

Universidad de Magallanes
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“Elizabeth I, the Virgin Queen of the Golden Age”

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Authors:

Angelina Aguilar

Paola Cárdenas

Viviana Solís

Tutor Teacher:

Alicia Triviño

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Table of Contents



Abstract	03
Introduction	04
1.1. Birth of a Princess	07
1.1.1. Elizabeth's father: Henry VIII	07
1.1.2 Elizabeth's mother: Anne Boleyn	09
1.1.3. Elizabeth's stepmothers	11
1.2. Early life	13
1.2.1. The teenager Princess	13
1.2.2. Elizabeth's Personality and Image	14
1.2.3. Ruled by her siblings	15
1.2.3.1. Edward VI (1547 – 1533)	15
1.2.3.2. Mary I's reign (1553-1558)	17
1.3. The Path to the Throne	18
1.3.1. Elizabeth becomes Queen Elizabeth I (1558-1603)	18
1.3.1.1. The Elizabethan religious settlement	19
1.3.2. Proposals of Marriage	21
1.3.2.1. Why didn't Elizabeth I marry?	26
1.3.3. Plots and Conspiracies	30
2.1. Elizabethan Age and Renaissance	33
2.1.1. Renaissance	33
2.1.1.1. The pioneers of Renaissance	34
2.1.2. Elizabethan Age of Exploration	37
2.1.2.1. Nautical Instruments of Exploration	38
2.1.3. Elizabethan England	38

2.2. Elizabethan Government	40
2.2.1. The Government duties	40
2.2.2. Laws	41
2.2.3. Crimes and Punishment	44
2.3. Elizabethan Society	48
2.3.1. Family	48
2.3.2. Entertainments	50
2.3.3. Art, Literature and Theater	53
3.1. Wars	58
3.1.1. The English War with Spain (1585 – 1603)	58
3.1.2. The Wars in Ireland, also known the Desmond Rebellions	59
3.1.3. The Tyrone Rebellion, also known as the Nine Years War	60
3.2 Elizabeth's Twilight	60
3.2.1 Later years	66
3.2.2. Elizabeth's Death	62
3.2.3. Elizabeth's Legacy	65
Conclusions	67
References	68
Appendices	72

ABSTRACT



The purpose of this study about Elizabeth I, Queen of England during the XVI century, is to show how a woman who lost her mother in the first years of her life and a father that only worried about his heir, ruled a country in a wonderful and unimaginable way doing of England of that years the most powerful nation. Her intelligence and enormous ability at the moment of doing strategies made her a peculiar woman who lived, acted and did things that woman of that years were not expected to, for these characteristics she was considered a woman with man thoughts. She was a queen who lived and died for her nation, she postponed her own life as woman and mother for being a whole queen.

Introduction

“I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king” (Tilbury speech, 1588.)

Elizabeth was the second daughter of the king Henry VIII and his second wife Anne Boleyn and the last monarch of the Tudor dynasty. Resembling her father in hair-color, face and eye color. She grew up away from court, under the care of a governess with the absence of her mother and father. She was well-educated and had exceptional skills for languages. She inherited the throne by right of succession. At the age of twenty- five she was crowned Queen of England. The situation of the country was not easy, for the English people had suffered under the rule of Edward VI and Mary I. Having many of her father’s qualities she was able to understand people’s needs and had a fair government.

As Queen Elizabeth had to face first the religious question. Elizabeth’s sister, Mary I was a devout and committed Roman Catholic who supported harsher persecution of the Protestants having about three hundred religious dissenters burned at the stake. This caused strong Protestant feelings in the country. Elizabeth knew that religion was a delicate matter. The queen with the help of her chief minister William Cecil set about making England a Protestant nation with a Church that satisfied all reasonable men. She was cautious with both Catholic and Protestants traditions, and in this way she won people’s acceptance, eventually she became respected by her subjects.

Soon the queen had to face Parliament’s demands to choose a husband and to lean upon him for support and help her rule the country and more importantly produce a Protestant heir. Elizabeth had a significant task, to find a right man to marry. Through her life she received many proposals of marriage, but no suitor had all the qualities Elizabeth demanded. At the time to look for a man, Elizabeth had to take into account important issues such as religion, range and origin, and at the same time she had the duty to keep her enemies aside while her country was strong enough to protect itself.

Elizabeth became the most admirable single woman of England. She received offers of marriage from different noblemen willing to settle a convenient political union among them the king of Spain, the Prince of Sweden, the Archduke Charles, the Duke of Saxony, the Earl of Arran, the Earl of Arundel, and others.

But the decision to select the future fiancé was between Elizabeth and her advisers, who considered the advantages and disadvantages of each union.



However, it is believed that her true love was Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leicester. When Elizabeth became queen Dudley was married but years later, Dudley's wife died under mysterious circumstances. Nevertheless, Elizabeth could not marry Dudley since it would cause troubles in her reign- Queen Elizabeth never married but as young woman she used the proposals of marriage as a political tactic.

Elizabeth was loved and admired by her people. Nevertheless, she had many detractors basically, because she was Protestant. Elizabeth had to deal with many threats against her and her reign. One of her bitter enemies was her cousin Mary, Queen of Scots. Mary was supported by extreme Catholics who wanted her to seize the throne of England. Parliament and advisers requested Mary's death, but Elizabeth was unwilling to sign Mary's death warrant. For almost eighteen years Mary was in prison because she was a great menace to Elizabeth. Soon Mary and her allies made plans to murder Elizabeth. At last a letter from Mary plotting against her, proved a horrible plan, and Mary was executed. When Phillip II of Spain knew that Mary's head had been cut off, he was furious, since he had supported the plot. At once he made preparations to attack England.

In 1588 a great Armada of Spanish ships anchored at Calais harbour. From the beginning of her reign Elizabeth kept her country far from menaces of war. However, this situation was irrefutable and Elizabeth would not permit that a foreign country damaged her state. With the help of her advisers Elizabeth studied the attack and the Spanish Armada had to face the Royal Navy. After a series of defeats the Armada went back to its home ports. Thanks to this victory England emerged as a noteworthy naval force in the world. This triumph over Spain saved England from Catholic rulers, and saved the Protestant faith in all northern Europe. Moreover, the Spanish threat to England had gone for ever.

Elizabeth had a cultivated and lively mind. She allowed England to become a successful and prosperous nation respected by the rest of Europe. She was a sensible woman who loved all kinds of music, sports and arts. As England was going through great cultural advancement, she drove her Era to the top of English renaissance being her name attached to the great works of literature and drama that flourished in the latter years of her reign.

She promoted many of the greatest writers in England standing out names such as William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, and Edmund Spenser. Those writers and other exceptional men were the vivid representation of the spirit of the age. Their works were not merely exciting and amusing literature; they were models of Elizabethan life.

Playwrights made London theatres the most exciting places of Europe. People loved the new drama and comedies. They were eager of fun and embraced all these new ways of life. People also had a great passion for sports and games. No matter what their social standing may be all people enjoyed gambling games and sports, such as hunting, hawking, and falconry. Elizabeth enjoyed her pastime being hunting her favourite sport.

Despite the fact that Elizabeth I lived in a men's world she was able to promote important changes on economy, politics and social issues. Under her reign, England's explorations in the new world began. The most famous sea captains thrived in this era, a clear example of this was Sir Francis Drake who sailed the world and this achievement made him the most celebrated sea captain of his generation. Sir Humphrey Gilbert and Sir Walter Raleigh started to colonize eastward in order to get profits. Apart from that, the reign of Queen Elizabeth I saw an enormous emergence in the naval and commercial power of the Western world. Her reign is well-known as the "Golden Age" because of the development in art, literature, music, expeditions, and trading.

Elizabeth I governed the country as few monarchs did. She was able to cope with the drawbacks under the most difficult sceneries. She was the first Tudor to understand that a monarch could rule by popular consent. Her wise and witty mind unable her to choose her advisers who helped her to rule the country in a successful way.

She dedicated her entire life to England. As time went on she felt tired and old, less portraits of her were permitted to avoid the real decline of the queen. She was far from being the young queen who liked dancing, singing or laughing. The energy that characterized her at the beginning of her reign was fading away. She spent her last days at Richmond Palace assisted by her closer ladies, she went to sleep and never again woke up-, in this way the most glorious Queen called Elizabeth "Gloriana" or "Good Queen Bess" ,the last of the Tudors, who had reigned England for over 44 years had passed away.

1.1. Birth of a Princess

1.1.1. Elizabeth's father: Henry VIII

To have a better understanding of the Elizabethan Era it is necessary to look deep into the historical events that promoted this successful period. Indeed the reign of Henry VIII was the main foundation of the Elizabethan Era. Many crucial events happened during Henry's period as king, events which directly changed the society of England under the reign of Elizabeth I. When he became king England was a Catholic country, and Henry himself was a devout catholic, he even published a book in "Defense of the Seven Sacraments" condemning Luther's ideas of Protestantism so as to show his disapproval towards Protestant faith, as a result the Pope prized him by honoring him with the title "Defender of the Faith".

