

The stages by which wolsey gained power in church and state



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Wolsey was born in Ipswich in 1472 and was the son of a butcher. From such a low place in society he rose to become the second most powerful man in the country and one of the wealthiest.

Wolsey reached the top in both ecclesiastical and secular positions due to both his character and personality and his fine mind. This being displayed at a very early age, after obtaining a BA from Oxford at the mere age of fifteen. Wolsey was gifted with all the skills needed for a good leader and although these were undoubtedly useful tools in making his way to the top, other factors such as luck, also played a part in Wolsey gaining power in both the Church and the state. As mentioned before, Wolsey's character and personality played a huge part in Wolsey's rise to the top.

His power loving character and his desire to reach the top and surpass all was helped by his unscrupulous character. He was prepared to do anything to achieve this objective and morality did not seem to deter him, for example carrying out the King's wishes regardless of whether he himself believed them to be correct or not. This is shown by Wolsey's gentlemen usher, who wrote, " He was the most earnest and the readiest among all the Council to advance the King's only will and pleasure without any respect to the case. " George Cavendish also wrote of Wolsey's ability to speak well and most persuasively, He had a filed tongue and ornate eloquence.

" Wolsey's first bit of luck was the accession of Henry VIII in 1509, as the fluid situation around the King provided an opportunity for Wolsey to become part of the court. In late 1509, Wolsey was made Royal Almoner and a member of the council. It was whilst he was in the council that Wolsey was

able to use his skill of speech and could present cases in council well.

Wolsey's position in council was significant as it meant he was able to share his viewpoints with Henry. In addition to this, being in council meant Wolsey knew that Henry was not pleased with his father's counsellors and it was therefore a matter of luck that this opportunity allowed Wolsey to gain Henry's favour and confidence by giving Henry the advice he wanted to hear. It was also a matter of luck that Wolsey did not have much competition as many of the leading figures from the previous reign such as Empson and Dudley were removed from the scene and others such as Bishop Fox and Archbishop Warham had retired.

This meant that Wolsey's path to rising to the top was relatively clear and he had no fear of being overshadowed. A significant stage in Wolsey's rise to the top was in 1513 when Wolsey was given the task of organising the French expedition. He managed to do so successfully overcoming all the problems of transport, weaponry and supplies and thereby showing his ability to organise such a large operation effectively. He also showed loyalty to the King by taking all measures to ensure that the King's wishes were fulfilled thereby both securing the King's confidence and illustrating his capability. This trust placed in Wolsey was illustrated in 1515 when Wolsey was appointed as Lord Chancellor. This gave him great power as it meant he was the head of the country's legal system and was responsible for the legal work of the King's council and for the courts that had originated from it.

The huge power which Wolsey exercised from this position cannot be underestimated as this arguably made him one of the most powerful men in the country. Wolsey's sudden successions of ecclesiastical titles were <https://assignbuster.com/the-stages-by-which-wolsey-gained-power-in-church-and-state/>

accompanied alongside his secular achievements. In 1513, Wolsey was made Bishop of Tournai, in 1514 Bishop of Lincoln and in 1515 the Archbishop of York. All of these bishoprics gave Wolsey a lot of wealth which also gave him power.

Being the Archbishop of York was very significant to Wolsey as it meant he was the second most senior person in the Church of England. However, Wolsey was not satisfied with being second best and he was able to persuade the Pope to make him Cardinal in 1515. Although this outranked all churchmen except the Pope, Wolsey did not have control of the Church as a whole and was therefore not satisfied as he had not outranked Archbishop Warham of Canterbury completely. Another campaign therefore took place in trying to make Wolsey Papal legate. He succeeded in securing his Papal legate in 1518 and his ecclesiastical career reached a pinnacle when in 1524, his powers were confirmed for life.

This undoubtedly put Wolsey above Warham and he had achieved his objective of surpassing all- he was now the most senior churchman in England. Having looked at the various stages in which Wolsey rose to power in both Church and state, it seems that Wolsey's early years were important in establishing Henry's trust and confidence and in displaying his capability. It was after establishing a firm foundation that Wolsey gained power quite rapidly in both Church and state.