

Anne of Cleves

Anne of Cleves was Henry VIII's fourth wife and Queen of England for six months in 1540.

Early Life



Anne was born in 1515 in Düsseldorf in the Holy Roman Empire, in what is now Germany. She was the second daughter of John III, Duke of Cleves, and his wife, Maria. She had two sisters, Sibylle and Amalia, and a brother, William. While not very well educated, Anne was skilled at needlework and enjoyed playing card games. She could read and write but only in her native German.

Marriage to Henry VIII

After the death of Henry VIII's third wife, Jane, in 1537, Henry's advisors began asking him to consider marrying again. His chief minister, Thomas Cromwell, was keen for Henry to pursue an alliance with Cleves as they were part of the same faith as the new Church of England. Cromwell suggested Henry consider marrying either Anne or her younger sister, Amalia. In order to persuade Henry, the artist Hans Holbein the Younger was sent to their home to paint portraits of both ladies, under strict instructions to make the paintings as realistic as possible and not to flatter them.

After Holbein returned with the portraits, Henry found Anne's portrait to be pleasing and gave permission for a marriage contract to be drawn up. A formal marriage treaty was signed on 4th October 1539 and Anne travelled to England.

Henry first met Anne in person privately on New Year's Day 1540 at Rochester Abbey. Upon meeting her, he was said to be disappointed in her appearance, arguing that she was nothing like she had been described to him. He used his dislike of Anne's appearance to argue against the marriage, saying that he had been misled by his advisors.

Nevertheless, Henry and Anne were married on 6th January 1540 at the Palace of Placentia in London.

The marriage was not a happy one from the start, with Henry saying to Cromwell the day after their wedding, 'I liked her before not well, but now I like her much worse.' Despite Henry's dislike of Anne, she always praised him as a kind husband to those she spoke with.

The King's Beloved Sister

On 24th June 1540, six months into the marriage, Anne was ordered to leave court. On 6th July she was told that Henry was reconsidering the marriage. Anne consented to an annulment without argument, pleasing Henry, and the marriage was ended on 9th July.

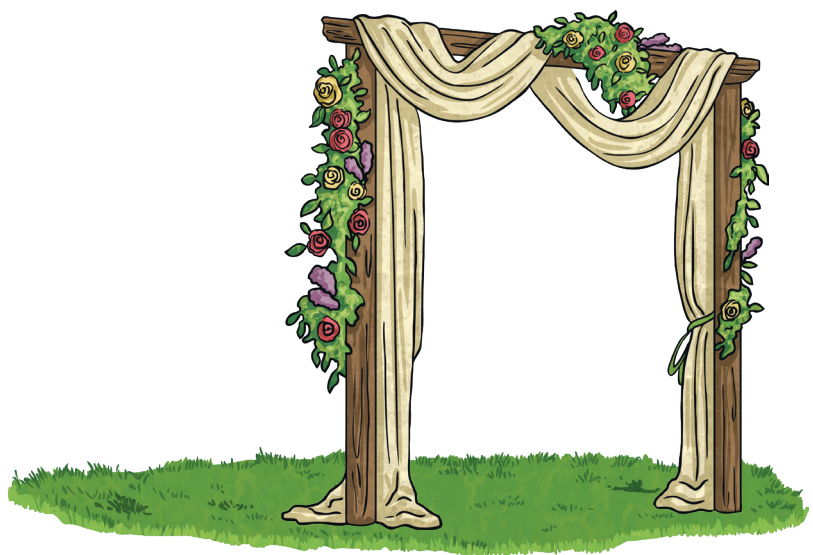
Cromwell, who was the driving force behind the marriage, was arrested for a number of crimes including treason and was executed on 28th July.

As Anne had not argued against the annulment, Henry gave her a very generous settlement ensuring she was well cared for, including Hever Castle, the former home of his second wife, Anne Boleyn. Henry also began referring to Anne as his 'beloved sister', saying that she should be treated with the highest respect and that she was more important than all other women in England, except for his wife and daughters. She was often invited to court for celebrations and maintained a friendship with Henry and his daughters, especially Elizabeth.

After Henry's Death

After Henry's death on 28th January 1547, Anne continued to live in England. When Mary became Queen of England in 1553, Anne was part of her coronation procession. She converted to the Catholic faith during Mary's reign as the new queen was a strict Catholic.

Anne died on 16th July 1557 and was buried in Westminster Abbey on 3rd August. By all accounts, Anne was a generous and peaceful woman, courteous to all and well thought of by those who met her.



Questions

1. Where was Anne born? Tick **one**.

- ☐ Westminster Abbey
- ☐ Palace of Placentia
- ☐ Düsseldorf, Holy Roman Empire
- ☐ Hever Castle

2. Fill in the missing words.

Anne was skilled at _____ and enjoyed playing _____ games. She could read and _____ but only in her native _____.

3. Who was sent to paint portraits of Anne and Amalia?

4. What did Henry refer to Anne as after their divorce?

5. Tick to show whether each statement is **true** or **false**.

	True	False
Anne's parents were called John and Sibylle.		
Anne met Henry on New Year's Eve 1540		
Anne had a strong friendship with Henry's daughter Elizabeth.		
Anne was part of Queen Elizabeth's coronation procession.		

6. Did Henry and Anne's first meeting go well? Why? Use evidence from the text to explain your answer.

7. Why do you think Hans Holbein the Younger was instructed to not flatter Anne and Amalia in their portraits?

8. Why do you think Henry treated Anne well after their divorce?

9. Why do you think Anne chose not to argue against the divorce?

Answers

1. Where was Anne born? Tick **one**.

- ☐ Westminster Abbey
- ☐ Palace of Placentia
- ☒ **Düsseldorf, Holy Roman Empire**
- ☐ Hever Castle

2. Fill in the missing words.

Anne was skilled at **needlework** and enjoyed playing **card** games. She could read and **write** but only in her native **German**.

3. Who was sent to paint portraits of Anne and Amalia?

Hans Holbein the Younger

4. What did Henry refer to Anne as after their divorce?

Henry referred to Anne as his 'beloved sister'.

5. Tick to show whether each statement is **true** or **false**.

	True	False
Anne's parents were called John and Sibylle.	✓	
Anne met Henry on New Year's Eve 1540		✓
Anne had a strong friendship with Henry's daughter Elizabeth.	✓	
Anne was part of Queen Elizabeth's coronation procession.		✓

6. Did Henry and Anne's first meeting go well? Why? Use evidence from the text to explain your answer.

Pupil's own response, such as: No, Henry and Anne's first meeting did not go well as Henry was disappointed in her appearance. He argued that she did not look as she had been described to him and he tried to argue against marrying her because of this.

7. Why do you think Hans Holbein the Younger was instructed to not flatter Anne and Amalia in their portraits?

Pupil's own response, such as: I think Hans Holbein the Younger was instructed to not flatter Anne and Amalia in their portraits because Henry wanted to know what they really looked like if he was going to marry them. He wanted to know if he would like their appearance as it is rather than after an artist had painted them making them more attractive.

8. Why do you think Henry treated Anne well after their divorce?

Pupil's own response, such as: I think Henry treated Anne well after their divorce as she consented to the annulment rather than arguing against it which Henry probably appreciated.

9. Why do you think Anne chose not to argue against the divorce?

Pupil's own response, such as: I think Anne chose not to argue against the divorce because it would have made Henry angry and caused her many more problems. It was not a happy marriage so she probably knew it was the best choice.