Henry VIII first marriage took place in 1502 when his elder brother Arthur, died. His father, Henry VII made the arrangements to marry Arthur's widow Catherine of Aragon, the daughter of the King of Spain, to the future king. The engagement immediately raised questions related to the biblical teachings in Leviticus 18 "You shall not uncover the nakedness of your brother's wife" against marrying a deceased brother's wife. Pope Clement VII had already given him a special dispensation to marry his brother's widow, as this had been against the laws of the Church. During the union that lasted twenty five years only a girl named Mary survived, after a series of miscarriages, Henry convinced himself that it was a sign of God's displeasure that he had no male heirs. He felt that his marriage was cursed since Catherine had been married first to his elder brother. He wanted to dissolve the union by asking the Pope to declare his marriage unlawful, as it had been carried out against the Church laws. He would then be free to marry again; he was passionately in love with a court lady, Anne Boleyn. Being well-educated and twenty years younger than Catherine, she was the perfect suitor to give him the male heir he so badly wanted. He was determined to divorce Catherine and marry Anne. But the powerful king of Spain Charles V, was Catherine's nephew, and his army had invaded Rome making the Pope his prisoner. Being under his control he had no chance to help King Henry, besides Charles certainly would not allow his aunt to be humiliated.

Consequently, Henry ordered his Chancellor, Thomas Wolsey, to persuade the Pope to accept the king's divorce. However, *"Pope Clement VII refused to grant Henry an annulment. For five years Henry's desire for divorce and remarriage consumed English politics. The people of England tended to favour Henry's side of the argument as there was already a growing anti-papal sentiment for the heavy taxes imposed by the Church"* (Palmer, 1976; Scott, 2008). In spite of Wolsey's efforts, he had no success, because the Pope depended on Charles V's decisions. So Henry's efforts were in vain.

Henry used to be ruthless with people who failed him and in 1529 dismissed Wolsey by accusing him of treason. He escaped from execution as he died on the way to his trial. In 1532 Thomas Cranmer was appointed as Archbishop of Canterbury. The appointment had been secured by the family of the Anne Boleyn who was being courted by Henry. He worked on the king's annulment of his previous marriage, which required great urgency after Anne announced her pregnancy. Consequently in May 1533 Archbishop Thomas Cranmer's declaration disabled Henry's previous marriage with the catholic Catherine of Aragon and accepted his new wife, Ann Boleyn, as queen. Consequently Henry's church reforms were achieved; However, Henry's intention was not a religious reform. Ironically, he continued being a devout Catholic till the end of his life. To end up his first marriage he named himself his own Pope, able to approve his own divorce. Not only did he break away from papal authority but he also eradicated the Catholic religious practice from England so as to establish The Church of England under the 1534 Act of Supremacy, with the king as sovereign over the Church within his realm. During the same year the King's minister, Thomas Cromwell, ensured that Parliament recognized Henry as Supreme Head of the Church of England with Anne as his rightful Queen, and her children would succeed to the throne.

As a result of that union a girl named Elizabeth was born on 7 September 1533 at Greenwich Palace, under a new religion, imposed by her father. She was the second daughter of the king. Both Henry and Anne strongly believed that the child she was expecting was a boy and had every reason, to as the philosophers and astronomers foretold them the arrival of a son but the newly born was a girl. Having expected a son, Henry VIII felt disappointed with Elizabeth's birth. He wanted a son to succeed him to the throne, since he already had a daughter but he still proclaimed her heir to the throne.

That was bad news since Henry had broken with the Catholic Church to marry Anne, such was his disillusionment that when she was baptized he did not assist. Elizabeth was christened in the Friar's Chapel at Greenwich, her Godfather was Thomas Cranmer and her Godmother was the duchess of Norfolk.

Eventually, King Henry's feelings change positively towards Elizabeth, and she was afforded all the honours to a princess of the royal blood. *"Baby Elizabeth spent her first three months in the royal nursery at Greenwich Palace. Many servants tended to her needs. One fed her, one changed her, another rocked her cradle, and yet another did her laundry. But then, at the age of 3 months, and according to royal custom, Elizabeth was separated from her parents and removed from the place"* (Weatherly, 2006) therefore, she was escorted through the streets of London by her great uncle the Duke of Norfolk to Hatfield, a palace north of London that her father gave to her. As a consequence, Princess Mary lost her position as heir to throne and she was appointed as Elizabeth's lady-in-waiting, so the King's first daughter was now a mere servant.

1.1.2 Elizabeth's mother: Anne Boleyn

Henry's marriage to Anne, and her ensuing execution, made her an iconic figure in the political and religion revolution that was the origin of the English reformation.

Anne Boleyn was the Queen of England from 1533 to 1536 becoming the second wife of Henry VIII and the first Marquise of Pembroke (a title giving to her by her husband), it was the first hereditary peerage title granted to a woman so as to raise his mistress to the dignity of a Marquise before marrying her.

Anne did not have the opportunity to be a mother; that possibility was snatched from her. Starkey argued that *"Anne wanted to breastfeed her daughter but was only prevented from doing so by Henry's selfish desire for a good uninterrupted night's sleep"*. (2003:511). Whether there was truth in Henry VIII not allowing Anne to breastfeed her daughter it could be related to make sure that she could get pregnant again quickly, rather than babysitting her daughter. She became pregnant three more times, but none of the babies survived. Meanwhile young Elizabeth was under the care of the baroness Lady Margaret Bryan, not her parents, and she would only see them on special occasions and celebrations such as Christmas.

Borman (2009) described that Anne's demonstration of love for her daughter was magnanimous as she enjoyed having little Elizabeth next to her paying great attention to the running of the nursery. Her own mother chose the materials and colours of her clothes. Since the clothing worn during that period reflected the status of the wearer. Her clothes were made by her own dressmaker called William Loke, who was very concerned about the design of the clothes made for the young Princess.

Elizabeth had been only two in the year 1536, when her mother Anne Boleyn was sent to the scaffold on false charges of adultery and incest with her own brother George Boleyn. The truth is that Henry was becoming disappointed with Anne, as she did not provide him with a male heir and this had become an embarrassment for him due to his split from Rome. Anne's body and head were buried in a grave without name in the Chapel of St. Peter ad Vincula. Consequently, a new Act of Succession declared her marriage to the king null and void, making Elizabeth illegitimate and removing her from the line of succession.

After the terrible death of Elizabeth's mother, her life changed considerably. For being too young she scarcely realized her mother's extinction; nonetheless, her way of life would have suffered a sudden metamorphosis. Notwithstanding the young princess had her own household at Hatfield, a palace in Hertfordshire, as was required by the etiquette some of the girl's needs were neglected. Her first governess, Lady Bryan considered writing to the statesman Thomas Cromwell, asking him to provide the girl with the clothes she needed, for the ones she had were too small. Moreover, Elizabeth's privileges were withdrawn. As her mother passed away she was no longer a Princess, instead she became a Lady and was taken to a different place in Hunsdon.

Not only Elizabeth was the only victim of the brutal murder of her mother but it also was an audacious achievement to become a successful monarch being humiliated and treated as a bastard during her childhood. As a marvelous miracle Anne Boleyn's daughter became Queen of England, sometimes called "Good Queen Bess", "The Virgin Queen" because of her refusal to marry or "Gloriana" after the main character in Spencer's famous poem, "The Fairie Queen", a name that defines a "Golden Age" for British Culture-she was the fifth and last monarch of the Tudor Dynasty.

1.1.3. Elizabeth's stepmothers

Being an orphan Elizabeth had four stepmothers along her turbulent childhood. Henry's new queen after Elizabeth's mother was Jane Seymour; she was the only wife who succeeded in the one thing that all other wives failed to do-bore Henry a legitimate son, an heir to the throne. She died nine days later of an infection called childbed fever. After the death of Jane Seymour in 1537, the king lamented the loss for some time; nevertheless, political constraints demanded he looked for a new wife. Meanwhile Edward went to live with her sisters at Hatfield so as to keep them out of the impoverished city of London. They used to move from one palace to another reducing their chances of getting ill. Edward's birth changed young Elizabeth's life once again, as Lady Bryan, her governess, left her to take care of the newly born. Katherine Champernowne was appointed in Lady Bryan's place. Weatherly (2006) described Katherine as a quite well-educated woman who became Elizabeth's baroness teaching her History, Mathematics, geography and astronomy. She also taught Elizabeth the skills that a royal Lady of the time should master, such as, needlework, dancing and riding. Katherine brought up Elizabeth with affection as she watched Elizabeth grow in a difficult world.

When Elizabeth was seven years old Henry's fourth marriage was organized by his loyal minister and great statesman, Cromwell, in 1540. He married Anne of Cleves, a German princess; she was considered a desirable marriage prospect due to her family's political holdings. She did not have the abilities expected of a noblewoman, such as playing a musical instrument, singing, dancing and the ability to speak in at least one or two languages, besides English. She preferred to do needlework rather than trying to accomplish the expertise of an English noblewoman. She was one of the luckiest wives to survive Henry. He got tired of the alliance and divorced Anne saying that she was neither well-educated nor beautiful. Then Cromwell's enemies The Duke of Norfolk, The Duke of Suffolk and the Bishop of Winchester, betrayed him giving an end to his brilliant career as he was executed a month later.

