

Elizabeth 1558-1588 – the essentials!

Queen, Government and Religion 1558-69

The situation upon Elizabeth's coronation – England was £300,000 in debt; the divine right of monarchs meant Elizabeth believed she had a right to rule; her gender and religion however caused her issues – many thought it unnatural for women to rule; Catholics believed she was illegitimate; calls began immediately for Elizabeth to marry and threats from abroad came from the Auld Alliance – France and Scotland.

Elizabeth was highly intelligent, educated and charismatic but could be indecisive. She made all the key decisions but also needed her...

Privy Council – 19 nobles and courtiers who advised Elizabeth on matters of state and helped her govern.
Secretary of State - the most important Privy Councillor – Sir William Cecil (1st Baron Burghley) 1558-73
Robert Dudley (Earl of Leicester) – an early favourite courtier.

Elizabeth was **protestant** (her mother was Anne Boleyn) and faced challenges from Catholic countries (France, Spain), Catholics in the North of England and a claim to the throne from her second cousin Mary, Queen of Scots.

Protestantism – Bible and services in English; people can speak directly to God through prayer; only God can forgive sins; the bread and wine of Communion is symbolic of the Last Supper; plain and simple vestments (clothing) and churches; Priests could marry.

Catholicism – Bible and services in Latin; the church acts as intermediary between people and God; the church forgives sins; **transubstantiation** - Communion is the miracle of bread and wine becoming body and blood of Christ; Priests are special so vestments and churches were made to look special and ornate; priests forbidden to marry

Puritanism – an extreme and radical branch of Protestantism that wanted to 'purify' the Christian religion by getting rid of anything that wasn't in the bible. Puritan churches were very basic without special clothes or altars.

To try to 'settle' the religious divisions, Elizabeth passed two Acts – The Act of Supremacy and the Act of Uniformity.

Act of Supremacy – Elizabeth became the supreme governor of the Church of England and all clergy and royal officials had to swear an oath of allegiance to her as the head of the church

Act of Uniformity - establishing the appearance of churches and form services took (eg Bible and services in English)

Royal Injunctions – enforced the religious settlement and used visitations to inspect churches and clergy.

Although the settlement was intended to appease Catholics and prevent uprisings, it angered Catholics, Protestants and extreme protestants (Puritans) alike making England a difficult place for religious groups to live side by side. In England the Catholic challenge was limited until 1569 but Puritans challenged both the use of crucifixes and vestments. The main challenge in this time came from abroad.

Challenges to Elizabeth at Home and Abroad 1569-88

Elizabeth had to send troops and finances to deal with Catholic challenges in Scotland, France and the Netherlands. The Dutch Revolt was a particular concern as the Spanish army of Philip II crushed Protestant **heretics**. English relations with Spain got much worse after the Dutch Revolt especially as a result of piracy and secret support.

Mary Queen of Scots

Born in 1542, she was a Catholic with a strong claim to the throne as Henry VII's great granddaughter. She was second cousin to Elizabeth. She was Queen of Scotland aged 6 but spent most of her early childhood in France.

- 1560 Treaty of Edinburgh – Elizabeth supported protestant Lords in removing Mary's mother Mary of Guise.
- 1561 After the unexpected death of King Francis II of France (Mary Q of S husband), she returned to Scotland
- 1566 Mary gives birth to a son James
- 1567 The Scottish Parliament rebels against Mary and she is imprisoned and forced to abdicate.
- 1568 Mary escapes, raises an army against the Lords, is quickly defeated and flees to England.
- 1568 Elizabeth has a problem – what to do with Mary Q of S? She chose to imprison her. She was afraid to kill her. Whilst in prison Mary Q of S would become a focus of several Catholic plots to overthrow and even kill Elizabeth. These plots were encouraged by the Pope and Spain.

1569 The Revolt of the Northern Earls

This revolt was a serious rebellion focussed on overthrowing Elizabeth and restoring Catholicism. It was triggered because the northern earls had lost influence at court, lost finances to Elizabeth, wanted Catholicism restoring and could see a figurehead in Mary Q of S imprisoned and treated badly. The combination of these made them act.

Thomas Percy, Earl of Northumberland – had lost influence under Elizabeth and rights to his copper mines

Charles Neville, Earl of Westmoreland – the Duke of Norfolk's brother-in-law and important Catholic noble

Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk – one of England's most senior nobles and important member of the Privy Council. He had close links to the old, Catholic noble families in the north. The plot centred around Norfolk marrying Mary Q of S, although he would later back down and urge the Earls to abandon their rebellion.

