**Lady Jane Grey**

English noblewoman Lady Jane Grey is one of the most romanticized monarchs of Tudor England. Her short, nine-day rule was an unsuccessful attempt to maintain Protestant rule. This challenge cost her the throne and her head.

**Synopsis**

Lady Jane Grey was born in 1537, in Leicester, England. Her life began with promise and high expectations but ended tragically, due in part to the ambitions of her father and the religious strife of the times. The great-granddaughter of Henry VII, Grey was named the successor to Edward VI during an intense competition for the throne. She was deposed as Queen of England by Mary Tudor (“Bloody Mary”) on July 19, 1553—nine days after accepting the crown. Grey was beheaded in London on February 12, 1554.

**Early Life**

Jane Grey was born in 1537, in Leicester, England, the great-granddaughter of Henry VII. Her parents saw to it that she received an excellent education, intended to make her a good match for the son of a well-positioned family. At the age of 10, Jane went to live Thomas Seymour, Edward VI’s uncle, who had only recently married Catherine Parr, the widow of Henry VIII.

Jane was raised as a Protestant and proved to be an intelligent and engaged young woman, remaining close to Thomas Seymour and Catherine Parr until Parr’s death in childbirth in 1548. Seymour was executed for treason in 1549.

**Arranged Marriage**

In order to consolidate his family’s power, Grey’s father arranged for the marriage of two of his daughters to sons of two other prominent families. Jane married Lord Guildford Dudley, the son of the Duke of Northumberland.

**Background on England's State of Affairs**

After Henry VIII’s death in 1547, his only male heir, Edward, assumed the throne. Sickly with tuberculosis and only 10 years old at the time of his coronation, Edward VI was easily manipulated by calculating individuals such as the fiercely Protestant John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, who acted as regent to the young king.

By January 1553, it was clear Edward was dying, and Dudley was desperate to prevent the throne from passing to Edward’s half-sister, Mary Tudor, a Catholic.

**The Conspiracy Is Hatched**

In early 1553, John Dudley convinced Edward to declare Jane his successor. Edward VI died on July 6, 1553, and the 15-year-old Lady Jane Grey, somewhat reluctantly but dutifully, agreed to become Queen of England and was crowned four days later. However, she faced strong opposition from Mary Tudor and Parliament, both citing the 1544 Law of Succession, which clearly stated Mary should be queen. Public support for Jane’s rule evaporated when it was learned that the unpopular Dudley was behind the scheme.

With opposition mounting against Jane Grey, many of her supporters quickly abandoned her, including her father, who futilely attempted to save himself by supporting Mary as queen. The council didn't buy it and declared him a traitor. On July 19, 1553, Jane’s nine-day reign ended, and she was imprisoned in the Tower of London.

John Dudley was condemned for high treason and executed on August 22. On November 13, Jane and her husband, Guildford Dudley, were likewise found guilty of treason and sentenced to death, but because of their youth and relative innocence, Queen Mary did not carry out the sentences.

**Execution**

Jane’s father, Henry Grey, sealed Lady Jane’s fate when he joined an insurrection against Mary after she announced, in September 1553, that she intended to marry Philip II of Spain.

Jane condemned Mary’s reintroduction of the Catholic Mass to the Church.

When Mary’s forces suppressed the revolt, she decided it best to eliminate all political opponents. On the morning of February 12, 1554, Jane watched from her cell window as her husband was sent to the executioner’s block. Two hours later she would meet the same fate. As she stood before the chopping block, she is believed to have stated that she recognized her act had violated the queen’s law, but that she was innocent before God.

**Legacy**

Lady Jane Grey has been viewed as a martyr for centuries. Over the centuries, her tale has grown to legendary proportions through romantic biographies, novels, plays, paintings and films. Yet, her reign was so short, she had no impact on the arts, science or culture. No laws or shifts in policy were passed during her brief nine-day rule.