



© 2023 GrandPalaisRmn (Louvre Museum) / Adrien Didierjean

ANNE OF CLEVES

WATCH-ALONG GUIDE

BEFORE WATCHING

Key themes

✚ Alliances

Relations between countries were just as important in the Tudor period as they are today. Alliances were often formed through marriage, shared enemies and shared religious beliefs.

✚ Women's power

In the Tudor period, society was controlled by men. However, occasionally women could live as a 'femme sole' – an independent woman with control over her own property and decisions.

✚ Tudor pastimes

In Tudor England, wealthy people spent their free time enjoying activities such as hunting, dancing, music and games.

Who was she?

Anne of Cleves became an independent woman, which was unusual in the Tudor period. She had her own castles and money, enjoyed hunting and gambling, and got on well with her servants, stepchildren, and Catherine Howard.

She was Henry VIII's fourth wife, and they were married for only a few months before their marriage was annulled. They had no children.

SIX the Musical

A modern musical that retells the stories of the wives of Henry VIII's. In this video, an actor from the show explores the real history behind her character with a historian.



Source used in the video

Part of a letter written about Anne of Cleves

Vocab

✚ Alliance

Agreement between people or countries to help each other



✚ Annulment

The ending of a marriage, a bit like a divorce, but it means the marriage never happened in the first place

✚ Femme sole

A single woman who can act independently

WHILE WATCHING

01:19 Why is Anne of Cleves often remembered only as “divorced”?
What’s missing?

Talking points: oversimplification; male-focused narratives; ignores character and influence

02:29 Why did Henry want to marry Anne of Cleves?

Talking points: political alliance; shared religious ideas

04:31 What does being a femme sole tell us about Anne’s status?

Talking points: financial independence; unusual freedom at that time; control of life

04:49 What do Anne’s activities tell us about Tudor leisure?

Talking points: hunting; gambling; fashion; lifestyle of high status

05:12 Why might the French ambassador have written about Anne, even after her marriage to Henry had ended?

Talking points: political interest; importance of English court; ongoing influence

06.35 How do you think Anne of Cleves should be remembered today, and why?

AFTER WATCHING

How do we know?

Use the Source Bank to explore a portrait of Anne of Cleves and part of a letter written about her.

Key events

1515 – Born in Cleves (modern-day Germany)

1539 – Travels to England to marry Henry VIII as part of a political alliance

January 1540 – Marries Henry VIII

July 1540 – Marriage is annulled; Anne remains in England

1541 – Dances with Catherine Howard, Henry’s new queen, at court

1547 – Henry dies and Anne moves to smaller estates

1553 – Takes part in the coronation procession of Mary I

1557 – Dies aged 41

