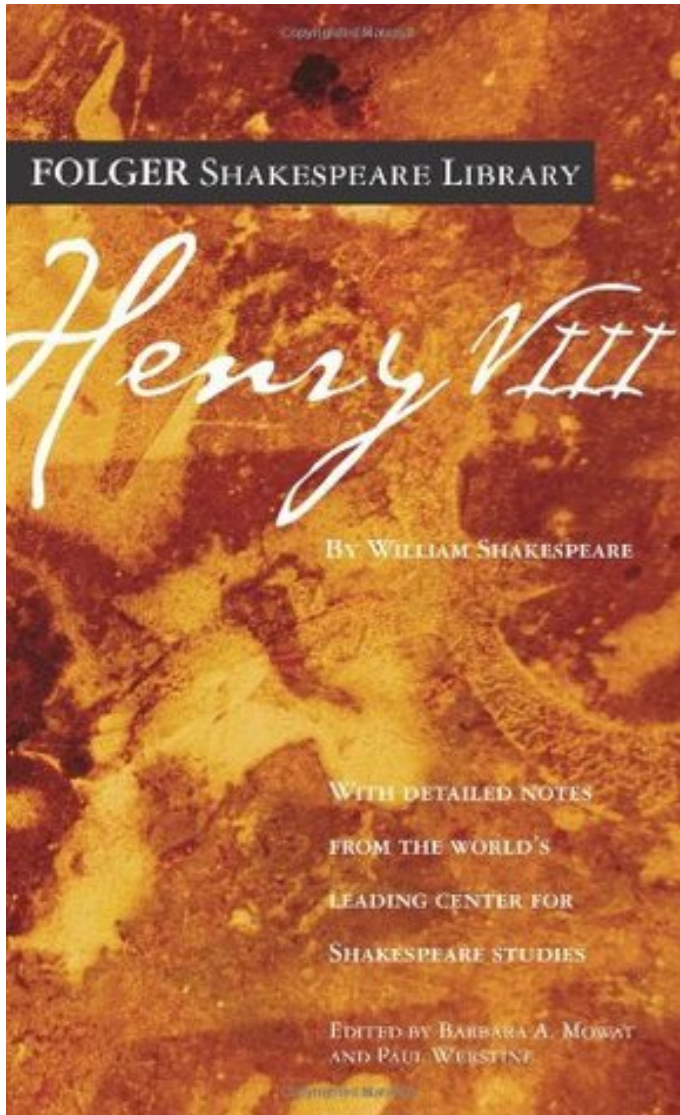


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# William Shakespeare

## Henry VIII



Title: Henry VIII

Author: William Shakespeare

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Language: English

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## Description

Henry VIII is a history play generally believed to be a collaboration between William Shakespeare and John Fletcher, based on the life of Henry VIII of England. An alternative title, *All is True*, is recorded in contemporary documents, the title *Henry VIII* not appearing until the play's publication in the First Folio of 1623. Stylistic evidence indicates that individual scenes were written by either Shakespeare or his collaborator and successor, John Fletcher. It is also somewhat characteristic of the late romances in its structure. It is noted for having more stage directions than any of Shakespeare's other plays.[1]

During a performance of *Henry VIII* at the Globe Theatre in 1613, a cannon shot employed for special effects ignited the theatre's thatched roof (and the beams), burning the original building to the ground.

## Insightful reviews

David Sarkies: **Shakespeare's Comeback**

31 August 2015

You know those directors/authors who go into retirement (or even sporting heroes, but this is book website so I don't think sports stars quite cut it) and then a few years later decided to make a comeback with another movie/book and despite all of the hype it ends out being little more than rubbish? Well, this is one of those books. Yes, I know, it was written by William Shakespeare, and yes, I know, I have given it two stars, so I guess you probably think I am some sort of heathen, but I must admit that I really didn't enjoy this play. Okay, maybe I should fall back onto the argument that it is a play and it is meant to be performed, not read, but to be honest with you I'm not all that willing to fork out my hard earned money to go and see a production of this play.

I guess the first problem that I had with this play was that one of the main characters had the name Wolsley and every time he appeared in a scene I simply could not help but picture him looking like this:



Yeah, I know, I've watched too much Stargate, but seriously that was one awesome science-fiction series and it is very rare that a science-fiction series of that calibre not only comes along, let alone lasts fifteen seasons. Anyway, while it is really tempting to write about how awesome Stargate is this review is of a less than ordinary Shakespeare play so I better remain on topic (not that that has stopped me in the past).

