

**REFORMATION BRITAIN
- ANNE OF CLEVES:
HENRY VIII'S BELOVED
SISTER**



REFORMATION BRITAIN - ANNE OF CLEVES: HENRY VIII'S BELOVED SISTER

Description

Through an in-depth analysis of various primary and secondary sources, students in this lesson will identify, understand and be able to explain the story of Anne of Cleves, how she and Henry VIII came to marry, why their marriage was quickly annulled under Henry's orders and how she was treated by the king and the English people after the annulment.

Subjects

European History, World History

Grade Level

11-12

Duration

90 minutes

Tour Links

- Anne of Cleves House, Lewes
- Westminster Abbey
- Kleve, Germany

Essential Questions

- Who was Henry VIII? Why did he take so many wives?
- Who was Anne of Cleves? How did she become Henry's fourth wife?
- How did Henry react to meeting Anne?
- Why was the marriage annulled after only a few months?
- How was Anne treated by the English (and Henry) after the annulment?
- What was Anne's relationship with Henry's children?

Academic Summary

Letter of Anne of Cleves to her husband, King Henry VIII

11 July 1540

Pleaseth your most excellent majesty to understand that, whereas, at sundry times heretofore, I have been informed and perceived by certain lords and others your grace's council, of the doubts and questions which have been moved and found in our marriage; and how hath petition thereupon been made to your highness by your nobles and commons, that the same might be examined and determined by the holy clergy of this realm; to testify to your highness by my writing, that which I have before promised by my word and will, that is to say, that the matter should be examined and determined by the said clergy; it may please your majesty to know that, though this case must needs be most hard and sorrowful unto me, for the great love which I bear to your most noble person, yet, having more regard to God and his truth than to any worldly affection, as it beseemed me, at the beginning, to submit me to such examination and determination of the said clergy, whom I have and do accept for judges competent in that behalf. So now being ascertained how the same clergy hath therein given their judgment and sentence, I acknowledge myself hereby to accept and approve the same, wholly and entirely putting myself, for my state and condition, to your highness' goodness and pleasure; most humbly beseeching your majesty that, though it be determined that the pretended matrimony between us is void and of none effect, whereby I neither can nor will repute myself for your grace's wife, considering this sentence (whereunto I stand) and your majesty's clean and pure living with me, yet it will please you to take me for one of your humble servants, and so determine of me, as I may sometimes have the fruition of your most noble presence; which as I shall esteem for a great benefit, so, my lords and others of your majesty's council, now being with me, have put me in comfort thereof; and that your highness will take me for your sister; for the which I most humbly thank you accordingly. Thus, most gracious prince, I beseech our Lord God to send your majesty long life and good health, to God's glory, your own honor, and the wealth of this noble realm.

From Richmond, the 11th day of July, the 32nd year of your majesty's most noble reign.

Your majesty's most humble sister and servant, Anne the daughter of Cleves.

Letter from Spanish Ambassador Eustace Chapuys to the Royal Spanish Court

On New Year's Eve the duke of Norfolk with other knights and the barons of the exchequer received her grace on the heath, two miles beyond Rochester, and so brought her to the abbey of Rochester where she stayed that night and all New Years Day. And on New Years Day in the afternoon the king's grace with five of his privy chamber, being disguised with mottled cloaks with hoods so that they should not be recognized, came secretly to Rochester, and so went up into the chamber where the said Lady Anne was looking out of a window to see

the bull-baiting which was going on in the courtyard, and suddenly he embraced and kissed her, and showed her a token which the king had sent her for New Year's gift, and she being abashed and not knowing who it was thanked him, and so he spoke with her. But she regarded him little, but always looked out the window.... and when the king saw that she took so little notice of his coming he went into another chamber and took off his cloak and came in again in a coat of purple velvet. And when the lords and knights saw his grace they did him reverence.... and then her grace humbled herself lowly to the king's majesty, and his grace saluted her again, and they talked together lovingly, and afterwards he took her by the hand and led her to another chamber where their graces amused themselves that night and on Friday until the afternoon.

