

Gateway to the Mid-Tudor crisis and Elizabeth, 1547–1603

England's position in Europe

- England was at war with France and Scotland when Henry VIII died
- England was not a major power in Europe
- England had captured Boulogne from the French
- The alliance between Scotland and France meant England could have to fight a war on two fronts
- There had been fears of a Catholic crusade against England in the early 1540s

The government of England

- The personality of the king was very important; he made all the decisions, but Edward was only a child
- The royal household looked after the domestic needs of the king
- The age of the king gave opportunities for nobles to gain power and for factional struggles
- Law and order in the localities was maintained by Justices of the Peace
- Parliament was not a regular feature of government, but called when the king needed money or new laws
- The king relied on nobles for advice and along with senior churchmen made up the Privy Council

Monarchy in England

- Henry had ruled England through the 1540s without a chief minister, making most of the decisions himself
- Henry's image was of a ruthless ruler, even tyrannical ruler in his last years
- Edward VI was only a child when Henry VIII died
- Henry had established a Regency Council to govern England until Edward was old enough
- The Council Henry established was balanced between religious conservatives and reformers

What was England like in 1547?

Religious change

- England had broken from the papacy and the monarch was now head of the Church
- England was still largely Catholic in doctrine, but without the pope
- All religious houses had been closed down
- Most people in England were still Catholic
- A Bible was available in English in all churches

Rebellion and unrest

- There had been protests against the levels of taxation in 1525 with the Amicable Grant
- The rebels had forced Henry to abandon the tax
- In 1536 over 40,000 rebels had risen in protest against a range of issues, including religion and economic grievances
- Without a standing army or a police force it was difficult for the monarch to prevent unrest
- The monarch relied on nobles and local gentry to put down unrest

Economic and social conditions

- Henry had spent all the money he had gained from the Dissolution of the Monasteries on war and defence in the 1540s
- Henry had reduced the silver content of coins to raise money
- The reduction in silver content had caused inflation
- Food prices rose quickly in the 1540s
- The population was rising and this put pressure on food and land
- There were complaints about land being enclosed for sheep farming