

The Tudors: Reign of Henry VIII

1.

Tudor Society

- Society dominated by the aristocracy. Ranks of the peerage: Duke → Marquis → Earl → Viscount → Baron. Below the peerage came the gentry – this class covers a range of people including knights, people knighted for political service (“Sirs”) and local landowners; gentry dominated local politics (e.g. Justices of the Peace).
- By the end of Elizabeth’s reign there were roughly 4 million people in England; largely rural society – only large city was London (150,000 people).
- Flourishing coastal trade but difficulties in transport hampered internal trade – goods had to be carried by packhorse and routes became impassable in winter.
- Main external trading partner was the Netherlands; main export was woollen cloth.
- England was an agrarian economy, with farming specialisms varying from area to area; there was very little industry taking place – coal, lead and tin were mined but this did not generate as much wealth as the cloth trade.
- In the political system, ultimate authority lay with the Crown, with the monarch able to exercise the powers of the royal prerogative, e.g. right to declare war.
- Limitations in the exercise of royal power: supremacy of parliamentary statute over other forms of law; lack of a paid civil service to administer the realm; lack of paid officials to enforce the law and limitations of Crown finance.

Religious changes, 1529-47

- Change between 1529 and 1536 had very little impact on religious doctrine – it was largely driven by political considerations such as Henry’s desire to divorce Catherine of Aragon.
- 1529 parliament attacked “widespread” abuses of the Church which allowed Henry to claim the Church needed reform.
- 1532 Act in Restraint of Annates banned the payment of most clerical taxes to Rome.
- Between 1534 and 1536, parliament abolished papal authority in England through a series of statutes – direct payments to Rome stopped; Archbishop of Canterbury given powers of dispensation and exemption that had previously been the pope’s; definition of religious beliefs and practices taken away from the pope and given to the crown.
- 1534 Act of Supremacy made Henry the head of the Church of England; Thomas Cromwell appointed king’s deputy in Church affairs.
- **Henry’s motivations:** desire for more power alone is not a convincing argument (as shown by the length of time Henry spent trying to persuade the papacy to grant his divorce); chronology suggests that acquisition of wealth was a bonus of the Break, not a cause (it was only after the dissolution of the monasteries that Henry gained substantial wealth); doctrinal changes came only in 1536 with the dissolution of the monasteries – a direct attack on the doctrine of purgatory.

2.

1. Tudor Society and the Legacy of Henry VIII

To what extent was England Protestant by the end of Henry’s reign?

3.

Evidence of Protestantism	Evidence of Catholicism
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Henry married the Protestant Anne of Cleves and the Protestant Catherine Parr. - Signs of Protestantism in London and Kent although Susan Brigden’s study of London has suggested only 20% were Protestant by 1547. - Decline in the number coming forward for ordination as priests; less church building; less money being left to local parish churches. - Translation of the Bible into English. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Despite regional variations, nationally, the number of Protestants was small – most were happy with how the Church had been and did not welcome change. - Legally, England was not a Protestant country and key Catholic beliefs (e.g. transubstantiation) were still upheld by the king. - In between Anne and Catherine Parr, Henry married the Catholic Catherine Howard. - Studies of wills show that most were still Catholic in their wording, with testators making references to the Virgin Mary. - The further north and west one travelled from London, the fewer Protestants were found.

What was England like by 1547?

- **Position in Europe:** at war with France and Scotland – alliance of these countries meant a war on two fronts; not a major European power; fears of a Catholic crusade against England.
- **Religious change:** monarch now head of the church; England still Catholic in doctrine, just without the Pope; all religious houses closed down; Bible available in English; most English people still Catholic.
- **Government:** personality of the king very important (this would be different when Edward took over as a child); royal household looked after domestic needs of the king; age of the king had given opportunities for nobles to gain power and for factional struggles to develop; law and order maintained by JPs; parliament not a regular feature of government – called when the king needed money or new laws; Privy Council made up of nobles and senior Churchmen.
- **Monarchy:** Henry had made most decisions for himself in the 1540s; Henry’s image was as a ruthless ruler; Edward VI only a child when Henry died; Henry established a Regency Council to govern England in Edward’s minority, made up of both religious conservatives and reformers.
- **Economic and social conditions:** Henry had spent his gains from the Dissolution on war and defence in the 1540s; coinage had been debased; food prices rose quickly; population rising, putting pressure on food and land; complaints about land being enclosed for sheep farming.

