



Speaker: The court of King Henry VIII of England was mired in both political and religious turmoil. King Henry needed a divorce from his Spanish born wife Katherine of Aragon, because they had been unable to produce a male heir. After six years of negotiation, the Pope would still not allow a divorce. This highly political and religious ruling proved to be a very costly mistake to the Papacy. King Henry broke away from Papal authority and created the Church of England.

Unfortunately, this had some ruinous consequences for the art in England. King Henry set out to acquire the lands and wealth of the monasteries in England. His minister, Thomas Cromwell, ordered the destruction of objects of idolatry including artwork. This destruction as part of the anti Catholic reform movement was called iconoclasm and it related to the Old Testament prohibition of images and idols.

During the reign of King Henry's daughter, Elizabeth I, composers, and poets and playwrights flourished in England, including the composers Thomas Wilkes and Thomas Morley, both known for their madrigals. Then, of course, there's the very famous playwrights such as Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare.

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