henry VIII took control of the Church?

When Henry VIII became king in 1509, one nobleman said he could feel heaven rejoicing. People often feel full of hope when there is a chance for a new start. Henry VIII's father was Henry VII. He had been a strong king who had settled the country down after the Wars of the Roses, but he seemed rather dull. No one could say that about his son, Henry VIII. This famous painting from the sixteenth century reminds us how powerful Henry VIII was by the middle of his reign.

Henry VIII could use his great power to change the lives of his people. He certainly changed the lives of all the people whose heads rolled off the chopping block during his reign. Many of them had once been very close to Henry. They had been wives, advisers or friends.

How things change!

Henry VIII



1535 - The Bishop of Rochester, leading member of the Church
'Off with his head!'

1535 - Thomas More, a close friend and adviser
'Off with his head!'

1536 - Anne Boleyn, his second wife
'Off with her head!'

1540 - Thomas Cromwell, his chief adviser
'Off with his head!'

1542 - Catherine Howard, his fifth wife
'Off with her head!'

When Henry took the throne in 1509 many people thought he was a perfect king. He agreed with them. He insisted that they must call him 'Your Majesty', a title which English kings had never used before. The **Pope** soon gave him a new title too. He called Henry the 'Defender of the Faith' because Henry was such a good Roman Catholic. But - as the picture reminds us - things change.

Your enquiry

In this enquiry you will learn how Henry VIII used his power to make the greatest of all his changes - he ended the power of the Roman Catholic Church in England. We call this the 'Break with Rome'. It changed the whole history of Britain. You face a difficult challenge. You must explain these complicated events so clearly that a primary school pupil can understand them.

The causes - Why Henry VIII made the Break with Rome

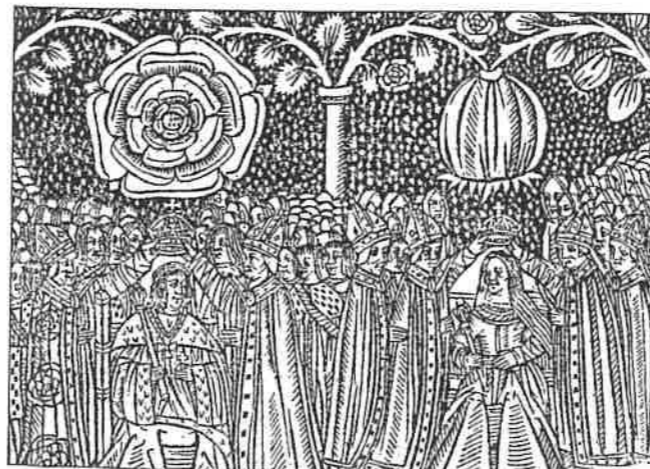
Some say that Henry only made the Break with Rome because the Pope would not let him have a divorce. In 1509, Henry married a Spanish princess called Catherine of Aragon. She had once been the wife of his brother, Arthur, who was now dead. The Bible seemed to say that a man should never marry his brother's widow, but the Pope gave permission for the marriage to go ahead.

By 1526 the marriage had gone badly wrong. In 1527, Henry asked the Pope to let him divorce Catherine but the Pope refused, no matter how often Henry asked.

The problem was that Henry needed a son to take the throne after he died. By 1526 Catherine had suffered several miscarriages and five other children had been still-born or had died as infants. She had only one healthy child, a daughter called Mary. Since 1518 Catherine had not even been pregnant. Henry wondered if God was punishing him for marrying Catherine.



The coronation of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon in 1509



Henry was especially keen to divorce Catherine because he had fallen madly in love with Anne Boleyn, a young lady at his court. Henry desperately wanted her hand in marriage (despite the fact that it had six fingers!).



Henry was sure that Anne would be able to give him a son but the Pope still refused to let him divorce Catherine. Between 1527 and 1533 Henry grew more and more impatient. He simply had to find a way to divorce Catherine and to marry Anne.

Think

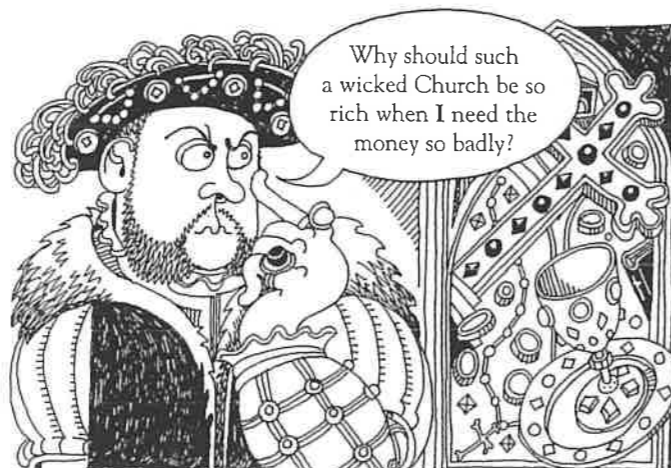
- When did Henry marry Catherine?
- Why did Henry ask for a divorce in 1527?