The same day he was beheaded, Henry married Catherine Howard. She was the cousin of Henry's ill-fated second Queen Anne Boleyn. She had been lady-in-waiting to Henry's fourth wife, Anne of Cleves and also was the young niece of the powerful Duke of Norfolk who was Catholic. He worked against Cromwell, and was against protestant changes in the Church but had accepted Henry as the Supreme Head of the Church.

Catherine's greatest crime was her stupidity as she was a flirtatious girl who never understood the consequences of her actions. She made the mistake to continue her affairs as queen. The elderly Henry called her his "rose without a thorn" which was an irony since Catherine was unfaithful to the king.

Henry, nearing fifty and weighing about 140 kilograms, expelling a foul smelling, festering ulcer that had to be drained daily made Catherine find her marital relation neither attractive nor pleasant, repulsed by her husband's obesity and health problems.

She soon started off a romance with the king's favourite male courtier Thomas Culpeper. Consequently Henry would regret both, the loss of Cromwell and this marriage. Catherine was arrested for adultery and beheaded in 1543. *"The death of this stepmother upset Elizabeth because she was kind to her and seated her at the Queen's table every time Elizabeth visited the palace"* (Weatherly, 2006). She even told her friend Robert Dudley that she would never marry to avoid making the same mistakes her father did.

The following year Elizabeth was ten years old and she got another stepmother called Catherine Parr. She was the king's sixth and final wife who also looked after him and his three children and she probably was the only motherly influence that the children had.

Catherine Parr achieved the union of Henry VIII with his three children as she took them all to live with her and the King at the royal palace where they received fine clothes and an excellent education since she set up the best tutors to come to the palace to teach the children. She helped the King to build a closer relationship with his children that he had previously neglected. Even Mary, who thought differently about religion, was enchanted by this warm and witty woman. As Henry's three last marriages had failed to produce more children, a third Act of succession in 1543 restored the previous position of his daughters by giving each of them a considerable income and naming them as successors after their brother Edward. He also contemplated in his will allowing Catherine to live the life she wanted and also to be in charge of his beloved children.

1.2. Early life

1.2.1. The teenager Princess

However, being barely a teenager Elizabeth's life took a dangerous turn as her last stepmother Catherine Parr, over a month of Henry's death in 1547 married Lord Seymour. He was the fourth son of Sir John Seymour and Margery Wentworth, and the brother of Jane Seymour, Henry VIII's third wife, and Somerset's younger brother as well.

He had been interested in Catherine Parr previously in 1543 but he had to let her go when the King became interested in her, since she was forced to accept his proposal. It was clear that the love between the two of them rekindle after the King's death. However, the ambitious and immoral Thomas Seymour proposed marriage to the young princess first, but after she rejected him, he married her stepmother Catherine in secret by the end of April, 1547, at Chelsea.

At the time of Henry VIII's death the twelve-year-old Elizabeth was living with Catherine Parr in her household at Chelsea. Even though Seymour was married, he behaved in a seductive manner towards Elizabeth and he was not totally unwelcome. *"Elizabeth's governess later testified in front of the Privy Council that Seymour would enter Elizabeth's chamber some mornings, wearing only a nightshirt and in one opportunity he would climb in with her and tickle her"* (Weatherly,2006).Catherine finally took into account that something unusual was going on. In April, she found them in each other arms. Instead of confronting them Catherine in an attempt to protect her stepdaughter, sent her to live with her good friends, Sir Anthony Denny and his wife at Cheshunt. Elizabeth was devastated, since she did not want to hurt her stepmother's feelings. Before leaving, Catherine told Elizabeth, *"God has given you great qualities. Cultivate them always, and labour to improve them, for I believe you are destined by Heaven to be Queen of England"*(retrieved from <http://www.luminarium.org/encyclopedia/katherineparr.htm>).).

After Catherine died in childbirth on August 1548, Seymour proposed to Elizabeth. To even think of such a thing was treason, even worse some rumours said that Elizabeth was pregnant with his child.

Consequently, Seymour was arrested in 1549 on charge of treason. Elizabeth was questioned because, at that time, it was treason for an heir to the throne to marry without the consent of the council. Elizabeth was able to persuade Lord Protector Somerset that she was innocent, to keep herself alive; however, Seymour did not have the same fortune as he was beheaded.

It is believed that Elizabeth was sent to Cheshunt to cover up her pregnancy as she possibly gave birth to a boy in July 1548. To hide the scandal, the child was brought up as the son of John de Vere, ultimately inheriting de Vere's title as Earl of Oxford. Many Scholars suggested that "William Shakespeare" was in fact a pen name of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, the greatest writer in the English language.

1.2.2. Elizabeth's Personality and Image

After the shameful incident with Seymour, Elizabeth was sent to Hatfield House, Hertfordshire, where she lived until she was crowned Queen of England; this was one of her family's many residences throughout England. There, she was taught by distinguished tutors such as William Grindal and Roger Aschman. She received a methodic education normally given to male heirs related to studies on classical language, history, rhetoric, and moral philosophy. According to Ascham: "*her perseverance is equal to that of a man, and her memory long keeps what it quickly picks up*". Moreover, she was able to read Latin and Greek and spoke French and Italian fluently. She also studied theology but she was more interested in languages than religion; however, she was influenced by the beliefs of English Protestantism in her formative period, to restore the Protestant church and mould the future of England.

Some people such as Venetian Ambassador, Giovanni Michiele, 1557, described the queen as it follows: "*Her face is comely rather than handsome, but she is tall and well-formed, with good skin, though swarthy; she has fine eyes.*" According to the portraits left by painters such as Sieve and Ditchley, Elizabeth had an erect posture and very pale skin. She had a thin and curved nose and reddish-gold hair, extremely long, slender hands and fingers and her eye-color appeared to have been golden-brown, her lips rather thin, and her cheek bones pronounced. Her hair was also naturally curly or at least wavy.

Elizabeth did all the things women in 16th-century England weren't supposed to do, she looked at men in the eye and spoke out of turn. Not only had she loved all kind of sports especially horse riding, but she was also an expert horsewoman. She liked to dance and enjoyed watching dancers.

She enjoyed watching plays and produced the atmosphere responsible for improving the literature of the period. The Queen denied the Puritan demands for bringing to an end the theatres and playhouses. She learned to be cautious in foreign affairs, preferring in most cases to wait and see what happened to decide what to do at the last moment.

1.2.3. Ruled by her siblings

1.2.3.1. Edward VI (1547 – 1553)

By 1547 Henry VIII's son and heir to the throne Edward VI was only nine years old. Edward's uncle, Edward Seymour became the Lord Protector of the Realm and Governor of the king's person and who created himself Duke of Somerset. The Protector's aims were two: the continuation of Henry VIII's devastating wars against France and Scotland, especially with the objective to apply the Treaty of Greenwich, under which Edward was to marry Mary, Queen of Scots. The second one was to install aggressively the Protestant Church. If the former was done with uncertainty and badly organized on Somerset's behalf, the later, directed by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, was applied full of determination. English victory over the Scots at the Battle of Pinkie in 1547 only kept Scots closer to France.

The following year, the French king sent troops to Scotland, proclaimed war on England and blockaded Boulogne. The same year, there was an agreement between the Scots and the French that Mary should marry the heir of the French throne, demonstrating the collapse of Somerset's foreign policy.

Even though a formal break with Rome came about during the time of Henry VIII, the Church of England continued to use liturgies in Latin throughout his reign, just as it always had. Once Henry died and his son Edward VI came to the throne in 1547 the scenario was ready to set some very radical changes in the religious life of the country. A group of bishops gathered to create to first Book of Common Prayer.

At the same time, Cranmer's reforms were taking form. He proposed to make a middle way between Catholic and Protestant. However, in 1547 traditional Catholic rituals were forbidden. The measures were applied by force in 1549 with the Act of Uniformity, being reinforced by the publication of Cranmer's Prayer Book to dignify English, but maintaining the order of the old services and its use was compulsory. He was the responsible of the translation and reformation of the faith and worship of English speaking world keeping it to a simpler more direct proclamation of Christ and the gospel. It contained the words of structured services of worship and the forms of services for daily and Sunday worship in English. It also had morning prayer, evening prayer and the holy communion.

As a result of a devastating economy produced by Somerset's waste of money on inefficient military campaign there were rebellions in the Catholic west of England to protest against the Prayer Book. Another rebellion broke out in East Anglia against unpopular local landowners instead of religious reasons. Both rebellions were crushed as John Dudley, an English general, admiral and politician who led the government of King Edward VI from 1550 to 1553, kept the incidents under control. As Somerset was too arrogant and inefficient, he was left aside in 1549 by this ruthless man who took the title of Duke of Northumberland and executed Somerset in 1552. John Dudley's father was the remarkable Edmund Dudley. He, one of the chief instruments of [Henry VII's](#) extortions, was descendant from a younger branch of barons. The ambition of power increased in the male members of the family with each succeeding generation, and though the father was beheaded by [Henry VIII](#) for his too devoted services in the preceding reign, the son became powerful enough in the days of [Edward VI](#) to trouble the succession to the crown.

