

# Henry VIII

Read through the information below and then answer the questions.



Henry VIII in 1536  
by Hans Holbein the  
Younger.

Henry VIII is, perhaps, the most famous of English kings. Why that is could be questionable, but for most people it is his private life that attracts interest.

Born on the 28th June 1491, Henry's parents were Elizabeth of York and Henry VII. As was usual at that time, the young Henry did not see a great deal of his parents as he and his brother and sisters were brought up in the country at the palace of Greenwich where it was thought to be more healthy than London itself.

Henry VIII was not born to be king; he had an elder brother, Arthur, who was Prince of Wales. Henry's parents had destined him for the church and his early schooling was planned accordingly. However, Arthur died on 2 April 1502 and Henry's role was elevated to that of heir to the throne.

Henry was certainly princely material. He loved music and wrote his own, being an accomplished musician. He enjoyed dancing and entertainment, holding countless banquets and tournaments. Henry also thoroughly excelled at physical activities such as hunting, archery, tennis and jousting – he made his court into a world of competition and celebration. Upon the death of his father, Henry VII, the heir to the throne certainly appeared to have the world at his feet.



Katherine of Aragon  
painted c.1502 by  
Michael Sittow.

Henry was crowned King of England at Westminster Abbey on 23 June 1509. He married Katherine of Aragon (a Spanish princess who had previously been married to his deceased brother) on 11 June that same year and she bore him a son on 1 January 1511. So what went wrong?

This is what the Venetian diplomat Pasqualigo had to say about Henry in 1515:

*“His Majesty is the handsomest potentate I ever set eyes on; above the usual height, with an extremely fine calf to his leg, his complexion very fair and bright, auburn hair combed straight and short, in the French fashion, and a round face so very beautiful that it would become a pretty woman, his throat being rather long and thick.... He will enter his twenty-fifth year the month after next. He speaks French, English and Latin, and a little Italian, plays well on the lute and harpsichord, sings from book at sight, draws the bow with greater strength than any man in England and jousts marvellously... a most accomplished Prince”.*

## Questions

1. When was Henry VIII born?
2. Who were his parents?
3. What profession did Henry's parents intend him to follow?
4. Where did Henry and his brother and sisters live when they were children? Why?
5. What does the word 'destined' mean?
6. Find out what a harpsichord is and write a description of it.
7. Find another word that means 'accomplished'. (You may use a thesaurus for this).
8. Who did Henry marry? Was she already related to him and, if so, how?
9. In paragraph 5 the word 'deceased' can be replaced with:  
a) older b) smaller c) dead d) ill
10. When was his son born?
11. What impression of Henry do you get from the diplomat's description of him?
12. How many languages could Henry speak?