

Does queen mary 1st
deserve the title
"bloody mary"



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Henry the 8th had 6 wives. When his first wife, Catherine of Aragon was divorced, her daughter Mary was declared illegitimate and had her right to the throne removed. Then, when she refused to pay her respects to his second daughter, Elizabeth her father refused to see her. In 1536 she swore an oath declaring that her mother had been justly divorced (in contrast, she wrote to the Pope, informing him that she had been forced to take it). The third wife, Jane Seymour was the daughter of Sir John Seymour was first, in 1530 the lady in waiting for Catherine of Aragon and then for Anne Boleyn. When Henry's marriage with Anne Boleyn was falling apart, Jane Seymour caught the eye of Henry 8th. Eleven days after Anne Boleyn's execution, (due to Henry's accusations of witchcraft and adultery) Jane Seymour married Henry. On the 12th October 1537 she gave birth to a male heir, who would later become King Edward 6th of England. It is widely accepted that Henry was deeply in love with Jane when she died on the 24th October 1537 due to postnatal complications (she had contracted puerperal fever).

When Henry died on the 28th January 1547 Jane Seymour's her son, Edward 6th became King. Henry had started the process for England becoming a protestant country and Edward continued it. Because he was so young, the country was primarily run by senior nobles, firstly the duke of Somerset and later the Duke of Northumberland. Because both were prominent Protestants it was during Edwards's short reign that England finally became a protestant country. Many rebelled against it but the plans still went ahead.

Some of the first steps of England becoming a protestant country included: Archbishop Cranmer issued a book of Protestant sermons which had to be

read in all churches, all Catholic chantries were abolished, the government then ordered for all statues and paintings in churches should be removed, and a new prayer book (in English) by Archbishop Cranmer was issued that set out the service that all churches had to follow and included the instruction that priests should wear plain clothes.

The main differences were that the services were in English. The king, as God's representative could have headship of the church. The only way to heaven is to have true faith by reading the bible and the words of the bible are the only thing that should be accepted as true religion and churches should be plain with priests wearing plain vestments. In 1553 Edward was dying from tuberculosis. The heir to the throne was Mary, daughter of the discarded Catherine of Aragon and a devout Catholic.

To save Protestantism, the duke of Northumberland decided he would try and stop Mary from becoming Queen and hatched a plan to use 15 year old daughter in law, Lady Jane Grey to try and keep England a Protestant country. He persuaded Edward to name her as his successor, and when he died he kept the news secret whilst he tried to capture Princess Mary, Henry's daughter and the rightful heir to the throne. Mary had foreseen this and so fled to East Anglia and reminded the Privy Council that she was the legitimate successor to the throne.

The council gave their support to Mary, as did the nobles and towns all over the country. Northumberland was forced to surrender and was executed. Although Lady Jane was spared for a while, a rebellion against the queen provoked Mary to order her execution. The essay question is so controversial

as many say that if Mary had produced a Catholic heir, then she would never have acquired this name. They say that it was protestant propaganda as the protestant rulers thereafter were trying to make themselves gain support by denoting the opposition and something they didn't believe in.

Another reason that the question is controversial is that many people see it in a modern day context, but in that era executions were common practice. I will answer the question by not only comparing and contrasting the ideas of both views of the question, but also by showing how various factors are inter-linked and contrast with the popular image of Mary. Firstly, a reason that she deserved the title 'Bloody Mary' was because of the sheer scale of the burnings and the atrocities that surrounded the events.

At a particular burning of Protestants there was reportedly (according to 'Foxes book of martyrs') a heavily pregnant woman that gave birth while burning, that had her baby thrown back into the flames by the soldiers. They were both engulfed in flames. Even according to the standards of this era, the brutality of this event is still greatly overwhelming. On the topic of the immense scale of burnings, Mary burnt 283 victims in her short reign of five years, which is more than three times the sum of all other Tudor monarchs with a combined reign of 113 years.