By 1553, Elizabeth's half brother Edward was sixteen years old. Being extremely ill Edward ignored Elizabeth and Mary to succeed him. According to Edward's journal he did not get along with Elizabeth; on the other hand, Mary, his legitimate successor was catholic and Edward was Protestant. The crown was left to the fifteen-year-old Protestant cousin, Lady Jane Grey. Northumberland backed by Jane's ambitious parents, came up with the marriage of [Lady Jane Grey](#) with his own son Guildford Dudley, and involved both, her and her husband in a common ruin with himself.

Young Prince Edward died in July, 1553 and Jane was proclaimed Queen, but she ruled for only nine days, because Mary claimed her throne. People joined to support her to be the rightful ruler of England. Northumberland was executed and Jane was sent to the scaffold the following year with her husband when she was only seventeen.



1.2.3.2. Mary I's reign (1553-1558)

King Edward was succeeded by his sister Mary, a convinced Roman Catholic, who remembered Cranmer's responsibility of her mother's traumatic divorce from her father. Accused, tried and sentenced to death for treason, he was spared by Mary until he was finally tried for heresy.

"Elizabeth's half-sister Mary, who became queen of England in 1553. A staunch Catholic and loyal daughter of Katherine of Aragon, she made Elizabeth's life very difficult" (Doran, 2003) Elizabeth's half-sister Mary as queen made her first Parliament to validate Catherine of Aragon's marriage, by bastardizing Elizabeth once more. However, Mary did not remove Elizabeth formally from the succession, because until six months before her death she was still hoping to have children of her own.

During Mary's reign the Protestants were frightened as Mary was determined to destroy her father's work and restore the Catholic faith, the Catholic Church and the Pope's power in England. In order to achieve her goals she married Phillip, heir to the throne of Spain the most powerful Catholic country in Europe at that moment against the wishes of Parliament. She also wanted a son so as to avoid leaving the crown to her Protestant half-sister Elizabeth.

Opposition to Mary's expected Catholic marriage triggered a Rebellion in 1554 led by Sir Thomas Wyatt, who was a courageous leader and a skilled soldier. The aim of the rebellion was to get rid of the misleading Mary's government by overthrowing her and to marry Elizabeth to Edward Courtenay, an English descendant of the House of York, so as to place them both on the throne to avoid driving England under the influence of the Catholic Church. The uprising came to an end with Wyatt's execution. Once again Elizabeth had to face a traumatic and dangerous episode as she may have been implicated in the conspiracy. As a result, she was found guilty and sent to the tower of London; nevertheless, there was no evidence to prove her participation in it.

After two months, she was released and sent to Woodstock where she remained prisoner for a year. Elizabeth never forgot that awkward experience and twelve years later she confessed her Parliament, “I stood in danger of my life, my sister was so incensed against me”.

Finally she was allowed to return to Hatfield, her childhood home. From 1554 Protestants in England had been persecuted. About three hundred people were burned as heretics, mostly in the south-east, where Protestant beliefs were stronger.

Mary’s burnings were so unpopular that she was nicknamed “bloody Mary”. Her reign lasted only five years, quite a short period to restore the Catholic Church. Her husband Philip of Spain abandoned her and left the country. England was dragged into a war between Spain and France, losing Calais, its last possession in Europe. The bad harvests and influenza epidemics in 1557 helped increase the failure. Mary died in 1558, childless and sad, knowing that her heretic Protestant half-sister would rule the country.

1.3. The Path to the Throne

1.3.1. Elizabeth becomes Queen Elizabeth I (1558-1603)

Elizabeth became ruler of England at the age of 25 on November 17, 1558. Her first words were from Psalm 118: “*a domino factum est mirabile in oculis nostris*” which means: “this is the Lord's doing and it is marvellous in our eyes”(Schama, 2000). In fact, it was a miracle that she had survived to that day. She must have known from the very beginning how rough the road was going to be for a ruler of the wrong sex. The celebrations at her coronation were carefully planned to display the young queen as a shining example of virtue. The coronation itself was theatrical and spectacular because Elizabeth enjoyed exaggerating her role to the people, appearing as the attractive young queen.

During her procession, she regularly stopped to talk with plebeians, a gesture which achieved her both, admiration and respect from people. In fact, she stopped so many times and tried so hard to play her role that she finished the coronation process worn out.



At the same time, the skeptics dissipated their fears as Elizabeth's confidence and the air of controlled energy she emanated in public, demonstrated her capacity of leadership. It might be supposed that her first appearances at the council would have been an unpleasant experience. What the councillors saw was not a naive girl, but someone who seemed full, it was said, of manly authority.

The English had suffered so much under Mary's reign that they did not expect anything better from her sister, but time proved they were wrong. She had many of her father's qualities including rhetoric, the art of public speech. This was Elizabeth's strongest political weapon during her reign.

1.3.1.1. The Elizabethan religious settlement

Early in her reign, Elizabeth faced demanding tasks. Avoiding to be influenced by her personal feelings Elizabeth chose her advisers with care, including William Cecil, Francis Walsingham and Nicolas Throckmorton. Her chief minister among these was William Cecil who was made Lord Burghley in 1572 and served her faithfully for forty years. With Cecil's aid, Elizabeth was able to make both progresses towards improving the state she inherited, and settled down her first problem, the Church.

After the chaotic and short reigns of her siblings Edward VI and Mary I, Elizabeth had to face religious conflicts and marriage issues; to assume a catholic posture would have suggested Elizabeth's own bastardy, admitting that she did not have right to the throne. Possibly, she could have set an arrangement with the papacy as the ecclesiastic politics of 1558 determined. However, the Pope Julius III was too busy being a faithful ally of the French, having Mary as a new queen, who was a genuine catholic and had just claimed the English throne; it could have been a weak chance to Elizabeth accepting Catholicism, leaving the leadership and possibly the throne.

It was believed that she would restore the Protestant faith in England. Not only Mary's persecution of Protestants left a bitter disappointment among the English, but it also led to an increment of Protestants in the country.

Besides Queen Elizabeth was raised under the Protestant faith, and she must have remained loyal to it. Elizabeth's religious point of view was tolerance towards Catholics and Protestants because both of them believed in God. As she declared later in her reign: "There is only one Christ, Jesus, one faith". All else is a dispute over trifles.

Moreover, Queen Elizabeth's target was to maintain the peace and stability of her country, and religious persecution was only applied as an extreme solution when small religious groups threatened this peace. Nevertheless, many people disagreed with her views on religious toleration, and she was forced to apply cruel punishments towards Catholics. She only wanted a Church that would be useful to both Catholics and Protestants, and did not expect to move the Church into a more Protestant direction.

Her idea was maintaining the Church without changes; therefore, people would become accustomed to it. As a solution she wanted her subjects to accept Protestantism for Catholicism would die out naturally as people turned to the middle way religion to keep the loyalty of both Catholics and Protestants in time of danger.

It was known that Queen Elizabeth believed in God, and she also prayed everyday. Her chapels were as conservative as Catholic ones, for instance, the crucifix was present, and she also liked candles and music. Not only did she hate tedious Protestant sermons, but also showed disapproval at some Catholic rituals, such as, the elevation of the Host, which demonstrated that she rejected the Catholic belief of the Trinity.

She was not in favour of the clergy marrying as well, but it was a key ritual of Protestantism and she had to accept it. During her life, the Queen wrote several prayers for her people, according to them she accepted God as a superior entity in the need to accept his will.

The Act of Supremacy

An Act of Parliament in 1559 abolished the Pope's power, and the Queen was declared the "Supreme Governor of the Church of England" so as to avoid the religious tension in England. This act gave Elizabeth the right to control the Church of England. It also included an oath of loyalty to the Queen that the clergy were expected to take. If they did not take it, then they would lose their office. A High Commission was established to ensure that the oath was taken. It stated the following:

“I A. B. do utterly testify and declare in my conscience, That the Queen's Highness is the only Supreme Governor of this Realm, and of all other her Highness Dominions and Countries, as well in all Spiritual or Ecclesiastical Things or Causes, as Temporal; and that no foreign Prince, Person, Prelate State or Potentate, hath or ought to have any Jurisdiction, Power, Superiority, Preheminence, or Authority Ecclesiastical or Spiritual, within this Realm; and therefore I do utterly renounce and forsake all foreign Jurisdictions, Powers, Superiorities and Authorities, and do promote, that from henceforth I shall bear faith and true Allegiance to the Queen's Highness, her Heirs and lawful Successors, and to my Power shall assist and defend all Jurisdictions, Preheminences, Privileges and Authorities granted or belonging to the Queen's Highness, her Heirs and Successors, or united and annexed to the Imperial Crown of this Realm. So help me God, and by the Contents of this Book.”

The Act of Uniformity

As Thomas Cranmer did during her father's reign, Elizabeth wanted to apply a middle way between Protestants and Catholics. Elizabeth also restored Cranmer's Prayer Book that Mary had banned. People had to attend Prayer Book services on Sunday by law. Their absence would mean to be fined twelve pence-probably a small amount of money for a landowner, but a huge amount for a villager. As its services were based on Cranmer's prayer book, it encouraged men to accept it as the true religious expression of the English renaissance.

