

## Henry VIII

### SYNOPSIS

*The Life of King Henry the Eighth* (originally: *All Is True*)  
(a collaboration between Shakespeare and John Fletcher)

A prologue points out that the play deals with serious events. The Duke of Norfolk tells the Duke of Buckingham about the peace agreement between Henry VIII and King Francis I of France at the Field of the Cloth of Gold, and Buckingham expresses his distrust of the Chancellor, Cardinal Wolsey. At Wolsey's instigation, Buckingham is arrested and charged with treason. The Queen, Katherine of Aragon, interrupts to demand that Henry should take away the tax Wolsey has imposed to finance a war against France.

At a party given by Wolsey, Henry meets Anne Boleyn and falls in love with her. Buckingham is tried and executed. The Dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk try to turn the King against Wolsey, but fail. Henry questions whether his marriage to Katherine was legal, and sets up a tribunal to decide the question under Wolsey and the representative of the Pope, Cardinal Campeius. Anne Boleyn, meanwhile, is made Marchioness of Pembroke. Katherine walks out of the tribunal, saying that the question can only be decided in Rome. Wolsey and Campeius fail to convince the Queen that she should submit to Henry's will.

Anne secretly marries Henry. A plot arranged by the Dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk to disgrace Wolsey is successful, and Wolsey loses his post. Thomas Cranmer, a Protestant, is made Archbishop of Canterbury. The King divorces Katherine, and Anne becomes Queen. Katherine dies soon after hearing the news of Wolsey's death. Anne gives birth to a girl, who will later become Queen Elizabeth. Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, accuses Cranmer of heresy, but Henry intervenes on Cranmer's side. Elizabeth is christened, and Cranmer predicts that her reign will be glorious. The play closes with an epilogue.

Media:

DVD:

*Henry VIII* (BBC TV Shakespeare 1979), dir. Kevin Billington

*Henry VIII* (Shakespeare's Globe 2012), dir. Mark Rosenblatt

CD Audio:

*Henry VIII* (Arkangel Complete Shakespeare)

[Michael Mitchell]