



## Eleanor of Aquitaine (1122-1204) Queen of France and England

*What an incredible life!*

*She was queen twice and two of her sons became kings - Richard the Lionheart and John Lackland - among her ten children. She lived until eighty-two, which was very rare at that time!*

### *A very interesting young woman*

*Eleanor was born in 1122. When she was fifteen, in 1137, her father, Guillaume X of Poitiers, Duke of Aquitaine, died. She inherited the County of Poitiers and the Duchies of Aquitaine and Gascony. The same year, she married the heir to the king of France. Only a few days after their union, the king died; Louis VII became king and Eleanor became Queen of the Franks. She had two daughters with Louis VII.*



### *An exceptional tireless woman*

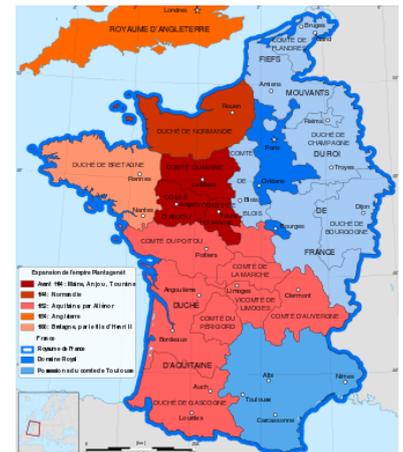


*In 1147, she took part in the second crusade, crossing Europe and a part of Asia on horseback. Back to France, Louis VII and Eleanor divorced. In fact, Eleanor was disappointed with her husband. She had believed she had married a man, but not a monk!*

*Soon, she married Henri de Plantagenet. When he became king of England, under the name of Henry II, she became Queen a second time.*

*Henry and Eleanor were both sovereigns of England and sovereigns of all the West of France, from Edinburgh to Bayonne.*

*Unfortunately, her new union was not better than the first one, even if she had five sons and three daughters. Henry II was not faithful and she made him pay for his betrayals. She caused the uprising of her sons against their father. During a trip, the impetuous Eleanor was arrested. Her husband held her prisoner in a convent for more than fifteen years, from 1173 to 1189.*



## *For the love of a son*

*The end of her life could have been calmer but she wanted to accompany her dear son Richard for a crusade. She went, once again on horseback, despite her age.*

*After the death of Henry II in 1199, she had to take care of the succession of the two kingdoms. She had to protect Richard's property during his absence, against his brother John, who was not reliable. When she knew that Richard was a prisoner in Germany, she went herself to liberate him.*



*Always on the run, she participated in all the activities of the kingdom and worked to obtain the support of allies to assure the future.*

*She died in Poitiers on 31<sup>st</sup> March 1204. She was eighty-two. She was buried in Fontevraud.*



*While being exceptional, Eleanor's life testifies to the very free behaviour of women in the Middle Ages. They were allowed to follow their husbands to the crusades, they studied and they had a role in society. Eleanor was also at the initiative of Magna Carta. Unfortunately, women lost their autonomy in the Renaissance period and Napoleon aggravated the situation.*