4.

<h2>The Tudors: The reign of Edward VI</h2>	<h2>2. Reign of Edward VI under Somerset</h2>
<p><u>Problems of minority rule</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous examples of minority rule raised questions, e.g. Henry III's minority from 1216 had not disrupted government but Henry VI came to the throne as a baby in 1422 in a reign characterised by the Wars of the Roses and Edward V had been deposed by Richard III in 1483 - concern that Edward's minority would result in instability – threat of civil war, foreign invasion and factional division. • Henry had wanted a Regency Council to rule but Somerset quickly assumed power – he was Edward's maternal uncle and a respected soldier. There were realistic arguments that a council of 16 would have encouraged more factional unrest but this ignorance of Henry's wishes left open the possibility that others might challenge Somerset's dominance. 	<p><u>The Western Rising (or Prayer Book Rebellion), 1549</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religious tension in the area – in 1549, peasants had gathered at Bodmin to protest the Act of Uniformity; disturbance at Sampford Courtenay where locals objected to the new Prayer Book and demanded the priest say mass; rising spread with rebels from Devon and Cornwall joining forces on 20th June. • Rebels not only religiously motivated – initial list of demands also mentioned the sheep and cloth tax; actions of the rebels suggested grievances with the gentry class. • Link between socio-economic and religious grievances: gentry had benefited from the Dissolution of the Monasteries and Chantries and it was they who were implementing the new changes.
<p><u>To what extent did England become Protestant under Somerset?</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1547 - much of England remained Catholic so Somerset's initial religious policies were cautious. • Royal visitations examined the state of the clergy, the doctrine and practices of the Church. • July 1547 – ordered that the Book of Homilies (model sermons) and Erasmus' Paraphrases should be placed in every church; clergy ordered to conduct services in English, preach every Sunday and ensure a copy of the English Bible was in their church; superstitious images and statues were to be removed. • Autumn 1547 – Chantries Act: dissolved the chantries (places where masses for the souls of the dead were held) but this may have been more about funding war with Scotland than an attack on superstition. • Repeal of the Treason Act – reformers able to speak more freely about their views, unleashing more radicalism and acts of iconoclasm. • 1549 Act of Uniformity enforced a number of Protestant practices (such as clergy being able to marry) but did not mean all Catholic practices disappeared (e.g. belief in purgatory allowed to remain and worship of saints was discouraged but not banned). 	<p><u>Kett's Rebellion, 1549</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kett assembled 16,000 men who marched towards Norwich and set up camp at Mousehold Heath; local forces unable to disperse the rebels and the offer of a pardon failed – the rebels seized Norwich (England's second-largest city). • Government forced to send 14,000 men under the Marquis of Northampton but his force was defeated; Earl of Warwick then sent which led to a massacre of the rebels. • Agricultural causes: complaints about gentry manipulation of the foldcourse system (where gentry could graze sheep on peasants' unsown land); grievances about enclosure; concerns about fishing rights (wanted the rivers to be open to all). • Religious/social causes: unlike Western rebels, these demands were more Protestant; rebels attacked nobles/gentry as landlords as well as local officials.
<p><u>Socio-Economic Problems</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Between 1525 and 1551 population likely increased from 2.3m to 3m; agricultural productivity could not keep pace with the rise so the price of food rose (becoming very serious during bad harvests). • Grain prices rose faster than meat and dairy which had a serious impact as this was the staple diet. • More incentive to turn over to sheep farming (increased demand for cloth) but this was a problem as it required fewer labourers; also encouraged enclosure. • Population rise, rising food prices, enclosure and debasement of the coinage made poverty worse and this was exacerbated by the Dissolution (monasteries had previously helped the poor; increased levels of vagrancy led to the passing of the 1547 Vagrancy Act (2 years slavery for first offence and life for the second)). 	<p><u>To what extent were the rebellions of 1549 a threat to the government?</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government in a vulnerable position with its forces stretched by the battle against Scotland and the standby for an attack from France. • In the West Country and Norfolk, nobility and gentry were either absent or unable to act because of the scale of the unrest; government forces were waylaid by disturbances in Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire meaning it took considerable time for a large force to arrive in the West; number of skirmishes took place before the Western rebels were defeated (3000 rebels killed in battle and more executed without trial). • In Norfolk, the seizure of Norwich created a serious crisis for the government – troops had to be sent from Scotland to boost Warwick's forces; rebels treated less harshly than in the West with only 50 executions. • Despite neither of the rebellions aiming to remove Edward VI, both had potential to seriously harm the government and if the two regions had coordinated they may have overwhelmed government resources. However, when the government was forced into military action and had sufficient forces, they dealt with the rebels quickly and effectively.

