

Catherine of Aragon (1485-1536) was the youngest daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella, the King and Queen of Spain. Born at a time when children of royalty were married for political reasons, she was engaged to Arthur - Britain's Prince of Wales - when she was three years old.

Although she was a Spanish princess, Catherine had English blood. Her hair was golden auburn, her eyes were blue and she had a fair complexion. Her namesake was Catherine of Lancaster (her maternal great-grandmother) who was the daughter of John of Gaunt (son of England's King Edward III).

Well-educated, Catherine married Arthur soon after he turned 15. Her father-in-law (King Henry VII) was her third cousin. Her mother-in-law (Elizabeth of York) was her fourth cousin.

Another important note about her ancestry ... Catherine - now the Princess of Wales - was a legitimate descendant of John of Gaunt. Her husband and father-in-law were illegitimate descendants of the same man. If the Prince of Wales had children with Catherine, their right of succession to the British throne would never be an issue.

Arthur, unfortunately, died five months after marrying Catherine (at St. Paul's Cathedral). Refusing to go back to Spain, unmarried, she was left in limbo for six years not knowing whether Prince Henry - now heir to the throne - would marry her.

When her father-in-law died, he expressly asked his son Henry to marry Catherine. The new King - Henry VIII - agreed, and Catherine became his Queen.

Although the couple had children, including sons, only Princess Mary survived. Henry VIII wanted sons; eventually he wanted sons with Anne Boleyn.

Announcing to Catherine that their marriage (which took place on June 11, 1509) was never legal, the King put in place a plan which eventually annulled his union with her (so he could marry Anne). Catherine, however, always thought of herself as Henry's wife and neither accepted *him* as head of the Church of England nor *Anne* as his Queen.

Catherine died - still a Catholic - on January 7, 1536 and is buried at Peterborough Cathedral. Her daughter, Mary, succeeded Henry VIII as Britain's next monarch.

Credits:

Clip from the first episode - "Catherine of Aragon" - of "[The Six Wives of Henry VIII](#)," a six-part series of television plays aired by the BBC, in 1970. Copyright, BBC, all rights reserved. Clip provided here as fair use for educational purposes and to acquaint new viewers with the production. Online, courtesy BBC Worldwide Channel at YouTube.

Series Producers:

Mark Shivas and Ronald Travers

Starring:

Annette Crosbie in the award-winning role of Catherine of Aragon

Keith Michell in the award-winning role of Henry VIII

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Catherine-of-Aragon0>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

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