1.3.2. Proposals of Marriage

Cecil and the rest of the Privy Council were continually surprised at Elizabeth's intelligence, incisive critical thinking, and capacity for hard work. However, she further disappointed her advisers in her denial to marry. Everyone had expected her to tie the knot as soon as possible. Elizabeth's marriage would provide an heir and set her free of those labours only fit for men; Elizabeth's advisors thought she would soon choose one of the suitors and create some powerful alliance, but they all knew that Queen Elizabeth constantly found a way to evade marriage at the last minute.

According to her advisers, a marriage could secure Queen Elizabeth's safety. However their worries were somewhat misplaced. She managed to maintain popularity and at the same time survived without a husband or heir on her behalf.

The queen's romantic relationships with men were often settled in romantic terms. During her lifetime, she received many offers of marriage beginning with Phillip II of Spain who considered marrying Elizabeth in 1559, the same as Prince Eric of Sweden, soon to be king, The Archduke Charles son of the Emperor Ferdinand, the son of John Frederic Duke of Saxony, The Earl of Arran, the Earl of Arundel, and Sir William Pickering were politely rejected.

Nevertheless, at the same time the queen allowed the other suitors to remain hopeful as she did not have intentions to marry yet, while her advisers considered the advantages and disadvantages of each match. She also kept romantic friendships with Sir Christopher Hatton, Lord Chancellor from 1587 to 1591, Sir Walter Raleigh, and, in her last years as a Queen, with the much younger Robert Devereux, the Earl of Essex.

In fact, Queen Elizabeth's rejection to marry actually may have been a witty strategy to control foreign countries, dealing with courtiers at home rather than marrying quickly as her advisers recommended her to do.

England's army was smaller than the other countries in Europe, so Queen Elizabeth was afraid of a large scale invasion by France or Spain. However, if she didn't marry, potential invaders could always get a chance of conquering England through marriage, despite the fact that they had delayed actual attacks on England. Elizabeth, as always, avoided an engagement while managing never to offend Philip or to extinguish his hopes altogether.

This policy worked quite well, until Philip gave up courting Elizabeth. After this, he began planning an invasion of England. As Spain became a threat in 1578, she seemed serious about marrying the Duke of Anjou, the king of France's brother; however, he was much younger than Queen Elizabeth. Indeed, the marriage negotiations were based on the mutual need of England and France to make an alliance against Spain.

Not only the French were Catholic but they also accepted English Protestantism. For a decade, Anjou was by far the most serious foreign suitor of Queen Elizabeth's heart, and it was almost believed for a while that she would marry him. He went to England and it seemed that the queen was quite enchanted with her future husband, who she called her "frog", as he was not good-looking.

Moreover, Queen Elizabeth announced that she would marry him, but at the same time, it produced disagreement among those who did not want their queen married to a Catholic French. There were those who supported the marriage such as William Cecil and Thomas Radcliffe, Earl of Sussex, and those who were against it such as Robert Dudley, now Earl of Leicester. Once again, politics and religion were provoking difficulties for the queen to marry.

She had to face the pros and cons of the situation so as not to leave aside her popularity and support towards her regime. On the other hand, she was an old lady in her forties, and if she did not marry Anjou, then this could be her last opportunity to marry and have an heir to succeed her to the throne of England. After ten years of negotiations the union between France and England seemed impractical, for the Queen was over forty.

Despite the fact that she had many suitors, as well as a number of openly flirtatious dalliances, Queen Elizabeth found out how hard it was for an English queen to marry someone whom her people would accept.

Foreigners were unpopular among English people, and an English noble could cause quarrels at home. On the other hand, she always had feelings for her true love-Robert Dudley, the son of the Duke of Northumberland-who had conspired against Mary. They met when Dudley was imprisoned in the Tower of London at the same time as Queen Elizabeth, and they sometimes saw each other there. Dudley was tall and singularly good-looking and perhaps the man Queen Elizabeth really wanted to marry. She made him Earl of Leicester in 1564. Surprisingly, he often displeased the queen and was unpopular at court.

However, she might prefer remain single, as she showed her real feelings about marriage as she once yelled at her favourite, the Earl of Leicester, who tried to give orders to one of her servants: *"I will have a mistress here and no master"*.

Moreover, Dudley was married to Amy at that time, daughter of Sir John Robsart. The union had been arranged by convenience, since it was not a love match. Amy visited her husband in the Tower during his imprisonment; but afterwards when the new queen was crowned, she lived apart from him, as he preferred to spend his time with Queen Elizabeth rather than with his wife. In September 1560 she was staying at Cumnor Hall in Berkshire, when she died under strange circumstances which certainly appeared questionable since Queen Elizabeth's obvious favouritism towards Dudley was not a secret among people.

It was deduced that Dudley might have poisoned his wife to marry Queen Elizabeth, so he was suspected to be responsible for her death. Nevertheless, the suspicions were dissipated as it was explained that she broke her neck when she fell down stairs; Despite the death of Dudley's wife, he was still the most likely candidate for her hand.

However, Queen Elizabeth's paramour was not as interested in her as she believed. According to Somerset (2005) there was record of flirtation between Lettice Knollys and [Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester](#) already in 1565 but Lettice's affair with Leicester began in 1575.

Lettice Knollys was an Englishwoman, grandniece of Anne Boleyn and close to Queen Elizabeth since childhood. As she was one of the best looking ladies of the court, the queen grew tremendously jealous of the attention paid to her and allowed her to marry [Walter Devereux](#), Viscount Hereford, and later Earl of Essex.

They were married around 1560 and they had five children. Nevertheless, her first husband died under strange circumstances. Some malicious rumours said that Dudley might have poisoned Essex.

In spite of the rumours, Dudley married secretly the widow of Essex, now pregnant with his child. The first wedding with Amy Robsart was at Kenilworth, the second took place at Wanstead on September 21, 1578, in front of witnesses-attending to Sir Francis Knollys' claim. Four months later their son, Robert, was born in January, 1579. The queen knew about the union only a year later.

The courtiers knew the whole thing, but nobody wanted to tell the queen the awful truth. In August 1579, the French ambassador de Simier told the queen of the marriage, in a desperate manoeuvre to settle down the negotiations for Elizabeth's possible marriage to the Duke of Anjou. Elizabeth was shocked and furious:

"The rage, vexation, and disappointment of the Queen, on hearing the Frenchman's disclosure of the marriage of her favourite, Leicester, exceeded all bounds of decency and decorum. That Leicester, the dearest of her favourites, should form such a connection, such an indissoluble tie, and that too with her own near relation, without even consulting her, imploring her sanction, or supplicating her forgiveness —and that, after having formed it, he should have concealed the horrid fact from her, when known to the whole court;—appeared, to her eyes, the very acme of ingratitude, perfidy, baseness, and insult!"

(Retrieved November 08, 2010 from

<http://www.luminarium.org/encyclopedia/letticeknollys.htm>)

The queen ordered Dudley's imprisonment, and even threatened to put him in the Tower, but she was persuaded by the Earl of Sussex. Instead, she ordered him to retire to his estate at Wanstead. Leicester was out of favour for a few months, and restored his position a year later.

Lettice, whom Elizabeth called a "she-wolf", was never forgiven and was permitted to come to court only once after this for a private interview. Robert Dudley, the son of Leicester and Lettice Knollys, died at the age of five, in 1584. Dudley died at his manor at Cornbury, Oxfordshire, in September 1588. He appointed Lettice the only beneficiary of his will, which he had made the previous year:

"I do heere appoint my moste deere and welbeloved wyfe, the Counteisse of Leicester, to be my sole executrix of this my laste will and testament, and do require her, of all love betweene us, that she will not only be content to take it upon her, but also to see it faythfullye and carefully performed. Next her Majestye I will now returne to my deere wyfe, and sett downe that for her, which cannot be so welle as I would wyshe it, but shalbe as well as I am able to make it, having alwaies founde her a faythfull and verie loving and obediente carefull wyfe, and so do I truste this will of myne shall fynde her no less myndfull of me beinge gone, than I was alwaies of her being alyve. I do gyve and bequeath to my said deere wyfe, over and besides the joynecture I have made her, the lease of Drayton Bassett, freely to gyfe and dispose at her will. Item, there be certeine parsells of grounds which I bought of the Earle of Oxenforde, being sometime belonging to the house of Crambroke, § and I reserved purposely to be joyned to the parke of Wanstead, as also the parcell of ground called Waterman's, which I bought of the lorde of Buckhurste, which I do also freely gyve and grante to my said wyfe for ever, with the mannor of Wansted already assured unto her. Item, I do give to my said wyfe, during her lyfe, all other lands and tenements which I did purchase in the lordship of Wansted, besydes that is past by deede with the howse and mannour to her before"

(retrieved November 08, 2010 from

<http://www.luminarium.org/encyclopedia/letticeknollys.htm>)

Lettice fulfilled the will, which was not an easy issue since Dudley died in great debt. Lettice had a monument in the Beauchamp Chapel, an effigy of the two of them lying side by side. Despite the dishonest beginnings of their relationship, this had been a loving and happy marriage. Elizabeth's hate towards Lettice became less strong with time.