Anyway, as you can tell, the play is about King Henry VIII – you know, the one that was famous for removing his wife's heads from their body. It seemed as if divorce wasn't good enough, so when he got sick and tired of Anne Boylen instead of paying her off and dumping her in some remote castle he decided to make sure that she couldn't come back and haunt him. Okay, removing Kathrine of Aragon's head probably wouldn't have endeared him all that much to the King of Spain, but then again I'm sure the King of Spain, upon hearing that Henry had divorced Katherine, didn't sit back and say something along the lines of 'she probably deserved it'.

Despite Henry having more than just two wives this play focuses only on the transition between Katherine and Anne. The problem with Katherine was that she didn't produce an heir, but the fact that all of the women that he married had the same problem sort of makes me wonder whether the problem didn't rest with his wives, but with him – but then again he was king of England and any suggestion that the king was shooting blanks probably wouldn't go down all that well. Actually, come to think of it, that is probably why poor Anne ended up losing her head.

It goes without saying that the events in this play are incredibly significant in the history of England. We all know the story: Katherine wasn't producing an heir (because Henry was shooting blanks) and one day at a party he meets this ravishing young lady named Anne. Anyway, he decided that he wants to get rid of Katherine (through no fault of her own) and

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marry Anne. However, he can't annul the marriage so instead he goes and asks the Pope for a divorce. The Pope says no, so Henry throws a tantrum and says 'hey, I'm King of England, I don't have to take orders from you' and then proceeds to make himself the head of the church (as you do when you are king and you're not getting your own way).

The play itself ends with the baptism of Princess Elizabeth, who goes on to become a pretty competent monarch in her own right. I guess this is Shakespeare's tribute to a woman, and a ruler, who managed to pull England out of the chaos that ensued under the reign of Bloody Mary (the queen, not the drink) and established it as the Protestant nation that we know today. It wasn't as if Elizabeth's reign was easy – it wasn't. She had to deal with Spanish Armadas and internal plots, but then again how many rulers don't have to deal with intrigue – behind every ruler is a person with a knife that wants the job. However, as we see from many of Shakespeare's earlier plays there is a strong message that pretty much says that removing a monarch only brings about disorder and chaos.

This is probably why I really didn't like this play. Okay, there was intrigue and political manoeuvrings, but it wasn't anywhere near the complexity as the likes of [King Lear](#) or the other history plays. In fact I don't even think anybody dies (though I could be wrong). While one could argue that it is a tragedy of sorts – the tragedy of Katherine of Aragon, it isn't as if she has a fatal flaw that causes the world around her to crash. Rather it is just that she happened to marry some guy that simply couldn't have children, and in those days, especially when your husband is the king, you can't actually accuse him of being the problem, simply because it will mean that he would lose face (and the person with the knife will then make their move).

Anyway, I can now say that I have read this play, even though it isn't strictly a Shakespearean play because it is generally accepted that he wrote it in collaboration with some guy named John Fletcher. However, of note, as far as I am aware, the only play that Fletcher has any credit for, and is still performed, is the one he wrote with Shakespeare – this one. In the end, he generally isn't remembered as a playwright but rather the guy that helped Shakespeare write his final play (even though I still consider [The Tempest](#) to be Shakespeare's final play).

Jimyanni: The Folger Library Edition, as usual, is a fine edition. The play, "Henry VIII", however, is far from one of the most interesting of Shakespeare's plays; it is not terribly interesting, but it IS terribly un-historical. Clearly, it accomplished what it set out to accomplish, which was to curry favor with Queen Elizabeth I, whose birth is described at the end of the play as if it were almost Messianical, and whose father (the title character) is portrayed throughout the play in the kindest light I have ever seen him portrayed. There is no hint of the drunken glutton, only just the slightest hint of his capriciousness and womanizing, and no mention of the fact that after disowning and divorcing his first wife for Elizabeth's mother, he then went on to divorce and execute her mother, and divorce one other wife and execute another. He is portrayed throughout the play as an honorable man and a good king, even if there is just a hint that his divorce of Katherine for Anne may not have been for quite as high-minded a reason as he claimed. I find this whitewashing of Henry VIII to be rather unappetizing, even if I understand perfectly the reason for it.