The Earls rebelled in November 1569 and marched southwards towards London. They got as far as Pontefract but the promised support from Spanish troops failed to materialise. After a slow start, Elizabeth eventually mustered 14,000 troops who marched north to crush the rebels. 450 of them were executed, including Northumberland.

Why is the revolt of the Northern Earls seen as a turning point?

- It was the first and most serious rebellion against Elizabeth.
- Elizabeth changed her tactics in dealing with Catholic treason – punishments became harsher
- The Northern Catholic power-bases were crushed and Elizabeth asserted her power on the North.
- The executions of the rebels led the Pope to take action against Elizabeth - **the Papal Bull**.

1571 The Ridolfi Plot

Catholics were put in a difficult position in 1570 when the Pope excommunicated Elizabeth (cut her off from the Catholic Church). Who were they loyal to – Pope (spiritual leader) or Elizabeth (political leader)?

The Pope sent 'spies' to England and encouraged priests to travel to England to plot against Elizabeth. One such plot was led by **Roberto Ridolfi**, an Italian banker from Florence. He launched a plot to murder Elizabeth, launch a Spanish invasion and put Mary Q of S onto the throne. This involves Philip II of Spain, the Duke of Norfolk and the Duke of Alba's 10,000 men stationed in the Netherlands.

This plot was uncovered by Sir William Cecil and with evidence against the Duke of Norfolk, this led to his execution in 1572. Ridolfi was abroad at the time the plot was uncovered and never returned to England. Elizabeth had no proof of Mary's involvement so she remained in prison.

1583 The Throckmorton Plot

This was a plot for the French Duke of Guise to invade England, free Mary, overthrow Elizabeth and restore Catholicism. The Pope supported the plot and a young Catholic, Francis Throckmorton was the go-between.

This plot was uncovered by Sir Francis Walsingham using his spies, and after torturing Throckmorton, the true extent of the plot from Spain and English Catholics emerged. The spies had uncovered an 'enemy within'. As a result English Catholics were increasingly persecuted and lived more in fear. Priest holes developed to protect Catholicism.

1586 The Babington Plot

Once again the plot was to assassinate Elizabeth, encourage Catholics to rebel and put Mary on the throne. Anthony Babington, a Catholic with links to France, wrote to Mary Queen of Scots in prison with details of the plot. The messages were hidden in barrels. However, Walsingham was intercepting the letters and once he had the names of those involved, Babington and the other plotters were hanged, drawn and quartered. This was the final plot that persuaded Elizabeth that she had to act on Mary Queen of Scots. Even then she hesitated until 1587

1587 Execution of Mary Queen of Scots

Elizabeth finally was persuaded that as long as Mary lived, there would be a threat to her throne. The evidence gathered by Walsingham was enough to ensure her trial and conviction led to a death warrant. Mary was finally executed at Fotheringhay Castle on 8 February 1587

Elizabethan Society in the Age of Exploration 1558-88

Education – no national system of schooling existed but the importance of education was growing in Elizabethan times. In particular, new thinking called **humanism** led to a better understanding of the developing world. Protestants also believed that everyone should be able to read the Bible in their own language.

Nobility

Boys were tutored at home – foreign languages, history, philosophy, government and theology. Also fencing, swimming, wrestling and other sports.

Girls were also tutored at home – music, dancing, needlework, horse riding and archery.

Middle Classes

The biggest change came in the education of the Middle Classes with the introduction of the Grammar School. 42 were founded in the 1560s and 30 more in the 1570s. These were private schools set up for 'bright' boys – gentry, professionals and wealthy business owners. Fees varied on the wealth of the family. Some lower class boys could attend with their fees paid by benefactors (people giving gifts) to the school.

Some merchants and craftsmen ran a more practical (apprentice style) curriculum to train them in their trades. There were also **Petty Schools**, run in a teacher's home and **Dame Schools** for girls.

Working Classes

There was no formal school-based education at all. They learned what they needed from their families and in most cases started working as soon as they could to bring in extra money to the family.

Impact? 30% men and 10% women were literate by the end of Elizabeth's reign. An improvement for boys but not girls, unless they were well off like Elizabeth. Oxford and Cambridge Universities developed for boys from the age of 14/15 years old. In London Inns of Court trained Lawyers. Education improved for the middle and upper class but not the poor, working class.

Leisure activities were also determined by your class. Pastimes were similar to today but sport was more violent.

Nobility and middle class gentry – hunting; horses; hawking; fishing; fencing; tennis; watching baiting and cock-fighting; literature; theatre (eg Shakespeare and the Globe); music; dancing

Working class – football; baiting and cock-fighting; music, dancing

The problem of the Poor.