However, the queen refused to see her on several occasions, or come to parties, if she knew Lettice would be present. In addition, Queen Elizabeth became depressed and locked herself in her room when Dudley died; Somerset reported that *“She was so grieved that for some days she shut herself in her chamber alone, and refused to speak to anyone until the Treasurer and other Councillors had the doors broken open and entered to see her”* (1991:596). As an extreme manoeuvre Lord William Cecil had to break her door down so as to force her to eat.

Dudley’s death had hit her like a bullet in her heart as Westin described in her book *“His last letter”*: *“She opened her mouth to shout down his lie, but at that moment came a great boom of cannon from the Tower and what the queen howled was neither heard nor understood by anyone in the presence chamber, least by herself. It was a cry of denial from the deepest well of her heart”* (2010:360). She was able to keep fulfilling her role as queen; however as a woman she never recovered from Dudley’s death.

1.3.2.1. Why didn’t Elizabeth I marry?

Perhaps it was not Queen Elizabeth’s desire to diminish her own political power by sharing it with an ambitious man such as her beloved Dudley instead she enjoyed ruling the country by herself using the possibility of marriage with England as a strategy to secure the stability of the nation.

Another reason might be that she was afraid of marriage since her father had assassinated many of his wives, including her mother, Ann Boleyn, who was beheaded when Elizabeth was two years old; perhaps she was traumatized and did not want to be killed by a potential husband.

Elizabeth's romantic life was remained as a taboo topic in the Elizabethan era; however, the issue did not stop the commoners’ gossips about the possibility of her having bastard children or even worst that her state of virginity was not credible at all. According to the information retrieved from www.sparknotes.com there is a possibility that she might not be as pure as it was thought:

“As a result of her aversion to matrimony, she began to be called the “Virgin Queen.” However, although it is clear that she never married her status as a lifelong virgin is under considerable doubt. Sex was far from a polite discussion topic at the time and her affairs were not recorded in the same explicit detail as they might be today. Yet there is strong evidence that she likely had several affairs”.

Some rumours even said that no one would marry her because she was infertile or probably had some kind of sexual deformity. Nevertheless, no one knew the real reasons for her rejection to marriage.

According to the information retrieved from the web page www.luminarium.com there are some other possible reasons of Elizabeth’s aversion to marriage:

- Psychological – It is said that after Catherine Howard’s execution the 8 year old Elizabeth told her friend Robert Dudley that she would never marry. Did she decide not to marry because of what happened to her own mother, Anne Boleyn, and her stepmother, Catherine Howard.
- Mary I’s example – Elizabeth saw the damage that Mary’s marriage to Philip II did to the country. This marriage caused unrest and rebellion and it also broke Mary’s heart.
- Control – In Tudor times, a wife was expected to submit to her husband and Elizabeth, as monarch, may not have wanted to give away any control to her husband, when it was she who was responsible for the running of the country.
- Love – Elizabeth loved Robert Dudley and it may be that she chose not to marry because she could not marry her true love.
- Diplomacy – Remaining unmarried meant that she could enter marriage negotiations and play courtiers off against each other.
- Fear of childbirth – Two of Elizabeth’s stepmothers, Jane Seymour and Catherine Parr, had died just a few days after childbirth so was Elizabeth frightened of having children.
- Commitment to her country – Elizabeth wanted to do the best for her country and felt married to her country.

- The perfect marriage never came along – Marriage negotiations always seemed to come to nothing because of diplomatic wrangling and problems.
- Medical reasons –Elizabeth I – A Virago, Genetically Male. R. Bakan’s theory that Elizabeth had testicular feminization syndrome which meant that she looked like a female and would have had female external genitalia but that the uterus and uterine tubes would have been either rudimentary or absent, and that the vagina may also have been absent. She would also have been sterile. If Elizabeth did not have a vagina then she would not have wanted anyone to know about it.
- Elizabeth was a man – According to The Bisley Boy legend, the real Elizabeth died in childhood and a boy took her place. Obviously, the imposter would have been discovered if “Elizabeth” had married.

A list of Queen Elizabeth's principal suitors

This list gives the names of the principal suitors to the queen over the course of her life. Some individuals appear more than once as their suit was considered and reconsidered. Those suitors were given serious consideration by the queen's government or whose desire for her hand in marriage had a profound influence upon the queen's personal and political life.

Early Years (1534-1557)

- 1534 Duke of Angoulme (third son of Francis I)
- 1542 A Prince of Portugal
- 1543 Son of the Earl of Arran
- 1544 Prince Philip (Philip II)
- 1547 Sir Thomas Seymour
- 1552 Prince of Denmark
- 1553 Courtenay, Earl of Devonshire
- 1554 Philibert Emanuel, Duke of Savoy
- 1554 Prince of Denmark
- 1556 Prince Eric of Sweden
- 1556 Don Carlos (son of Philip II)

As queen (1558-1584)

- 1559 Philip II
- 1559 Prince Eric of Sweden
- 1559 Son of John Frederic, Duke of Saxony
- 1559 Sir William Pickering
- 1559 Earl of Arran
- 1559 Henry Fitzalan, Earl of Arundel
- 1559 Robert Dudley
- 1560 King Eric of Sweden
- 1560 Adolphus, Duke of Holstein
- 1560 King Charles IX
- 1560 Henry, Duke of Anjou
- 1566 Robert Dudley
- 1568 Archduke Charles
- 1570 Henry Duke of Anjou

1572- 1584 Francis, Duke of Alencon, later Anjou.

Compiled from *Elizabeth Tudor: The Lonely Queen* by Sir Arthur S. MacNalty (1971 edition).

1.3.3. Plots and Conspiracies

Elizabeth I's main accomplishment was to become Queen of England by surviving long enough to inherit the throne from her half-sister Mary. However, the threats against her life did not end on the day she became queen. Nevertheless, Elizabeth I was able to remain alive and to have a long and successful reign.

In December 1583, Elizabeth wrote to the French Ambassador telling him that many people were conspiring to kill her.

In October 1583, Elizabeth's life was in danger since John Somerville, a Catholic from Warwickshire, had aroused feelings against the queen as Jesuits propaganda were circulating. Somerville came out with the idea of killing his queen with a gun as a result he was arrested, found guilty and sentenced to death before he could murder her. He put an end to his life by hanging himself in his prison cell in the Tower of London before his death sentence could be passed.

Elizabeth was lucky to escape death as the potential killer Dr William Parry, a Welsh MP who hid in the queen's garden at Richmond Palace, was so enchanted to see her as she closely resembled her father, King Henry VIII that he could not assassinate the queen. The main reason to murder the queen is unrevealed, but he was known to William Cecil, Lord Burleigh and worked as a spy.

However, it was heard that he would murder Elizabeth if he ever had the chance and some thought that he was manipulated by Mary, Queen of Scots. Parry was sentenced to death and ended his life on the gallows.

According to the information retrieved from <http://www.elizabethfiles.com/plots-against-elizabeth-i/3509/> there were a number of plots against the Queen Elizabeth I:

a)The Barge Incident

One of the most famous attempts on Elizabeth's life was while the queen was travelling by barge down the River Thames. A shot rang out and one of the Queen's bargemen collapsed from a bullet wound which was clearly intended for the queen. As Elizabeth passed him her handkerchief to put on his wound, She said "Be of good cheer, for you will never want. For the bullet was meant for me."

b)The Ridolfi Plot

This plot surfaced in 1571 and it aimed to assassinate Elizabeth I and replace her with Mary, Queen of Scots who was to be married to Thomas Howard, 4th Duke of Norfolk. The plot takes its name from Roberto Ridolfi, a Florentine banker, who was a papal agent, a go-between for the Spanish and the Duke of Norfolk, and the man responsible for funding the rebellion which would see a Northern Catholic rebellion and an invasion by the Spanish under Philip of Spain. Unfortunately for the Catholics and for the Duke of Norfolk, Elizabeth's secret service, headed by her spymaster Sir Francis Walsingham, uncovered the plot and it collapsed. The Duke of Norfolk was executed as a traitor in 1572 and Elizabeth never trusted Mary, Queen of Scots ever again.

c)The Throgmorton Plot

This plot, in 1583, was another attempt to assassinate Elizabeth and replace her with the Catholic Mary, Queen of Scots. The plot takes its name from Francis Throgmorton, a Catholic who was involved in a number of plots against Elizabeth I. This plot involved Throgmorton acting as a go-between for Mary, Queen of Scots and her agent Thomas Morgan, and the Spanish Ambassador, Don Bernardino de Mendoza. Again, Elizabeth's secret service got wind of the plot and arrested Throgmorton who, under torture, revealed that the Duke of Guise was planning to invade England from the Spanish Netherlands. As a result of this plot, Throgmorton was executed at Tyburn and Mendoza was thrown out of England and sent back to Spain.

d)The Babington Plot

The Babington Plot of 1586 was yet another plot which involved Mary, Queen of Scots. The plan was to assassinate Elizabeth, encourage a Catholic rising and put the Catholic Mary, Queen of Scots on the English throne. This plot is named after Anthony Babington, a man who had worked in Mary, Queen of Scots's employ as a page. Babington set up a secret society which aimed to help and protect Jesuit infiltrators coming to England to get rid of the heretic Elizabeth I. His society also had links with Mary's emissaries in Europe who could be called on for aid. The plot had the Pope's blessing and although it was led by Babington it was actually thought up by John Ballard, a Jesuit priest.