....So she came to Greenwich that night, and was received as queen. And the next day, being Sunday, the king's grace kept a great court at Greenwich, where his grace with the queen offered at mass, richly dressed. And on Twelfth Night, which was Tuesday, the king's majesty was married to the said queen Anne solemnly, in her closet at Greenwich, and his grace and she went publicly in procession that day, she having a rich coronet of stone and pearls set with rosemary on her hair, and a gown of rich cloth of silver, richly hung with stones and pearls, with all her ladies and gentlewomen following her, which was a goodly sight to behold.

The marriage was probably doomed from the start. English King Henry VIII was 48 and had been married three times. Over the previous decade, Henry had broken with the Roman Catholic Church, divorced his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, executed another, Anne Boleyn, and watched as his third wife died from an infection after childbirth. With three children from three different previous wives, however, the king's counselors advised him to marry again to ensure there would be no problems with the royal succession. Henry's break with Rome also necessitated looking towards a Protestant alliance in case England went to war with the Holy Roman Empire, Spain or France (the Catholic powers in Europe). As the king's advisors looked across the map of Europe for potential connections, they finally settled on the Duchy of Cleves, an independent Protestant kingdom along the Rhine River between France and Saxony. William of Cleves had the alliances England needed. As a member of the Schmalkaldic League, an association of Protestant kingdoms in Northern and Central Europe, Cleves had potential as an ally in case of a war. William also had two unmarried sisters: Anne (aged 24) and Amalia (aged 21). In 1539, Henry's court sent representatives across the English Channel to Cleves to negotiate a marriage between Henry and one of the young ladies. Accompanying the party was Henry's royal painter, Hans Holbein the Younger. Henry's instructions to Holbein were simple. He wanted to know what the girls looked like.

As the royal representatives hammered out the marriage contract, Holbein, whose art was well-respected across England and Europe and whose portraits of Sir Thomas More and Henry VIII are some of the most famous of the time period, painted depictions each of the girls and had them dispatched to King Henry. After comparing the two,

Henry chose the older sister Anne to be his new bride.

The young lady would prove to be a profound disappointment. Unlike English women of court, the Cleves girls were not educated in a Renaissance humanist tradition. Anne could read and write, but only in German. She was also described by different sources as being “plain” and “solemn.” When she and Henry first met on New Year’s Day 1540 the king expressed his severe disappointment to his ministers, but nonetheless consented to go through with the marriage. They were married on 06 Jan 1540. According to the reports the wedding night did not go well and that the marriage was never consummated. Henry’s disposition toward his wife only got worse from there, as he often complained about Anne’s looks and her smell (ironic considering Henry’s notorious and well-documented odors). On 09 July 1540, Henry had the marriage annulled, a decision Anne chose not to oppose. As compensation for her understanding and loyalty, Anne received a generous settlement of lands and wealth. She and the king eventually became good friends and she appeared at court often as “the King’s Beloved Sister.” Her apparent fondness for English Ale and gambling became legendary across the realm. She also developed a close relationship with the king’s daughters, especially Mary. When Mary assumed the throne in 1553 after her brother Edward IV passed away with no heirs, Anne participated in the coronation ceremony.

Anne lived the last few years of her life in quiet seclusion at Chelsea Old Manor. She died at age 41 in 1557 (probably from cancer). Mary, still queen at the time, had Anne buried at Westminster Abbey, the only one of Henry’s wives buried in the famous cathedral. In what may be one of the most ironic twists in the story of the English Reformation era, the wife with whom the king never had sexual relations outlived all of Henry’s other wives by over five years.

Through an in-depth analysis of various primary and secondary sources, students in this lesson will identify, understand and be able to explain the story of Anne of Cleves, how she and Henry VIII came to marry, why their marriage was quickly annulled under Henry’s orders and how she was treated by the king and the English people after the annulment.

Objectives

1. Students will identify, analyze, understand and be able to explain how Anne of Cleves and Henry VIII came to be married in 1540.
2. Students will identify, analyze, understand and be able to explain why the marriage lasted only six months before the king had it annulled.
3. Students will identify, analyze, understand and be able to explain how Anne was treated by Henry and the English people after the annulment.