The Tudors: The reign of Edward VI

3. Reign of Edward VI under Northumberland

The fall of Somerset

- Ruling elite were concerned about the disorder of 1549; personal style of Somerset's rule also caused resentment.
- Formation of an anti-Somerset faction: Wriothesley (opposed to Somerset's religious changes), Warwick (looking for the opportunity to advance his power) and Paget.
- Somerset sensed his loss of power and moved to Windsor with the king – Edward claimed to be a prisoner and abandoned Somerset, whose removal and arrest followed within a week.
- Warwick's ascension not guaranteed – many religious conservatives in the Council did not trust him so he removed opponents until he had a Protestant majority. By January 1550, leading Catholic members (Arundel and Southampton) had been dismissed and Warwick made Lord President of the Council.
- Once Warwick (now Northumberland) was secure he attempted a reconciliation with Somerset, who was released from jail. His daughter married Northumberland's son and he was restored to the Council. However, his continued plotting eventually led to his execution.

1.

Religious Change under Northumberland

- Religious direction became clear in 1550 with the new Ordinal (revised the procedure for the ordination of priests).
- There were difficulties in imposing changes, made clear in the campaign against images in Church. This campaign saw a number of efforts to remove them: Royal Injunctions (July 1547) ordered the removal of superstitious images; all images ordered to be removed in January 1548 and a Proclamation in December 1549 ordered the destruction of the remainder of the images.
- Northumberland consolidated power in 1551 which allowed further change: conservative bishops removed (e.g. Gardiner) giving reformists a majority among bishops; new Treason Act which made it an offence to question the Royal Supremacy or Church of England; Second Act of Uniformity; Second Prayer Book.

2.

To what extent was England Protestant by the death of Edward VI in 1553?

- Some historians argue that steady but slow moves towards Protestantism were made in the reign, with major moves only occurring in the last few months with the Second Prayer Book and Second Act of Uniformity; they also argue that the changes had little time to make an impact.
- No doubt that England became officially Protestant – churches had been changed, altars replaced with communion tables, the new service being used in every parish.
- Difficult for historians to assess the extent to which ordinary people welcomed the changes – some parishes where change was welcomed and others where change seems to have been accepted grudgingly; Duffy suggests this begrudging acceptance was because people were used to being obedient to the monarchy, although he noted that exposure to Cranmer's Prayer Book must have had an impact over time.
- Loades argues that Protestantism did not take root naturally – it was artificial and imposed (albeit successfully) by authority.
- Also suggested that number of changes since the Break from Rome left many people confused or religiously indifferent – they accepted changes because they were told to and neither welcomed nor opposed them.
- Only areas which seem to have embraced Protestantism were London and some southern counties such as East Anglia; Mary's ease in restoring Catholicism suggests that traditional religion remained popular.

3.

Attempt to alter the succession, 1553

- In early 1553, Edward VI's health began to decline; according to the Succession Acts and Henry's will, the throne was to pass to Mary Tudor. During spring/summer, a plot was developed to alter the succession and exclude Mary.
- Most accounts have suggested that the driving force was Northumberland, as this was essential to maintaining his power. Northumberland arranged the marriage of his son, Guildford Dudley, to Lady Jane Grey, followed soon after by a change in Edward's will to name Jane as his successor (My Devise for the Succession).
- However, some evidence suggests that the driving force was Edward – not Northumberland. He had been playing a much greater role in government and was a convinced Protestant so it is possible he wanted to exclude Mary to preserve the religious reform programme. Poor management of the plot adds weight to the view it was not Northumberland's work – as an experienced soldier, it is likely he would have ensured he had sufficient forces available should Mary challenge the Devise, ensured Mary's capture (rather than allowing her to escape to East Anglia where she built up her forces) and launched a propaganda campaign preparing the nation for the change to the succession.
- Edward died on 6th July and Mary was quick to respond – she proclaimed herself queen and sent letters to towns and the Privy Council; legitimacy was important to the ruling classes and it was in their interests to support the rightful ruler – this forced the Council to respond. On 10th July, Jane Grey was proclaimed queen against her will, meanwhile Mary did the same – England seemed on the verge of civil war as Mary was able to raise a large force.
- Northumberland was forced to leave London to confront the challenge – his departure gave the Council the opportunity to reconsider their position, with many now defecting to Mary. Not only did he not gain support on the way, but many of his men deserted him. He was forced to retreat and proclaim Mary queen. Northumberland, Jane Grey and Guildford Dudley were arrested and all later executed.