At that time a growing number of English people were **Protestants**. Anne came from a Protestant family. Protestants protested against the **Roman Catholic** Church which seemed to have too much power over England. Not only did the Pope interfere with the king's marriage plans, but he also

took English Church taxes. Some rulers in Germany had managed to end the Pope's power over their people. Henry liked the sound of this. Why should the Pope, a foreign Church leader, have so much control over England?



Protestants also complained that the Roman Catholic Church was rich and **corrupt**. Reports proved that many priests and monks were greedy and sinful (although some did live very simple, holy lives). The **monasteries** were very wealthy. They owned huge areas of land in England and collected rents from these lands. They also had beautiful treasures made of gold and silver. Henry badly needed money to pay for the wars he had been fighting in France.



Henry knew he would be popular with the Protestants if he changed church services in England. Protestants believed that the Roman Catholic Church had grown **superstitious**. They said services should be in English and that priests should use the Bible to explain true faith to the people. Henry did not really agree with all these new teachings – but he would put up with them if it meant he could control the Church and get his divorce.



Thomas Cromwell



Thomas Cranmer

By 1533 two of Henry's most important advisers were encouraging him to start a new Church of England. Thomas Cromwell more or less ran the government for Henry. Thomas Cranmer was the new Archbishop of Canterbury. Both men were Protestants.

They told the king what he wanted to hear: that the Pope should have no power over England and that Henry should run both the government and the Church. The king was delighted, especially as Anne Boleyn was now pregnant and he had to marry her soon.

STEP 1

By the end of 1533 Henry had made the decision to break away from the Roman Catholic Church. You have read about several reasons why he did this. Copy this chart:

The causes – Why Henry VIII made the Break with Rome	
Love	
Money	
Faith	
Power	

Now go back through this section (pages 49, 50 and 51). Note down on the chart any reasons to do with Love which made Henry break away from the Roman Catholic Church. Then do the same for Money, Faith and Power.

The change – How Henry VIII made the Break with Rome

Henry used Parliament to help him make the Break with Rome. If Parliament passed Henry's changes then he could claim that everyone agreed with them. In this way, Henry helped to make Parliament feel more powerful than ever – without meaning to.

Between 1529 and 1536 Parliament passed many laws. Some had nothing to do with the Break with Rome. For example, Parliament united Wales and England by making them share the same system of law and local government.

But Parliament's real task was to cut the links between Rome and England. The most important new law that it passed was the Act of Supremacy (1534). This said that Henry was the head of the new Church of England. All church services were now in English and a copy of the Bible in English was placed in each church.

Most people accepted these new rules but some did not. If someone obeyed the Pope rather than the king it was an act of treason and the punishment was death. Bishop John Fisher and Henry's close friend and adviser, Thomas More, were among the first of many to be executed.

Henry closed down the monasteries. He took all their property and sold it to landowners and merchants. Gold and silver ornaments were melted down and beautiful old books were burnt. The buildings were turned into private houses or left to crumble.

This picture was made in 1534. The artist has tried to sum up the changes that Henry VIII was making.

Think

- Find Pope Clement, two of Henry's Protestant advisers, a copy of the Bible, and some worried monks
- Bishop Fisher was on the Pope's side. How has the artist shown this?



STEP 2

Make your own copy of this diagram.

In each of the boxes do a simple drawing to illustrate what Henry did.

The change – How Henry VIII made the Break with Rome



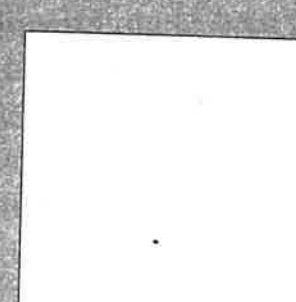
Henry used Parliament to help him.



Henry put himself in charge of the Church.



Henry executed people who stayed loyal to the Church.



Henry closed all the monasteries and took their riches.

The consequences – What happened after Henry VIII made the Break with Rome

As some of Henry's wives, friends and advisers found out, things don't always turn out as people expect. Henry soon discovered this too.

Henry divorced Catherine of Aragon and married Anne Boleyn in 1533. Three months later Anne had Henry's child. Henry was sure it would be a son.

But he was **wrong!** It was a girl, Elizabeth. Almost immediately, Henry began to hate Anne as much as he had once loved her. Soon, he heard stories that she was having affairs with other men at court. That was enough. He had her executed.