Why did poverty increase:-

Population growth of 35%; food price increases; food shortages; changes in agriculture eg enclosure; increasing land value and rents; movement into towns and the increase in vagabondage.

Changing attitudes to the poor:-

- Poverty and vagabondage were seen as a growing problem that had to be acted upon
- The poor were divided into categories – **idle poor, deserving poor and impotent poor**.
- Elizabeth passed laws to tackle poverty and vagabondage eg local officials could provide raw materials (wool) for the unemployed to make things to sell.
- However, vagabonds faced harsh punishments, even if few authorities actually applied them.
- There were local initiatives to help the poor as well.

Elizabethan England Voyages of Exploration and the Spanish Armada

What led Elizabethans to explore? :-

Trade – new opportunities needed as the conflict with Spain and the Netherlands had hit the wool trade

Great rewards – although risky, the rewards for investors and sailors could be enormous

Undermine Spain – opportunities to 'attack' Spanish interests in the New World

Adventure – adventure and fortune making – glory to those who made great, new discoveries.

New technology – quadrants, astrolabes, navigation, maps and ship design (Galleons) all helped make exploration easier and safer.

Sir Francis Drake

Born into a poor sea-faring family in Devon, Drake had always had a love of the sea. He was also ambitious and confident in his abilities. He is most famous for three events:-

Circumnavigation of the Globe 1577-1580

He had not set out to circumnavigate the Globe and instead had intended to explore South America and raid Spanish colonies and treasure ships. He was a privateer, which means he had been 'encouraged' by Elizabeth to go looking for Spanish wealth to bring home. However, the Spanish saw him as a pirate.

It took him three years from start to finish – raiding many Spanish colonies on the South American coastline. In the Pacific he captured two very valuable Spanish treasure ships and so to avoid capture by the Spanish, he took a route westwards home that led him across the Pacific and through the East Indies, Indonesia and round the Cape of Good Hope in Africa. When he returned he was knighted on board the Golden Hind. This encouraged others to explore.

Attack on Cadiz 1587

In 1587 Drake led a raid on the Spanish port of Cadiz. Over three days he destroyed 30 ships as well as fleet provisions. This became known as the '**singeing of the King of Spain's beard**'. It disrupted Spain's plans to attack England with a massive Armada of ships. It gave Elizabeth extra time to prepare for the inevitable attack.

Spanish Armada

Drake also played a key role in the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588. He died of disease in 1596 whilst trying to conquer Spanish colonies in the Americas.

Sir Walter Raleigh

Born into a gentry family from Devon, Raleigh had always been interested in exploration. From the 1580s Raleigh held a powerful 'favourite' position in Elizabeth's court.

1584 Elizabeth gave Raleigh permission to explore and colonise unclaimed territories in the Americas.

1585 Raleigh sent 108 settlers to colonise Roanoke Island, Virginia. (named after the Virgin Queen).

1586 However, settlers quickly ran out of supplies and when Drake arrived, the majority returned to England.

1587 A second group of settlers reached Roanoke and expected further supplies in 1588 but they were to be delayed because of the Spanish Armada. When they were finally reached again in 1590, they had all disappeared and were never found. Raleigh took responsibility for the failure – poor funds and planning.

1592 Raleigh was disgraced at court for marrying a lady-in-waiting without Elizabeth's permission.

Spanish Armada

In 1588 the Spanish Armada of 130 ships and 8000 sailors, carrying 18000 soldiers, was ready to set sail and meet up with the Duke of Parma's troops in the Netherlands before attacking England. The 'Enterprise of England' was a serious threat to Elizabeth whose Navy was underfunded and had been neglected. It was led by the **Duke of Medina Sidonia**.

July 1588 The Armada reaches the English Channel after delays due to bad weather. It was in a crescent formation which made it difficult to attack. The large galleons protected the smaller ships.

August 1588 After several minor attacks, the Armada reaches Calais, off the French coast. However, there are no Spanish troops waiting there. The Armada cannot anchor and the English send in fireships to panic them. The Armada regroup at Gravelines, off the Dutch coast, but a Summer storm scatters the fleet which is then harried up the North sea and around the tip of Scotland. Further storms batter and destroy much of the Armada. Less than half the fleet and only 10,000 men return!

Consequences of the Armada...

- England's victory removed the threat of Spanish invasion and England became a world super-power.
- It ignited the period of Elizabeth's reign known as the 'Golden Age' and made her very popular/strong.
- English ships could now travel the world, establishing trade routes, colonies and bring back riches.
- Protestantism was strengthened, as the defeat of the Spanish was seen as God favouring them over the Catholics.