Salvatore: Or '[All Is True](#)'. Which we know it is not. There are the pageantry and pomp and the

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silly saintliness of all the characters who were (once) regal and royal. There are the villains who lose their lives due to treachery (how often this happens during the reign of Henry 8). Oddly enough most of the 'fun' stuff happens offstage. Such as the coronation of Anne Bullen - amusing rendition of her surname - which we only receive through a gossip's mouth. In short, Hilary Mantel took this material and made something much better with it. Especially since the staging here has an air of tiredness, the plot being less innovative like the early comedies (I'm looking at you *Two Gentlemen of Verona*). Best role goes to Katherine, who loses her crown - but not her head - due to producing no living male heir. *Quel dommage!* or more so, due to her Spanish heritage: *Qué lástima!*

'O, good my lord, no Latin!' (III. i. 42).

Ngaio: This was once a 2.5 big name publication for me. I discovered it fascinating simply because that point interval pursuits me. For that very same cause I discovered it demanding simply because each old personality portrayed was once out of character. I comprehend the place Shakespeare was once coming from politically and that I be aware of he needed to do it like this, yet nonetheless it grated. One way or the other he controlled to show a complete new release of conniving, ambitious, and cut-throat humans into Mary Sues and Gary Stus. Even the villains have been great approximately their treachery and felt undesirable approximately it. It simply felt weird. All the motion of the play is mentioned instead of acted out so it used to be much less wonderful than say, Richard III. Normally humans simply gossiped approximately what was once occurring elsewhere. It was once fascinating gossip, yet still. The single saving grace of this play was once the bitchy personality exchanges. Seriously, the single flaw those humans received to maintain used to be the tendency in the direction of catty exchanges. The witty burns made this valuable to me. Now not a bad, brief learn all in all, yet no longer Shakespeare's most sensible either.

Ben: Shakespeare's prologue immediately drew me into the play's fandom. However, I don't believe I ended the play as a part of that very same group. During the prologue, I think Shakespeare protecting the aim of his old fiction whereas at the same time revolutionizing the medium of level plays. How quickly this mightiness meets misery: And when you may be merry then I'm going to say A guy may perhaps weep upon his wedding-day. Patrons of such performs anticipated humour or tragedy. To provoke one's political or ancient views onto an viewers looking aid from every-day stressors may end up in unsatisfied patronage and the tarnishing of a great recognition - a useful necessity for creating a first rate residing in such an industry. Shakespeare seems like a latest well known track act dictating their very own political views to those who paid to sing alongside to most sensible forty songs. Yes, I will savour that. What mightiness does Shakespeare communicate of? And what brings approximately its misery? And, surely, we don't weep for the dying of Goliath or the victory of these lower than a strong thumb. For this reason I started analyzing Henry VIII looking forward to that Henry himself may fall. However, with an extra exact realizing of the historical past upon which Shakespeare dependent his work, the reader will most likely achieve a deeper perception into the single subject he decide to develop. Without spoiling the outcome, I'll simply say that this subject of "how the amazing have fallen" performs a well-known position - one that I relished. This subject matter offers a component of literary romance which the consumer or reader, like myself, guzzles like a 10th glass of wine. It additionally exemplified the type of strength which Henry

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enforced. His regulations have been regularly brief and self-serving, leaving someone in his reliable graces prone to an approaching fall. Of course, Shakespeare jots down quite a few stanzas, soliloquys and characters which illustrate such common and undying truths relating to this subject matter that I prize them between a number of others of from his works. yet this topic illustrates a distress which usually shrouded the reign of this king. However, in the direction of the end, I in truth chanced on myself considering if Shakespeare didn't rush to accomplish this play, or promise to change his issues and messages to strong political gendarmes. simply because suddenly, after abuses of energy and the fickle effects of irresponsible ambition, the query of the self-made guy as opposed to the nobility, the play sounded and browse very similar to a homage to the Princess Elizabeth, born of Anne Bullen, and glorified particularly teenagers by means of Archbishop Cranmer and Henry himself, in all likelihood swayed via the archbishop's lofty rhetoric after listening to that his baby left his mother's womb and not using a penis. And the Epilogue made no connection with whatever powerful and fallen, absolutely not anything which might reason males to weep. at the contrary, it looked as if it would rejoice the increase of whatever new. The play crept from lower than the rays of humane truths, the inherent caliber of guys and the tragic classes of ambition and unchecked power, to a prequel for the nice Queen Elizabeth I who occurred to reveal from Henry VIII. It learn superbly yet after evaluating the prologue and epilogue, so varied in tone, i need to think that Shakespeare contrasted his preliminary subject with its antithesis - its annihilation and a party of a higher day.

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