Sir Francis Walsingham, Elizabeth's spymaster, proved how indispensable he was by uncovering this plot and saving his Queen's life. Ballard, the Jesuit priest, was arrested and tortured on the rack. He was then executed. Although Babington tried to save his neck by offering information to Elizabeth's secret service and then fleeing in disguise, he was eventually arrested and was executed as a traitor in September 1586.

This plot was the undoing of Mary, Queen of Scots. She had been implicated in many plots against Elizabeth in the past but this was the last straw. She was beheaded at Fotheringay Castle on the 8th February 1587 after a special court found her guilty of treason.

Mary was always a considerable threat to Elizabeth. Many Catholics did not recognize Elizabeth as the true queen of the realm. They did not recognize the marriage of her mother, Anne Boleyn, to her father, and so believed that she was illegitimate. Illegitimate children were not supposed to become kings or queens. As well as this, Elizabeth was also a Protestant, but Mary a Catholic. For many years Mary Queen of Scots tried to seize the throne and return England to Roman Catholicism. However, Elizabeth always treated Mary with care, and was remarkably tolerant of her less than respectful cousin.

These are just a few of the plots that Elizabeth survived thanks to God's protection, luck and the skill of her secret service. Elizabeth more than just survived though, unlike her half-brother and half-sister, she had a long and prosperous reign, ruling the country for over 40 years in a reign known as "The Golden Age".

2.1. Elizabethan Age and Renaissance



2.1.1. Renaissance

The word renaissance in itself means "rebirth", which originated from a French word. The idea of rebirth came about when Europeans thought that they had figured out what made the Greek and Roman culture so superior. The supreme intellectual movement during the Renaissance both in England and Italy was humanism which stressed the respectability and importance of individuals, a force crucial to the development of the Renaissance in many areas.

Renaissance utterly describes the intellectual and economic changes that occurred in Europe especially in England. This movement made its biggest impact between the years 1500 and 1600. This period in England can be divided in three categories: the growth of the Renaissance under early [Tudor monarchs](#) (1500-1558), the climax of the Renaissance under [Elizabeth I](#) (1558-1603), and weakening of Renaissance by Stuart monarchs (1603-1649).

“At the time when the Renaissance came to England, not only had new social conditions been created, but national life was rich in every variety of social, artistic, and literary movement. The Renaissance, with its recognition of the inherent human right to the enjoyment of life, appealed strongly to a community which had thrown off ecclesiastical domination and was rapidly developing a free national and domestic life along secular lines”(Retrieved from <http://www.oldandsold.com/articles23/architecture-126.shtml>)

The great development and advancement that happened during Elizabeth times could be partly attributed to the leadership of the Queen Elizabeth I. During this period, Europe rose from the economic depression of the middle ages and experienced a time of financial astronomical growth. In addition, English Renaissance was a period that became the turning point in artistic, social, scientific, philosophy, literature and political thought.

2.1.1.1. The pioneers of Renaissance

Intellectual creativity received a great impetus throughout the Renaissance. This era brought great erudite men, all skilled in mathematics, physics, astronomy, medicine, and other subjects. During this time great advances in the world exploration, medicine, and the study of the universe were made. One of the greatest inventions was the printing press which promoted the scientific revival by making it easy to spread knowledge abroad in every part of the world. Important inventions of the period included the graphite pencil, the modern calendar, time bomb, wind-powered sawmill, and the thermoscope.

The pioneers of Renaissance science were Italians. However, students in France, England, Germany, and other countries hold in a short time the work of enlightenment. In the middle Ages students had mostly been satisfied to accept what Aristotle and other philosophers had said, without trying to prove their statements. However, men such as Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, Vesalius, Harvey, and other learned men worked on the scientific method. The new scientific method rested on observation and experiment. Students learned at length to take nothing for granted, to set aside all authority, and to go straight to nature for their facts.

The names of some Renaissance scientists remain as landmarks in the history of thought. Among these great polymaths of the Renaissance was the astronomer Copernicus. He was one of the most striking figures of those times. Being the founder of modern astronomy he started the scientific revolution with the heliocentric theory (heliocentric theory is the [astronomical](#) model in which the [Earth](#) and planets revolve around a stationary [Sun](#) at the center of the [universe](#)). Being born in Poland, he spent most of his life in Italy. Copernicus was the first person to confirm and gave reason that the earth turns upon its own axis together with the planets, and revolves around the sun. The new theory caused much opposition, not only at the universities, but also by the theologians, who believed that the theory contradicted some statements in the Bible. To society it was not easy to admit the idea that the earth, instead of being the centre of the universe, is only one member of the solar system. It means that the earth is only a mere part of the cosmic dust.

Galileo Galilei (1564-1642), another man of the Renaissance, this Italian scientist played a major role in the Scientific Revolution. He has been called the “father of the modern observational astronomy,” the “father of modern physics,” the “father of science,” and the “father of modern science”. Galileo is perhaps more than any other single person, the responsible for the birth of modern science. Galileo’s achievements included improvement to the telescope as well as astronomical observations which sustain Copernican theory. Among his inventions was the thermoscope a predecessor of the thermometer, which indicated temperature differences. His works contributed to the study of astronomy, including the telescope confirmation of the phase of Venus, the discovery of the four largest satellites of Jupiter as well as observations and studies of sunspots.

Kepler (1571-1630), a German genius, was the man who worked out the mathematical laws which govern the movements of the planets. Kepler's investigations afterwards led to the discovery of the principle of gravitation. This period brought great advances in medical science as well. Namely, in the study of human anatomy, developments in dissection and surgical operations. Vesalius (1514-1564), a Fleming, who studied in Italian medical schools, gave to the world the first careful description of the human body based on actual dissection. Harvey (1578-1657), an Englishman, announced the discovery of the circulation of the blood after observing living animals. He thereby founded human physiology. Costanzo Varolio on the other hand, engaged in understanding the inner workings of the human brain and produced a detailed description of the central nervous system in 1568.

Key characteristics of the Renaissance.

a) Humanism arose the religious devotion of the Middle Ages declined and new emphasis was placed on discovering humanity’s place on earth.

b) Universities introduced a new curriculum called “the Humanities”, which included history, geography, poetry and modern languages.

c) More writers began working in the vernacular (local language).

However, the English Renaissance did not share the same characteristics of the [Italian Renaissance](#) since the major achievements of the English Renaissance were in the field of [literature](#), music and [visual arts](#). Moreover, the English Renaissance period began later than the Italian and continued until 1620.

“At the time that the English Renaissance began, the Italian Renaissance was already past the Mannerism period and beginning to start the Baroque period. Most historians will agree that the English Renaissance began in or around 1520 and continued on for a hundred years until 1620. Of course while there were many differences, there were also similarities such as the expansion and focus on music. The poetry and stage works in the period could be associated with having musical influences in their creations”. (Retrieved from http://www.family-ancestry.co.uk/history/england/english_renaissance/)

According to the information retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_Renaissance the major English Renaissance Figures were: [Francis Bacon](#), [Thomas Dekker](#), [John Donne](#), [John Fletcher](#), [John Ford](#), [Ben Jonson](#), [Thomas Kyd](#), [Christopher Marlowe](#), [Phillip Massinger](#), [Thomas Middleton](#), [John Milton](#), [Sir Thomas More](#), [Thomas Nashe](#), [William Rowley](#), [William Shakespeare](#), [James Shirley](#), [Sir Philip Sidney](#), [Edmund Spenser](#), [John Webster](#), [Sir Thomas Wyatt](#)

[Thomas Tallis](#), [Thomas Morley](#), [William Byrd\(List of Compositions\)](#) and [John Dowland](#) were the most outstanding English musicians of the period, and were part of the same artistic movement that inspired the authors mentioned above.

2.1.2. Elizabethan Age of Exploration

The English people of the sixteenth century experienced an exceptional increase in knowledge of the world beyond their island. Religious persecution at home forced a large number of both Catholics and Protestants to live abroad. Wealthy gentlemen and, in at least a few cases, ladies traveled to France and Italy to learn about the famous cultural monuments; merchants published accounts of distant lands like Turkey, Morocco, Egypt, Russia; and military and trading ventures took English ships to still more distant shores.

The Elizabethan Times saw the emergence of the bravest and skilful English seamen who reveled in the Renaissance Age of Exploration. Elizabeth also encouraged exploration and economic expansion. One of the ways she fulfilled these two goals was by organizing and supporting certain English gentlemen who preyed on Spanish shipping. They took the gold and silver that was flowing into Spain from the New World which in the long run strengthened England while weakening Spain. New discoveries brought new products such as gold and silver and spices. The Greatest English Explorers were Sir Francis Drake, Sir Walter Raleigh, Sir Humphrey Gilbert, Sir John Hawkins, Sir Richard Greenville and Sir Martin Frobisher.

The Elizabethan age saw remarkable feats of seamanship and reconnaissance. Many motives prompted the Age of exploration. Scientific interest of the Renaissance led men to set forth on voyages of discovery. The crusading spirit, which had not died out in Europe was thrilled at the thought of spreading Christianity among heathen people. In this age, as in all periods of exploration, adventurers were searching for adventure, glory and wealth. They looked for the opportunity to get wealth, fame and power. Commerce was perhaps the most dominant motive for exploration. From India and the Far East, merchants returned with coveted spices such as cinnamon, pepper, cloves, nutmeg, and ginger, those spices were used more freely in medieval times than now. Besides spices, all kinds of precious stones, drugs, perfumes, fabrics, gums, dyes and various woods came from abroad.

