

Edward VI and Mary I — A simple step-by-step guide

These two rulers were children of Henry VIII and ruled England soon after him. Their short reigns (1547–1558) caused big changes because England switched back and forth between Protestantism and Catholicism. That made life confusing and sometimes dangerous for people.

Quick timeline

- 1547: Henry VIII dies. His son Edward VI, age 9, becomes king.
- 1547–1553: Edward's reign — Protestant reforms speed up under regents.
- July 1553: Edward dies at 15. Lady Jane Grey is made queen for 9 days before Mary I takes the throne.
- 1553–1558: Mary I rules and restores Catholicism. Many Protestants are punished or flee.
- 1558: Mary dies. Elizabeth I becomes queen and brings a more lasting Protestant settlement.

Edward VI (1547–1553) — what happened and why

Edward was only a boy, so powerful adults ran the country for him. At first the Duke of Somerset was in charge, then the Duke of Northumberland. These leaders were strongly Protestant and made big changes to the Church of England:

- Services were moved into English instead of Latin so people could understand them.
- The Book of Common Prayer was introduced (1549 and updated 1552).
- Clergy could marry and some church decorations and images were removed.
- Laws were changed to make England more Protestant.

Because Edward was young and ill, there was a lot of struggle about who would be king after him. John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, tried to make his daughter-in-law Lady Jane Grey the next ruler to keep Protestant rule and his own power. That plan failed.

Lady Jane Grey — a short, important episode

When Edward died in 1553, Northumberland declared Jane (a Protestant and a great-granddaughter of Henry VII) queen. But many people supported Mary, Henry VIII's oldest surviving child. After just nine days, Jane was removed and Mary became queen. Jane was later executed.

Mary I (1553–1558) — what she did

Mary was a devout Catholic and wanted to return England to the Catholic Church and to be loyal to the pope in Rome. Her main actions were:

- Repealed Protestant laws and restored Catholic worship and bishops.
- Married Philip II of Spain (1554) — this worried many English people who didn't want England tied to Spain.
- Those who refused to return to Catholic worship were punished; about 280 people were burned for heresy in public. Because of these executions, Mary got the nickname 'Bloody Mary.' It was a harsh and frightening time for Protestants.
- There was a rebellion called Wyatt's Rebellion (1554) that protested Mary's marriage and the

possible Spanish influence. It failed.

- England lost Calais (its last possession in France) in 1558 — that was a big shock and a national loss.

How these changes affected ordinary people

- Religion affected everyday life: what people said in church, how they were buried, and which holidays were celebrated.
- Switching from Protestant to Catholic and back again created confusion — people could be accused of being heretics if they followed the 'wrong' religion at the wrong time.
- Some people fled the country to avoid persecution; others stayed and tried to keep their heads down.

Important people to remember

- Edward VI — young Protestant king who followed his advisers' reforms.
- Somerset and Northumberland — the powerful regents who ruled while Edward was a child.
- Lady Jane Grey — made queen for nine days during the succession crisis.
- Mary I — daughter of Henry VIII who restored Catholicism and whose reign included persecution of Protestants.
- Philip II of Spain — Mary's husband, whose marriage to Mary worried English people about foreign influence.

Why this period matters

The changes under Edward and Mary show how powerful religion and the monarchy were in Tudor England. Their short but dramatic reigns set the stage for Elizabeth I, who created a more stable settlement between Protestant and Catholic ways of worship. The period teaches us about how politics, belief, and power affect people's lives.

Easy way to remember it

Think of it like a switch: Edward moves England more strongly toward Protestantism, then Mary flips the switch back to Catholicism. That quick flipping caused fear, arguments, and sometimes violence until Elizabeth made a steadier rule later.

If you want, I can make a simple timeline poster or quiz questions to help you study these events.