Henry's third wife, Jane Seymour, finally gave him the son he so desperately wanted – even though she died in childbirth. That son was Henry's last child. He became Edward VI when Henry died in 1547.

Think

- Henry had three more wives after Jane Seymour died. None of them had any children. How much do you think this mattered to Henry?

With a son to follow him, Henry believed that his new Church of England was safe. Edward was brought up as a Protestant so Henry must have been sure that the Pope would never again have power over England.

If he thought this, he was **wrong again!** Edward died as a teenager and Mary, Edward's half-sister, took over as queen. Mary was a Catholic. She ended the Church of England and made England Catholic once again! When Mary died in 1558 Henry's third child, Elizabeth, became queen. She made the country Protestant again, but for hundreds of years afterwards the country was divided by religion. What a mess.

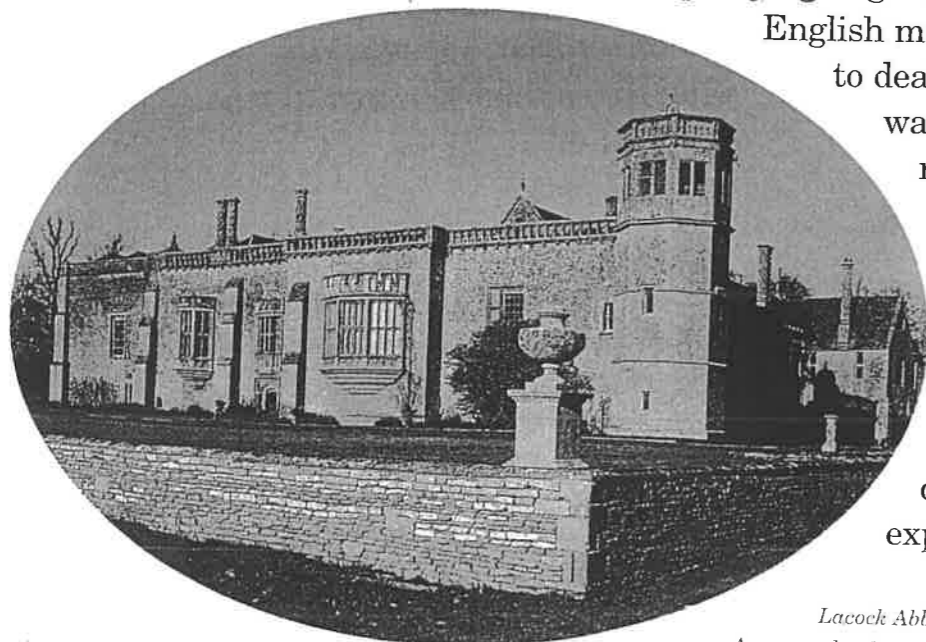
Henry must have been pleased to get his hands on the wealth of the Roman Catholic Church when he closed the monasteries. He probably thought this would make kings and queens of England rich for years to come.

But he was **wrong again!** He sold most of the land and property that belonged to the monasteries and then wasted the money on wars in the years that followed. Poor old Henry. If only he had known.

Henry wanted to use the Break with Rome to make himself the undisputed king of his country. He was sure that kings would be more powerful than ever once their old rival, the Pope, no longer had any power over them.

He was **wrong again!** Roman Catholics kept trying to get back into power. Almost every single English monarch between 1534 and 1750 had to deal with some sort of Catholic plot or war. Instead of uniting the kingdom, religion was dividing it.

Of course, Henry VIII had not really planned to cause any of these problems. It just goes to show, as you saw at the start of the enquiry, that things in history did not always turn out as people expected.



Lacock Abbey in Wiltshire
An example of an abbey that was turned into a rich man's home

STEP 3

Copy this chart and fill it in. At first Henry seemed to get what he wanted in Love, Money, Faith and Power, but this did not last. Use facts from this section (pages 53 and 54) to show what went wrong for Henry.

The consequences – What happened after Henry VIII made the Break with Rome

What Henry wanted	What Henry did	What went wrong for Henry
Love	He married Anne Boleyn ...	but ...
Money	He closed all the monasteries and took their riches ...	but ...
Faith	He ...	but his new Church was more Protestant than he really wanted.
Power	He gave English monarchs power over a Protestant country ...	but ...

Thinking your enquiry through

Write a very simple booklet for primary school children about the Break with Rome. It must have three main sections.

- 1 The first section must explain why Henry made the Break with Rome. Remember to mention Love, Money, Faith and Power. The chart you made in Step 1 will help you.
- 2 The second section must describe how he made the Break with Rome. You could write about each of the pictures you did in Step 2.
- 3 The third section must say what happened as a consequence (result) of the Break with Rome. The chart you made in Step 3 will help you.