Procedure

I. Anticipatory Set

- Writing / Question: What is an annulment? Why might it be used? (5 min)
- Handouts – Copies of the primary sources and readings from the websites listed. (5 min)

II. Body of Lesson

- Lecture / PPT – Anne of Cleves. (20 min)
- Video – Anne of Cleves (10 min)
- Independent Activity – Students read the primary sources and articles on Anne of Cleves, taking notes as appropriate. (20 min)
- Suggestion: Have the students read some of the articles as preparation for class discussion.
- Suggestion: Break students into groups and assign different articles to each group.
- Group Activity – Socratic Discussion: Anne of Cleves (20 min)

III. Closure

- Assessment – Essay / DBQ: Explain in detail the story of Anne of Cleves, how she and Henry VIII came to marry, why their marriage was quickly annulled under Henry's orders and how she was treated by the king and the English people after the annulment.

Extension

On tour: Anne of Cleves Burial Place, Westminster Abbey

While on tour, students visit Westminster Abbey, where they can see for themselves the final resting place for many of England's most famous people, including Anne of Cleves. When Anne died in 1557, her former stepdaughter Mary, Queen of England at the time, arranged to have the body buried at Westminster Abbey. The tomb, described as "somewhat hard to find", is across from Edward the Confessor's shrine on the south side of the High Altar.

Web Links

Lesson Plan Websites

- <http://englishhistory.net/tudor/letter12.html>
Letter of Anne of Cleves to her husband, King Henry VIII, 15 July 1540 (primary source)
- www.historylearningsite.co.uk/anne_of_cleves.htm
Anne of Cleves (website) – from the History Learning Site (UK)
- www.pbs.org/wnet/sixwives/meet/ac_handbook_main.html
Anne of Cleves (website) – from PBS, this website has a good deal of information on Anne and Henry and is a great place to start for all students and teachers
- <http://tudorhistory.org/cleves/index.html>
Anne of Cleves (website)
- www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/jonathanjonesblog/2011/apr/27/holbein-engineer-royal-wedding#
Did Holbein engineer a royal wedding? (web article) – from the Guardian (UK)
- <http://englishhistoryauthors.blogspot.com/2013/02/the-flanders-mare-anne-of-cleves-henry.html>
The Flanders Mare: Anne of Cleves, Henry VIII's Fourth Wife (website)
- <http://sussexpast.co.uk/properties-to-discover/anne-of-cleves-house>
Anne of Cleves House (website)
- www.bbc.co.uk/learningzone/clips/anne-of-cleves-and-henry-viii/9012.html
Anne of Cleves and Henry VIII (website) – from the BBC
- www.teachingchannel.org/videos/choosing-primary-source-documents?fd=1
Reading Like a Historian: Primary Source Documents (video). Great 2-minute video on how to incorporate primary sources into the Common Core and history classes. From Shilpa Duvor of Summit Preparatory Charter High School in Redwood City, CA. Highly recommended for teachers.
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bf9cyUIHT6U
Anne of Cleves (video) – from Brett Dolman, curator of the Historic Royal Palaces (UK)
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=LdQnrQd6958
The Six Wives of Henry VIII – Anne of Cleves (video). This 90-minute video, produced in 1970 by the BBC is based on the events surrounding Henry and Anne. It is part of a six-part series. Each episode is probably too long for most in-class showings, but it is highly recommended as out-of-class preparation for all students.

Background Information

- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anne_of_Cleves
Anne of Cleves – Wikipedia article
- www.passports.com/group_leaders/on_the_road/the_united_kingdom/country_profile
On the Road: Britain (country profile) – from Passports Educational Travel

Other Relevant Passports Lesson Plans

- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/england/sir-thomas-more
Reformation England – Sir Thomas More
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/england/english-reformation
Reformation England – An Overview
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/england/reformation-britain-pilgrimage-of-grace
Reformation England – Pilgrimage of Grace 1536-37

Key Terms

- Anne of Cleves
- Arranged marriage
- Consummated
- King Henry VIII

