

December 19, 1154

## Henry II of England is Crowned at Westminster Abbey

King Henry II of England was the son of Geoffrey, Count of Anjou, and Matilda, daughter of Henry I of England. The line of royalty that descended from this family came to be known as the Plantagenets. When Geoffrey, Count of Anjou died in 1151, Henry II became ruler of certain parts of western France, which his father had controlled. He married Eleanor of Aquitaine, which gave him control over even more of France. When Henry I of England died, the powerful barons became loyal to Stephen of Blois, the nephew of Henry I, instead of Henry's daughter Matilda. Matilda felt she should have ascended to the throne instead of Stephen. Geoffrey, Henry II's father, and Matilda, spent their life working to make Henry II someone who would be accepted as king of England. His opportunity came to pass when Stephen died in 1154.

King Henry II of England reigned for approximately 34 years. He became king when he was 21 years old and spent much of his time as king trying to recover the inheritance that his parents had led him to believe was his. He wanted loyalty from those around him more than anything else, as this is what he valued most.

King Henry understood that not everyone would agree with him all of the time, but he could not stand the idea of being betrayed. He would often turn to a fit of rage if he believed someone had betrayed him. This made him very frightening to many people.

In the beginning of his reign, King Henry II was very energetic and wanted to bring more order to his kingdom. However, as his reign continued, there were family problems that led to problems within the kingdom.

During his reign, King Henry II enlarged the English kingdom to include parts of France and Ireland. One of the things King Henry II is most remembered for is the murder of Thomas a Becket. It has been said that the murder was due to a misunderstanding. King Henry II supposedly said something referring to being rid of this trouble-making priest. Certain knights understood him to mean that he wanted Thomas a Becket killed and murdered him in an effort to carry out the king's wishes. Henry was supposedly very saddened that this happened and publically apologized for his part in the situation, along with participating in certain rituals of penance of the church at the time.

King Henry II died on July 6, 1189, while in France. His son, Richard (known as Richard the Lionhearted) became the next king of England.

On the next page, mark each statement T (true) or F (false). If the statement is false, correct it.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Henry II hated hunting.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Henry II spoke many languages.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Henry II was not impulsive and took much time to change his plans.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Henry II planned to divide his kingdom among two of his sons at his death.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ When Henry II began his reign, England was disorderly, ruined by civil war and violence.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Henry II reorganized the judicial system in England.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ During Henry II's reign, an English presence in Ireland ended.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ Henry II raised taxes in the kingdom.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ Henry II decreased the king's power over the military.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ In 1174, three of Henry II's sons rebelled against their father.
11. \_\_\_\_\_ Henry II spent much of his time away from England because of his possessions in France.
12. \_\_\_\_\_ Trial by jury was established for the first time under Henry II.
13. \_\_\_\_\_ Henry II tried to limit the church's authority over crimes committed by royalty.
14. \_\_\_\_\_ Oxford University was founded during the reign of Henry II.
15. \_\_\_\_\_ Henry II, King of England was buried at Westminster.

## Answer Key

1. F Henry II loved hunting.
2. T
3. F Henry II was known to be impulsive and change his plans with short notice.
4. F Henry II planned to divide his kingdom among his four sons at his death.
5. T
6. T
7. F During Henry II's reign, an English presence in Ireland began.
8. T
9. F Henry II increased the king's power over the military.
10. T
11. T
12. T
13. F Henry II tried to limit the church's authority over crimes committed by the clergy.
14. T
15. F Henry II, King of England was buried in France.