Secondly, another reason she acquired the title was that the ordinary people viewed those dying as martyrs, dying for a cause that they believed in and they were admired for their bravery. This opinion was almost definitely influenced by the publishing of the book 'Foxes book of martyrs' which was very popular, second only to the Bible. The sources make the executions

unpopular because they say things like " We shall this day light such a candle by God's grace in England, as I trust shall never be put out. " By saying this it portrays the image that they are dying for their cause so that Protestantism could carry on after they were gone.

This contrasts with Mary's proclamation of them as heretics and when they are talking about God it makes them seem holy in contrast with when Mary's saying that they are going to hell. This book spoke of horrendous events and encouraged people to emphasise and feel sorry for the victims, in addition to speaking out against Catholicism, creating the popular image of Mary.

Therefore, changing their status from heretics to martyrs. Few people however, had Mary's viewpoint of them being heretics and this led to her rapidly decreasing popularity amongst citizens.

In addition to this, her appointment of the Bishop of London, Edward Bonner to oversee the burnings lost her even more support, as even devout Catholics disagreed with his attitude towards violence and torture; He supposedly tortured a blind man by holding his face to a candle until the skin cracked. Furthermore, another reason for her loss of public support was because of the peoples' understanding of the world around them; she married Phillip of Spain, but was infertile which was seen as God's punishment.

Then, in the summer of 1555, bad weather led to famine, which, in due course led to high food prices and disease. 1 in 5 died. This was seen as God's punishment because he didn't approve of what Mary was doing. This then led to loss of support as the people thought they should do what God

wanted. Another reason for her decreasing popularity was her unpopular marriage to Phillip of Spain. This was because people didn't want to be involved with Spanish feuds. But then Britain led a war against France for Spain and lost Calais which led to higher taxes.

In 1554 Thomas Wyatt, a Kentish land owner and Protestant, lead a revolt of 3000 against the marriage of Phillip of Spain. The reached London but surrendered due to the size of the defence. 120 rebels were executed. Bodies were hung and left to rot and Wyatt was hung, drawn and quartered. Although, the lack of a sizable amount of rebels tells us that perhaps Mary did still have support. However, on the other hand she doesn't deserve the title Bloody Mary as ' Foxe's book of martyrs' was protestant propoganda because it was used to make Mary look bad and Protestants look good and contributes to the popular image of Mary.

It was written by a man while in exile, so the information against her is probably unreliable as all the information was second-hand. Also, if she had produced a catholic heir to the throne this name would never have come about because she was the last Catholic Monarch in history. This means that what we are focusing on in this question is just protestant propoganda to make them seem in the right. Mary was protecting herself from rebellion by executions but Henry 8th killed people just for trying to reclaim monastic lands.

Other Tudor monarchs used harsh punishments and execution for petty crime was commonplace; you would be hung if you were caught stealing a loaf of bread. In addition to this, famine and disease were out of her control.

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And many mocked Mary for being infertile, even though they were circumstances beyond her. When Mary was a young girl growing up she was a popular favourite. A tiny girl with hazel eyes and red hair she was warm-hearted, affectionate and generous. She was very good at her studies of Latin and music in particular and loved a bit of a laugh.

She was messed up in her childhood and wanted to make the world right and cleanse it due to her beliefs. Many had strong beliefs during this period of time and many forget of the innocence behind the strong minded forefront and why she carried out her actions in such a way. To conclude, my opinion is that Mary didn't deserve the title 'Bloody Mary' as although the scale over the burnings were much larger than by other monarchs, the burnings were to symbolise the 'heretics' burning in hell so other execution methods were more popular, like in Henry 8th reign he liked to behead people.

The title was more due to her decreasing popularity because of other events such as the famine and wars with France. We need to understand that we need not to compare it with modern day context, but with the rest of the Tudor era. In addition to this, Mary was protecting her throne whereas Henry 8th just killed people needlessly. Another factor to remember is that if their was a catholic heir, then we would have never acquired this popular image of Mary as it was the Protestants on the throne after her that created it as people will always try and make what they believe seem better than other peoples opinions by the use of propaganda.