

She was Queen of England in the 16th Century for just five years before the glorious 45-year reign of her half-sister, Elizabeth I. Both were daughters of King Henry VIII, and Mary's unflattering nickname comes from her religious persecution of Protestants during her short reign as Queen. She is said to have had hundreds of religious dissidents beheaded or burned at the stake.

It was just pure luck that Princess Elizabeth ever lived long enough to become Queen. Jealous of her much younger sister's popularity, Mary had Elizabeth imprisoned in the Tower of London. She intended to have Elizabeth beheaded, but was opposed by influential members of the court. Before she could insist on the execution, Mary sickened and died. Or maybe it was caused by too many Bloody Marys.



Although history proves that her dad, Henry VIII, and sis, Elizabeth I, each actually had more people executed during their reigns, the English queen will always be known as Bloody Mary. When you visit Westminster Abbey in London, don't try to look for the tomb of poor, misnamed Mary I.

Outshone in every way in life, in death Mary lies in quiet anonymity in the same ornate tomb dedicated to Elizabeth I. A sculpted figure of Elizabeth lies on top, its realistic face made from a death mask. There's no confirmation that when tourists marvel at the tomb of Elizabeth, they hear furious spinning just beneath it.

For more information, go to www.westminster-abbey.org.