4.

The Tudors: The reign of Mary I

4. Marian government

1. How serious a threat to the monarchy was a female ruler?

- Number of reasons it was feared that a female ruler would weaken the monarchy: a woman could not control faction; a woman would be unable to lead an army into battle; a woman was expected to marry – who would she marry and how could she be both subservient to her husband and rule the country?
- Concerns about choice of husband – an Englishman would increase his family's power (this family would then dominate court); a foreigner would lead to England being dominated by a foreign power.

2. Did the Spanish marriage cause a crisis?

- Suggestion that Mary might marry Edward Courtenay, Earl of Devon (Plantagenet blood) but she preferred Philip of Spain (a Habsburg – the family of her mother, Catherine of Aragon).
- When Mary announced her plans to the Council there was concern that although Philip was powerful and could protect Mary, England would be dragged into Habsburg wars. Despite a petition from the Commons, Mary ignored all opposition and in January 1554, a marriage treaty was approved by the Council.
- Plotting had begun as soon as rumours spread of a possible Spanish marriage, with Sir James Croft, Sir Peter Carew and Sir Thomas Wyatt fearful of losing their influence and being replaced by Spaniards. Initial plan was a four-pronged rising based in Devon, Leicestershire, the Welsh borders and Kent – however, it was only Kent that eventually rose.
- Historians debate whether the marriage was the cause of the rebellion. Wyatt and the others were committed Protestants and the government may have portrayed this as a religious rising to deflect from the unpopularity of the marriage.
- Rebels planned to marry Princess Elizabeth to Courtenay, but he disclosed the scheme to Gardiner (Mary's Lord Chancellor) which forced Wyatt to raise his force earlier than anticipated. He managed to raise 3000 men which was a serious threat to Mary – a royal force sent under the Duke of Norfolk also defected and joined the rebels.
- As the rebels neared London, the Privy Council tried to raise forces and urged Mary to leave but she refused, and her resolution is seen as a major factor in the defeat of rebel forces. The rebels were stopped at Ludgate where Wyatt surrendered.
- Mary executed less than 100 rebels – this could suggest it wasn't seen as a serious threat or could show her caution lest she provoke further unrest. Wyatt, Lady Jane Grey, her father Suffolk and Guildford Dudley were all executed; Courtenay and Elizabeth were questioned but later released – the marriage went ahead.

3. To what extent did the challenges to Mary threaten the stability of the monarchy?

- Both challenges to Mary had the potential to remove the legitimate monarch: Jane Grey had been proclaimed queen and Wyatt's rebels had reached the gates of London. However, both rebellions failed in part because the country wished to avoid the disorder that a disputed succession would bring.
- Wyatt's rebellion had threatened the stability of the regime – it was only the loyalty of some nobles that saved Mary and many had seemed reluctant to commit to a side until an outcome was clear; the rising being so close to London meant it struck at the heart of government and the surrounding areas had failed to back Mary.
- Possible to suggest that government actions show the reign was weak – no widespread **punitive** campaign after the Wyatt rising, Elizabeth and Courtenay both released, Paget became part of Mary's government after initially backing Jane.
- In both instances it was probably Mary's actions that preserved the Tudor regime – when challenged by Northumberland's coup she presented herself as the legitimate heir and rallied support; during the Wyatt rising she ignored advice and stood her ground in London and rallied the support of the city.

4. Faction and instability

- Dislike of foreigners (especially Spaniards) does not seem to have impacted the government of the country after the Spanish marriage.
- Some have argued that divisions in the Council did create instability; some have argued that the size of the Council made it ineffective but it was very rare for all of them to meet, and meetings rarely exceeded the size of those under Northumberland.
- Improvement of Council efficiency: establishment of committees, establishment of an "Inner Council" in 1555 and Philip's departure in 1555 (along with the death of Gardiner) allowed Paget to dominate and create a **conciliar** form of government,
- There were disputes over issues such as the revival of heresy laws but most of the time, the Council appears to have been able to put rivalry aside.
- Must also be remembered that factional rivalry was not new to Mary's reign, and was not always a bad thing.

