

How far did Henry VIII change the English church?

Today I will practise...

- Explaining the extent of religious **change** brought about by Henry VIII.
- **Presentation skills:** presenting work neatly, with a title and date.

Background to the European Reformation

Before the 16th Century (1500s), the only religion in England was **Roman Catholicism**. Roman Catholics were Christians. They believed that **the Pope** in Rome was the head of the Church in the whole world. They believed that the Pope was chosen by God and that being a Roman Catholic was the only true religion and the only way to get to heaven. The Pope could even **tell kings and queens what to do**, or they risked going to hell.

Until the 16th Century, Europe was Catholic. However, a German Monk called **Martin Luther** questioned whether the Catholic church was the right way to be. The Catholic church was **rich and powerful**, and Luther thought there was too much domination of the people by the Pope. He wanted churchmen to be more humble and for ordinary people to **read the Bible for themselves** (Catholic Bibles were in **Latin**, so only rich and educated people could read the Bible). This new religion was called **Protestantism**, because Luther protested against the Roman Catholic Church and the power of the Pope.

In 1534, proud King **Henry VIII** of England was **fed up of being told what to do** by the Pope. Henry VIII said that from now on he, not the Pope, was the **head of the Church** of England. However, many powerful people in England and powerful countries in Europe remained Roman Catholic. Henry's "break with Rome" was the start of trouble across the land for centuries...

Challenge Box

Answer these questions in full sentences.

1. What was the biggest change that Henry VIII made to the Church?
2. What things did Henry VIII keep the same in his new Church?
3. Which change would have caused the greatest upheaval in England?
4. Henry VIII converted back to the Catholic faith on his deathbed. What does this suggest about his actions against the Catholic Church?

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Dissolution of the Monasteries

Monasteries were buildings belonging to the Church where monks lived. In 1536 – 1537 Henry VIII ordered all these to **close**. He also **claimed all of their land and riches** for himself, which included gold, silver and expensive books.

Any of the monasteries that resisted closure were **crushed by force**. The monasteries were either **torn down**, fell into ruin or given away to rich families who supported Henry.

Church Services

Henry kept **most Church services the same**. Bishops and priests were allowed to stay in their positions if they agreed to **swear an oath** to support the King. Churches remained decorated in colour but any **symbols of the Pope** were removed. Henry did insist that all Church services were given **in English** and that at the end of every service they prayed for the King.

Priests

Priests were allowed to keep their positions if they agreed to **swear an oath** to the king. The priests had to **give their sermons in English** but otherwise continued as normal. As long as they were willing to agree to what Henry wanted they were relatively unaffected.

Bible

The Bible under the Catholic Church was written in Latin, which only priests and educated people could understand. Henry VIII changed this. Under his new rules Henry insisted that **the Bible was written in English** so that everyone could understand it. Even so, few people could read and so Priests still controlled what the Bible said.