Childhood

Henry was born on 28th June 1491 in Greenwich, London. He was the second son born to King Henry VII and Elizabeth of York. He was said to be very handsome and athletic in his youth. His older brother, Arthur, was born five years earlier and therefore Henry was second in line to the English throne. In total, Henry had six siblings, though sadly only three survived past infancy. As well as a brother, Henry had two sisters; Margaret, who was two years older, and Mary, who was born five years after Henry.

In 1502, Arthur fell ill and died aged only 15, possibly from sweating sickness. This meant that Henry, at only ten years old, was now in line as the next King of England. His father kept him under strict supervision and he had very little training as to what a king’s role involved.

Early reign

Henry VII died on 21st April 1509, leaving 17-year-old Henry as his successor. Henry decided soon after that he would marry his brother’s widow, Catherine of Aragon. Henry and Catherine were married on 11th June 1509. They had a number of children who were sadly stillborn before their daughter Mary was born in 1516.

Reformation of the Church

Henry was desperate for a son to carry on his legacy. As Catherine had failed to have a son, Henry decided to divorce her and find another wife. In 1525, he fell in love with Anne Boleyn - one of the Queen’s ladies-in-waiting and chose her to be his next queen. However, Henry’s argument that he should be allowed to divorce Catherine because she had been his brother’s wife was not supported by the head of the Catholic Church, the Pope, and his divorce was not given. This made Henry furious and he decided to break England away from the Catholic Church, creating the Church of England, of which he would be the head. This was known as the Reformation and sent shockwaves throughout Europe.
Henry’s Many Wives

In 1532, Henry finally married Anne and together they had a daughter, Elizabeth. However, Anne also failed to give him the son he desired. Henry lost his patience with her and, having been accused of being unfaithful to Henry, Anne was executed in 1536.

The day after Anne’s execution, Henry became engaged to Jane Seymour and they were married ten days later. On 12th October 1537, Jane gave birth to a son, Edward. Henry was overjoyed at his dream finally being realised, however his joy was short-lived as Jane died less than two weeks later due to complications from the birth, leaving Henry devastated.

Three years after Jane’s death, Henry’s advisors suggested that he should marry Anne of Cleves, a German princess. Having seen her portrait, Henry agreed to the marriage. Unfortunately, Henry did not like her when they met in person and they were divorced six months after their marriage in 1540. Anne and Henry remained friends, however, and she was affectionately referred to as the King’s ‘beloved sister’.

Henry then married his fifth wife, Catherine Howard, who was 17 years old and a cousin of Anne Boleyn. By this time, Henry was now 49, overweight and had painful leg ulcers which often caused him to be bedridden or in a foul mood. Catherine, being much younger and energetic, was often bored and started a relationship with Thomas Culpeper, the King’s groom. They were eventually discovered and Catherine was executed on 13th February 1542.

Henry’s final wife was Catherine Parr. Catherine had been married and widowed twice previously. She worked hard to reunite Henry with his daughters Mary and Elizabeth and succeeded in getting them reinstated to the succession, meaning they were now back in line to the throne after their half-brother Edward and therefore was responsible for the next, and final, three monarchs inheriting the crown.
Death and Legacy

Henry began to grow frailer due to his weight and many leg ulcers and, in 1547, Henry died at the age of 55. His son, Edward, succeeded him as King. He requested to be buried next to his ‘true wife’, Jane Seymour.

Along with his many wives, the reformation and his bad temper, Henry is also remembered as the ‘father of the British Navy’ after strengthening England’s naval forces with many new warships. He was also an author and composer, a keen jouster and a fan of playing tennis.

His legacy as one of England’s most infamous monarchs remains today and all three of his children succeeded him, including Elizabeth, who is remembered as one of the greatest monarchs in history and whose reign became known as ‘The Golden Age’.
King Henry VIII Questions

1. What illness is it believed Henry’s brother Arthur died from?

2. Find and copy the word that shows Catherine of Aragon had been married before her marriage to Henry.

3. What name is given to the break from the Catholic Church and the creation of the Church of England?

4. Which wives were executed by Henry? **Tick two.**
   - Anne Boleyn
   - Anne of Cleves
   - Jane Seymour
   - Catherine Howard

5. How old was Catherine Howard when she married Henry? **Tick one.**
   - 15
   - 55
   - 17
   - 49

6. Why do you think Henry referred to Jane Seymour as his ‘true wife’? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

7. Catherine Parr was responsible for a large change in the future of the Tudor line. What was this change and why was it so important?

8. Why is Henry sometimes referred to as the ‘Father of the British Navy’?
9. At the start of the text, it says that Henry is remembered for his bad temper. What evidence is in the text to support this?

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10. Do you think Henry VIII is worthy of being one of England’s most famous monarchs? Explain your answer fully.

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King Henry VIII Answers

1. What illness is it believed Henry’s brother Arthur died from?  
   **sweating sickness**

2. Find and copy the word that shows Catherine of Aragon had been married before her marriage to Henry.  
   **widow**

3. What name is given to the break from the Catholic Church and the creation of the Church of England?  
   **The Reformation**

4. Which wives were executed by Henry? **Tick two.**  
   - Anne Boleyn ✓
   - Anne of Cleves
   - Jane Seymour
   - Catherine Howard ✓

5. How old was Catherine Howard when she married Henry? **Tick one.**  
   - 15
   - 55
   - 17 ✓
   - 49

6. Why do you think Henry referred to Jane Seymour as his ‘true wife’?  
   Use evidence from the text to support your answer.  
   **Pupil’s own response, such as:** I think Henry referred to Jane Seymour as his ‘true wife’ as she had given him the son he had always wanted, the only one of his wives to do this. The text also says that Henry was ‘devastated’ when she died, showing that he loved her very much.

7. Catherine Parr was responsible for a large change in the future of the Tudor line.  
   What was this change and why was it so important?  
   **Pupil’s own response, such as:** Catherine Parr was responsible for getting Mary and Elizabeth restored to the line of succession, meaning that they were second and third in line to the throne again after their half-brother Edward. This had a big impact because both daughters went on to become queen and Elizabeth is remembered as one of the greatest monarchs in history.

8. Why is Henry sometimes referred to as the ‘Father of the British Navy’?  
   **Pupil’s own response, such as:** Henry is thought of as the ‘Father of the British Navy’ as he ordered lots of new warships to be built during his reign, strengthening England’s power on the seas.
9. At the start of the text, it says that Henry is remembered for his bad temper. What evidence is in the text to support this?
   Pupil’s own response, such as: In the text, it says that Henry was furious when the Catholic Church would not allow him to divorce Catherine of Aragon. Henry also had two of his wives executed; Anne Boleyn after he had 'lost patience with her' and Catherine Howard after she was found having a relationship with someone else. This shows he was angry enough with them to order their deaths.

10. Do you think Henry VIII is worthy of being one of England’s most famous monarchs? Explain your answer fully.
   Pupil’s own response, such as: Yes, I think Henry VIII is worthy of being a famous monarch as he started the Reformation, creating the Church of England and marking a major change in religion in Europe. He also added strength to the English navy with new warships and, alongside marrying six times, he was the father of three more English monarchs, including Elizabeth I, one of the most famous and important monarchs in history.