



Why Henry VIII Left the Catholic Church

KS3 HISTORY

Ages 11-14 ⌚ 3 min read

A King's Marriage Problem

In the **1530s**, **King Henry VIII** of **England** was married to **Catherine of Aragon**. But Henry wanted to divorce her because she hadn't given him a son, and he was worried about who would rule **England** after he died. The problem was that the **Catholic Church** didn't allow divorce. Henry asked the **Pope** (the head of the Catholic Church) for permission, but the Pope said no.

The Pope refused because **Catherine of Aragon** was the aunt of a very powerful Spanish king, and the Pope didn't want to upset Spain. Henry was furious. He couldn't get what he wanted, so he decided to break free from the Catholic Church entirely.

Think of it like this: imagine your headteacher says you can't do something you really want to do. If you get angry enough, you might decide to leave that school and start your own school where you make the rules.

Creating a New Church

In **1534**, Henry made himself the head of a brand new church called the **Church of England**. This meant he didn't have to listen to the Pope anymore—he could make his own rules. Henry quickly gave himself permission to divorce Catherine and marry **Anne Boleyn**, a young lady he had fallen in love with.

This was a huge moment in history. By breaking away from **Rome** and the Catholic Church, Henry changed **England** forever. The country was no longer Catholic—it became **Protestant**. Thousands of churches, monasteries, and convents that belonged to the Catholic Church were shut down, and their treasures were taken by the king.

Think of it like this: if you and your friends have a group with one leader, but you disagree with that leader, you could start your own group with yourself in charge instead.

Why This Mattered

Henry's break with Rome wasn't just about getting a divorce. It was about **power**. Kings in other countries had to obey the Pope, but now Henry answered to nobody. He could do what he wanted in **England**. This split between the Catholic Church and the Church of England lasted for hundreds of years and changed the religious map of Europe forever.