**The Tudors, religious upheaval, & questions of succession**

**Henry VIII (born 6/28/1491; died 1/28/1547; reigned 1509-1547)**

Henry VIII was born at Greenwich on 28 June 1491, the second son of Henry VII and Elizabeth of York. He became heir to the throne on the death of his elder brother, Prince Arthur.   
  
As the author of a best-selling book (it went through some 20 editions in England and Europe) attacking Martin Luther and supporting the Roman Catholic church, in 1521 Henry was given the title 'Defender of the Faith' by the Pope.

The second half of Henry's reign was dominated by two intertwined issues (which would prove to be very important for the later history of England and the monarchy): the succession and the Protestant Reformation, which led to the formation of the Church of England.  
  
Henry had married his brother's widow, Catherine of Aragon, in 1509. Catherine had produced only one surviving child - a girl, Princess Mary, born in 1516. By the end of the 1520s, Henry's wife was in her forties and he was desperate for a son.   
  
England had, at this point, never had a ruling queen, and the dynasty was not secure enough to run the risk of handing the Crown to a woman, risking disputed succession or domination of a foreign power through marriage.

Henry had anyway fallen in love with another woman, Anne Boleyn, and tried to persuade the Pope to grant him an annulment of his marriage. However, a previous Pope had specifically granted Henry the license to marry his brother's widow in 1509, & he was not given permission to annul his marriage.

Since the attempts to obtain the annulment had failed, Henry turned to Parliament, using its powers to decide the issue. The result was a series of Acts cutting back papal power and influence in England and bringing about the English Reformation.

The Pope responded by excommunicating Henry, which led to Parliamentary legislation enacting Henry's decision to break with the Roman Catholic Church.   
  
The Act of Supremacy (1534) which recognized that the English monarch was the only supreme head of the Church of England also called the Anglican Church.

Henry's second marriage had raised hopes for a male heir. Anne Boleyn, however, produced another daughter, Princess Elizabeth, and failed to produce a male child. Henry got rid of Anne on charges of treason which were almost certainly false, and she was executed in 1536. In 1537 her replacement, Henry's third wife Jane Seymour, finally bore him a son, who was later to become Edward VI. Jane died 12 days after Edward’s birth.

Henry made two more marriages, to Katherine Howard (executed on grounds of adultery in 1542) and Catherine Parr (who survived Henry to die in 1548). None produced any children.

Henry made sure that his sole male heir, Edward, was educated by people who believed in Protestantism rather than Catholicism because he wanted the anti-Catholic nature of his reformation and his dynasty to become permanent.

Henry's English Reformation had produced dangerous Protestant-Roman Catholic differences in the kingdom. Significantly, Parliament's involvement in making religious and dynastic changes had been firmly established. For all his concern over establishing his dynasty and the resulting religious upheaval, Henry's six marriages had produced one sickly son and an insecure succession with two princesses (Mary and Elizabeth) who each, at one stage, had been declared illegitimate.

In 1543, Henry forced Parliament to pass a law, called the Act of Succession Act of 1553. In it, he declared that Edward was his heir, to be followed by Mary (if Edward died without a biological heir), then Elizabeth (if Mary died without a biological heir).

**Edward VI (born 10/12/1537; died 7/6/1553; reigned 1547-1553)**

Edward VI became king at the age of nine upon the death of his father, Henry VIII in 1537.

During Edward's reign, the Church of England became more Protestant - Edward himself was fiercely so. Almost all aspects of Roman Catholic practices in the English church were eliminated.  
  
However, Edward was not very healthy; and in 1553 he became very ill. Edward had no heir, and his half-sister Mary was next in line for the throne, but Mary was a Catholic. Edward didn’t want England becoming a Catholic nation again, so before his death, he attempted to change the line of succession & named his cousin Jane Grey as his heir. On his death from tuberculosis in 1553, Jane assumed the throne, with her husband recognized as the King of England.

**Lady Jane Grey (born 1536; died 2/12/1554; reigned 7/10/1553-7/19/1553)**

Since Edward’s attempt to change the line of succession wasn’t legal, the country (& the army) backed Mary, in her attempt to claim the throne. Jane reigned for only nine days and was later executed with her husband in 1554.

**Mary I (born 2/18/1516; died 11/17/1558; reigned 1553-1558)**

Mary I was the first Queen Regnant (that is, a queen reigning in her own right rather than a queen through marriage to a king).   
  
Mary was a devout Catholic, and restored the Catholic Church in England. She also abandoned the title of Supreme Head of the Anglican Church.   
  
In order to return the Catholic Church to power in England, Mary made heresy (speaking or acting against the church; in this case the CATHOLIC church) a crime punishable by death. Around 300 Protestant heretics were burnt in three years. Apart from making Mary deeply unpopular (she was given the nickname “Bloody Mary”), such treatment demonstrated that people were prepared to die for the Protestant settlement established in Henry's reign.

Aged 37 when she became Queen, Mary wished to marry and have children, thus leaving a Catholic heir to consolidate her religious reforms, and preventing her half-sister Elizabeth (a Protestant) from becoming Queen after her.   
  
Mary married Philip, King of Spain in 1554. But the marriage was childless, and Mary died in 1558, possibly from cancer, leaving the crown to her half-sister Elizabeth, a Protestant.

**Elizabeth I (born 9/7/1553; died 3/24/1603; reigned 1558-1603)**

Elizabeth I - the last Tudor monarch - was the daughter of Henry VIII and his second wife, Anne Boleyn.

Elizabeth succeeded to the throne on her half-sister, Mary's death in November 1558. Her 45-year reign is generally considered one of the most glorious in English history. During it the Protestant Anglican Church was re-established as the official church of England. Despite this, Elizabeth herself refused to fight with Catholics, or the Catholic church; she asked for outward uniformity. Most of her subjects accepted the compromise as the basis of their faith, and her church settlement probably saved England from religious wars.

Elizabeth chose never to marry. If she had chosen a foreign prince, he would have drawn England into foreign policies for his own advantages and marrying a fellow countryman could have drawn the Queen into political infighting.   
  
However, the 'Virgin Queen' was presented as a selfless woman who sacrificed personal happiness for the good of the nation, to which she was, in essence, 'married'.   
Late in her reign, she addressed Parliament in the so-called 'Golden Speech' of 1601 when she told MPs: 'There is no jewel, be it of never so high a price, which I set before this jewel; I mean your love.' She seems to have been very popular with the vast majority of her subjects.

Overall, Elizabeth's always shrewd and, when necessary, decisive leadership brought successes during a period of great danger both at home and abroad. She died at Richmond Palace on 24 March 1603, having become a legend in her lifetime.

Since she had no heir, and no successor was named, the closest relative was James VI, king of Scotland, Elizabeth’s 1st cousin, twice removed. He would become James I, king of England.