

Anne (Tudor Era - Early Modern Period)

Anne Boleyn was the second wife of King Henry VIII of England, born (probably) in 1501. Raised at the French court, she was considered an educated, self-assured, and politically influential English noblewoman. She was a supporter of the Reformation, promoting religious renewal and education. She wrote and played music, and her refusal to be merely a mistress to the English king set in motion a momentous development that led to the separation of the English Church from the Roman Catholic Church, giving rise to the Anglican Church. Because she did not bear Henry a male heir, an intrigue was hatched against her in 1536, three years after her marriage and coronation, accusing her of adultery and thus high treason. She was executed. Her fate is still commemorated today at the Tower of London, but she is also remembered as a woman whose ambition for power ultimately led to her downfall. She found herself in this situation partly due to the fact that her father, an influential diplomat and courtier, wanted to place his daughters in positions of power by any means necessary. It was expected of a daughter of a certain social standing, and pressure exerted on her by her family, to make the best possible match in terms of marriage. Certainly, her story is captivating and multifaceted, as various interpretations by historians demonstrate.



Unknown artist:
„Hever Rose Portrait“ of Anne Boleyn,
Oil on wood, app. 1550, ca. 58cm x 44cm,
Hever Castle, England

“A bold, high-spirited, and independent woman, she had played politics for high stakes, not as an agent but as a principal. In doing so, she had used the weapons with which nature had endowed her: wit, charm, intelligence... Cruel and unjust as her fate may now appear, she suffered the standard penalty at the time for being a dangerous loser. In that sense, her execution was in itself a tribute to her power.” (David Loades)

The renowned English historian Alison Weir describes Anne as an early feminist: “But I believe it is legitimate to see Anne as a feminist long before her time – or, to be accurate, of her time: it is a concept she would have understood, and it underpinned her ambitions and self-image.” Whether she was a feminist of her time according to modern interpretations is a matter of much debate among historians and Tudor enthusiasts today. There is general agreement, however, that a combination of the role of women at the Tudor court, her own ambition, and intriguing forces ultimately led to her downfall. And, of course, the “misfortune” of having given birth to “only” a girl – the future Queen Elizabeth I, “the Great.” A famous portrait was also created during her reign, which served as the basis for my interpretation of Anne.

Sources:

„Hever Rose Portrait“: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anne_Boleyn#/media/File: AnneBoleynHever.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anne_Boleyn#/media/File:AnneBoleynHever.jpg)