

ANNE BOLEYN (Anne Boleyn)

TEXT 1-

Anne Boleyn was the second wife of King [Henry VIII](#) — a scandalous marriage, given that he had been denied an annulment from his first wife by the Roman Church, and that his mistress was Anne Boleyn's sister, Mary. The king had fallen in love with Anne Boleyn as a young maid. What is known is that Anne Boleyn's sister, Mary, one of the king's mistresses, had introduced her to Henry VIII and that the king wrote love letters to her. In one of the king's letters, he wrote: "If you ... give yourself up, heart, body and soul to me ... I will take you for my only mistress, rejecting from thought and affection all others save yourself, to serve only you." Anne Boleyn replied with rejection, however, explaining that she aimed to be married and not be a mistress: "Your wife I cannot be, both in respect of mine own unworthiness, and also because you have a queen already. Your mistress I will not be."

Anne Boleyn's response surprised Henry VIII, who is believed to have had several mistresses at that time, reportedly entering into these adulterous relationships because he badly wanted a son, and Catherine of Aragon had not borne a male child. The couple's only child to survive infancy, Princess Mary, was born in 1516. But Henry was desperate to have Anne Boleyn so he quickly configured a way to officially abandon his marriage with Catherine. Anne Boleyn discovered that she was pregnant in early 1533. Without the blessing of the pope, on January 25, 1533, Henry and Anne Boleyn quickly married in a secret ceremony led by Thomas Cranmer, archbishop of Canterbury. The following June, a lavish coronation ceremony was held in honor of the new queen. On September 7, 1533, Queen Anne Boleyn gave birth to a daughter, [Elizabeth I](#), who would be Henry VIII's only child with Anne Boleyn to survive infancy.

But if Anne Boleyn was less than prepared for her new role as queen, she was extremely unprepared for her new role as the king's wife. A year into their union, Henry VIII pursued and engaged in relationships with two of Anne Boleyn's maids-of-honor, Madge Shelton and [Jane Seymour](#). Unlike Queen Catherine before her, who knew of her husband's infidelity but was able to turn the other cheek, Anne Boleyn was enraged by Henry's promiscuity and became increasingly jealous. Permeated by resentment and hostility, the marriage quickly fell apart.

After Anne Boleyn gave birth to a stillborn male child in January 1536, Henry VIII decided that it was time to take hold of his legacy. He quickly settled on taking Seymour as his future wife and sought out the annulment of his marriage to Anne Boleyn. He then had Anne Boleyn detained at the Tower of London on several false charges, among them adultery, incest and conspiracy. It is believed that Thomas Cromwell, Chief Minister to the King and Anne Boleyn's former friend, plotted her downfall.

Anne Boleyn went to trial on May 15, 1536. In court, she remained levelheaded and articulate, calmly and clearly denying all of the charges against her. Four days later, on May 19, 1536, Anne Boleyn was unanimously convicted by a court of peers, and Henry's marriage to her was annulled and declared invalid. That same day, Anne Boleyn was taken to the Tower Green in London, England, for her execution, by a French swordsman. There, on the scaffolds, she delivered a speech. Her ermine mantle was removed and Anne Boleyn removed her headdress. She knelt down and was blindfolded. With one swift motion, she was beheaded. Her head and body was buried in an unmarked grave. Within days of Anne Boleyn's execution, Henry VIII and [Jane Seymour](#) were formally wed. The daughter of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, Elizabeth I, would later emerge as one of England's most revered queens.

TEXT 2:

In 1527 Henry initiated secret proceedings to obtain an annulment from his wife, the aging Catherine of Aragon; his ultimate aim was to father a [legitimate](#) male heir to the throne. For six years Pope [Clement VII](#), under pressure from Henry's rival [Charles V](#), refused to grant the annulment, but all the while Henry's passion for Anne Boleyn was strengthening his determination to rid himself of his queen. About January 25, 1533, Henry and Anne Boleyn were secretly married. The union was made public on [Easter](#) of that year, and on May 23 Henry had the [archbishop of Canterbury](#), [Thomas Cranmer](#), pronounce the marriage to Catherine null and void. In September Anne Boleyn gave birth to a daughter, the future queen Elizabeth I.

Anne Boleyn's [arrogant](#) behaviour soon made her unpopular at court. Although Henry lost interest in her and began [liaisons](#) with other women, the birth of a son might have saved the marriage. Anne Boleyn had a [miscarriage](#) in 1534, and in January 1536 she gave birth to a stillborn male child. On May 2, 1536, Henry had her committed to the [Tower of London](#) on a charge of [adultery](#) with various men and even [incest](#) with her own brother. She was tried by a court of peers, unanimously convicted, and beheaded on May 19. On May 30 Henry married [Jane Seymour](#). That Anne Boleyn was guilty as charged is unlikely; she was the apparent victim of a temporary court [faction](#) supported by [Thomas Cromwell](#).

She entered confinement for the birth of her first child on 26 August 1533. The child was born on 7 September 1533. The physicians and astrologers had been mistaken; it was not a prince. But the healthy baby girl called Elizabeth was not the disappointment most assumed, nor did she immediately cause her mother's downfall. The birth had been very easy and quick. 'There was good speed in the deliverance and bringing forth,' Anne Boleyn wrote to Lord Cobham that very day. The queen recovered quickly. Henry had every reason to believe that strong princes would follow. It was only when Anne Boleyn miscarried two sons that he began to question the validity of his second marriage.

As queen of England, Anne Boleyn was tried by her peers; the main charge was adultery, and this was an act of treason for a queen. No member of the nobility would help her; her craven uncle Norfolk pronounced the death sentence. She had prayed for exile, to end her days in a nunnery, but now faced a more tragic fate. She met it with bravery and wit. As a concession to her former position, she was not beheaded by a clumsy axe. A skilled swordsman was brought over from France. She was assured that there would be little pain; she replied, with typical spirit, 'I have heard that the executioner is very good. And I have a little neck.' She was brought to the scaffold at 8 o'clock in the morning on **19 May 1536**. It was a heretofore unknown spectacle, the first public execution of an English queen. Anne Boleyn, who had defended herself so ably at her trial, chose her last words carefully. She was blindfolded and knelt at the block. She repeated several times, *'To Jesus Christ I commend my soul; Lord Jesu receive my soul.'*

It was a sardonic message to the king. Even now he waited impatiently to hear the Tower cannon mark Anne Boleyn's death. He wished to marry Anne Boleyn's lady-in-waiting, Jane Seymour. They wed ten days after the execution.