Key Words

Conciliar: relating to a council.

Punitive: intended as punishment.

The Tudors: The reign of Mary I

5. Marian Religious Change / Overview

How popular were Mary's religious changes?

- Parliament met in 1553 but refused to repeal the Act of Supremacy (suggesting anti-Papal feeling); did pass an **Act of Repeal** which repealed Edward's reforms and restored religion to how it had been in 1547. By the end of the year Mary had given up her title as head of the Church.
- Mary used the **royal prerogative** to suspend the Second Act of Uniformity – no serious opposition but signs of disaffection, e.g. Wyatt's Rebellion.
- Early months of 1554 saw around 800 Protestants (mostly gentry, the wealthy and the clergy) leaving England for Germany and Switzerland. This was not an option for the poor, and many others remained, waiting on further developments.
- Royal Injunctions of 1554** – restoration of traditional Catholic practices (e.g. Holy Days); deprivation of large numbers of married clergy; Protestant bishops removed from their posts – all without major opposition.
- Restoration of **heresy laws** caused significant opposition – parliament rejected their reintroduction in 1554 (only agreeing when promises were made that monastic lands would not be given back to the Church).
- Second Act of Repeal** (November 1554) repealed all religious legislation since 1529 but Mary was forced to compromise with landowners – the Act protected the property rights of those who had bought Church land since 1536 and prevented full-scale restoration of Catholicism (large numbers of monasteries could not be refounded).

1.

Reactions to persecution of Protestants

- Nearly 300 people went to the stake (including 51 women), mainly in the south-east, Canterbury, London and Colchester.
- Writings of John Foxe have been used to suggest there was considerable opposition to the burnings and that the fires at Smithfield are what turned England Protestant – more recent work has challenged this view but the impact on the public remains unclear.
- October 1555 – Bishops Latimer and Ridley were burned at Oxford, followed by Cranmer in 1556. Some have argued that the burning of Cranmer was Mary's biggest mistake as it attracted a lot of sympathy.
- Death of Gardiner in November 1555 removed a restraining influence on Mary and the burnings increased.
- Large crowds attended the burnings – they were big public spectacles.
- Burnings only took place because victims were reported by local authorities – they would not have happened without the support of local officials.
- Difficult to determine the impact of the burnings – some have argued it did much to damage Mary's reputation but Haigh has argued that 'it was not a success, nor was it a disaster. If it did not help the Catholic cause, it did not do much harm.'

2.

To what extent was England Catholic by Mary's death?

- Historians have tended to focus on the negatives (i.e. burnings) and have overlooked the positive steps taken by Cardinal Pole – ordering visitations to check on clerical behaviour; creation of the London Synod which stressed the importance of priests being resident so they could carry out their duties; ordering publication of a Catholic New Testament and a new Book of **Homilies**.
- To influence **the laity**, the government adopted a two-pronged approach; they tried to control Protestant literature and attempted to be proactive themselves but were not very successful: Protestant writing was smuggled in from abroad and 19,000 copies of the Second Prayer Book meant a Protestant underground could be sustained.
- In the parishes, the evidence suggests that Catholic worship returned speedily and was welcomed by many; restoring a church was not cheap but evidence suggests parishioners showed their support by committing large sums of money to the process.

3.

Why was the monarchy able to survive the mid-Tudor crisis?

- There were times (particularly 1553) when the Tudor regime was seriously challenged but historians now agree that it would be wrong to see this period as one of continuous crisis.
- Even in 1553, the government survived Northumberland's challenge – with the political class wanting to avoid civil conflict.
- Regime survived minority of Edward VI because at crucial times, the foundations of the state were strong enough to survive the ambitions of men such as Somerset.
- Although there were numerous religious changes, the country avoided the religious wars that were prevalent in places like France and the Netherlands; most people were willing to accept the religion of the monarch; even Mary's persecution of Protestants did not provoke violence.
- Social and economic problems added to the difficulties of the mid-Tudor monarchs but the response of the state helped prevent further disquiet. Although socio-economic disturbances had the potential to cause crises, the government survived.

4.

Key Words

Royal prerogative: authority and privilege recognized in common law as belonging to the sovereign.

Homilies: sermons.

Laity: ordinary people in a religious community (not members of the clergy).