From Egypt, they imported ancient mummies, thought to have medicinal value; from the New World, explorers brought back native plants including, tobacco, animals, cultural artifacts, and, on occasion, samples of the native peoples themselves, most often seized against their will.

2.1.2.1. Nautical Instruments of Exploration



The new knowledge acquired by European people about routes to Asia was accompanied by progress in the art of ocean navigation. The compass was essential to guide explorers across the oceans of the world. It greatly helped sailors by allowing them to find their bearings in murky weather and on starless nights. The astrolabe was employed to calculate latitudes through observation of the height of the sun above the horizon.

During the Renaissance there were many navigational instruments which were used to measure the angle between objects above the ocean, such as the stars or the sun, with the horizon. A basic ship's log was used as a means of estimating the speed of a vessel, and so roughly calculating the longitude. These nautical instruments of the Renaissance would have enabled the explorers to calculate the ship's position at sea during the Elizabethan age of exploration.

The Navigational aids that explorers would have used included: Astrolabes, Telescope – Compasses, Cross-staffs, Quadrants, Traverse boards, and Almanacs. During the last centuries of the Middle Ages the charting of coasts became a science. A sailor might rely on the "handy maps" which outlined with some approach to accuracy the bays, islands, and headlands of the Mediterranean and adjacent waters. Manuals were prepared telling the manner about the tides, currents, and other features of the route he intended to follow. The increase in size of ships made navigation safer and permitted the storage of bulky cargoes. For long voyages the sailing vessel replaced the medieval galley rowed by oars. As the result of all these improvements navigators no longer found it necessary to keep close to the shore, but could push out dauntlessly into the open sea.

2.1.3. Elizabethan England

Elizabethan England was a period of re-awakening of learning following about a thousand years of sleep, this era in English cultural history is sometimes referred to as "The age of Shakespeare" or "The Elizabethan era". Elizabethan era was one of the most extraordinary periods of England history. It was the period in which Queen Elizabeth I ruled England for forty-four fruitful years and it is considered to be the "Golden Age".

The golden age is the expression taken from Greeks for whom this term expressed a period of primordial peace, harmony, stability, and prosperity.

Elizabethan era was remarkable in terms of poetry, in this sense it is possible to mention striking poets such as John Milton and Edmund Spenser who created works that increased the understanding of English Christian beliefs, exemplified in the allegorical representation of the Tudor Dynasty in the “Faerie Queen” and the retelling of mankind’s fall from paradise in Paradise Lost.

Two outstanding authors such as Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare wrote theatrical representations of the English, involving topics about life, death, and history. Their plays were performed on stage in London to audience that ranged from commoners who paid almost nothing to stand in front of the stage to royalty. Shakespeare wrote many of his plays, and his celebrated sonnets, during this time.

In the last stage of the Tudor Dynasty, philosophers like Sir Thomas More and Sir Francis Bacon published their ideas about humanism and the aspects of a perfect society. The Elizabethan style can best be appreciated in the field of architecture, drama and literature. The period was remarkable by the influence of the English rebirth and the flourishing of the English poetry, music and literature. Among the many significant writers and poets were Edmund Spenser who wrote a very detailed piece about a feast for Elizabeth, and Sir Walter Raleigh who wrote poems about Elizabeth as well.

During this time the Elizabethan theatre expanded its boundaries. Famous people such as William Shakespeare took the lead in advancing the country’s literature with his great successful plays. New buildings, sculpture, stained glass, illuminated manuscripts, and other decorative piece of arts were produced in Europe during the latest part of the Middle Ages.

The epoch itself was a time to allow artists to develop creativity. Among them there were many skillful men who delighted people with their works that was the case of Nicholas Hilliard who was considered as the most widely recognized figure of the fine arts.

It was a time of exploration and expansion abroad as well. Meanwhile great changes were taking place, as the Protestant Reformation which little by little became the main religion. Moreover, the Elizabethan era was a time of internal peace, in which parliament and monarchy got along ruling the nation without problems and the struggle between Protestants and Catholics were minimum.

During Elizabethan era England was a wealthy country compared to the other nations of Europe. For instance, in Italy the Italian Renaissance came to an end under a foreign domination of the peninsula. Meanwhile, France was involved in its own religion conflict that was resolved in 1598. These problems in France helped to standstill the conflict between France and England for most of the Elizabethan era. On the other hand, Spain was still one of the main rivals of England. Spain was one of the most influential, well known and wealthy countries in Europe as it owned lands in America. Moreover, an ambitious attempt of Phillip II of Spain to invade England with the Spanish Armada was satisfactorily defeated.

During this period England achieved a strong, well-organized, and productive government as well. This was the effort of Henry VII and Henry VIII. England also accomplished a good economy as the country started to have profits from the new era of trans-Atlantic trade.

On the other hand, the rural working class, which was 90 percent of the total population, received better welfare in this period than in other reigns, which was memorable due to the bankrupt state inherited by Queen Elizabeth's father's reign. However, she was able to provide the country with a long period of general peace, and normally increasing prosperity. Her wise policies re-established the fiscal responsibility. In her reign the fiscal controlled clearly the regime of debts by 1575 and ten years later the Crown enjoyed a great amount of funds. A vital fact that helped the economy of England was that England had lower taxes compared to other European countries of the period. Those tactics made England expand economically around the world and proved to be stable. There was evidently more wealth at the end of Elizabeth's reign than at the beginning. This popular peace and prosperity permitted the fascinating development that "the Golden Age" reached.

2.2. Elizabethan Government

2.2.1. The Government duties

The government of Elizabethan England was effective and well organized. English Laws that were created needed the approval and consent of Queen Elizabeth I. Queen Elizabeth's personality determined the style and efficiency of her government.

It sat for less than 3 years during her whole reign which lasted 45 years. As a monarch she had the power to summon, prorogue and dissolve laws and it had important functions of legislation, advice and taxation. But legislation needed the approval of the queen, lords and commons.

Laws began as a bill. Bills on money had to be introduced in the House of Commons, while these affecting the nobility began in the House of Lords. Once it was read 3 times in both houses, the queen had to give her approval. If she consented it became an act of Parliament.

The main duty of Parliament was dealing with financial matters such as the collection of taxes and to grant the queen money. The official summons to Parliament called on the members to advise the monarch, but she decided on the issues at hand.

She was the person who decided the religion of the country and also when Parliament was going to sit and what topics they could discuss. She decided on other issues too, such as education, wars, the welfare of the people, what food they should eat and how they had to wear. Everyone had to obey her or else they could be sentenced to death accused of treason.

Elizabeth also had a Council of men who took care of the general administration of the country, among his duties were matters of religion, the queen's security, economic issues and the welfare of the people.

At the beginning of her reign, the Council met three times a week, by the end her reign, they met almost every day. One the greatest English statesman was Sir William Cecil. He served Elizabeth as Secretary of State from 1558 to 1572, and as Lord Treasurer from 1572 until his death in 1598.

2.2.2. Laws

The Parliament had the power to pass laws too. Throughout the era, the Elizabethan Parliament composed by the House of Lords which consisted of nobility and higher clergy such as bishops and archbishops and the House of Commons which consisted of common people. During Elizabethan period these two houses passed 438 laws in all.

Of the hundreds of Elizabethan laws that were passed, the ones considered as the most important were Queen Elizabeth's Second Act of Supremacy of 1559 revoking royal policy that was approved during Queen Mary's reign.

These laws restored the Crown's control over the Church and the country. The 1574 Sumptuary laws also called "Statutes of Apparel" and the 1601 Poor law. The act validated Elizabeth as [Supreme Governor](#) of the Church of England. To Elizabeth this position was of utmost importance because many felt that a woman could not rule the church. Elizabeth's Second Act of Supremacy brought back 10 acts which [Mary](#) had reverted, crucially tightened up with the definition of what constituted [heresy](#), and also made it a crime to declare the authority of any foreign prince, [prelate](#), or other authority. Besides, it abolished the authority of the [Pope](#) in England.

Other important laws passed were the 1574 Sumptuary laws passed to control and to ensure that people would limit their expenditure on clothes to avoid excess. The sanctions for disobey Sumptuary Laws could be ruthless such as the loss of property, title and even life.

The medieval period was characterized by the Feudal system a way of government based on obligations between the lords or kings and vassal. The king gave or granted land to his noblemen these fields including houses, barns, tools, animals and serfs the king gave them protection on the field or in the court, they promised never to fight against the king and to provide him with soldiers in time of war. During the vassal Feudal System the way to distinguish the wealth of the person and their social standing was based on the clothing people wore it reflected their social standing. Under Henry VIII reign a new and powerful merchant class arose and a way to keep them separated from the nobility was to update the sumptuary laws. His daughter Mary followed his tendency. Queen Elizabeth I adapted the use of sumptuary laws and her laws dictated the colour and the type of clothing people were allowed to wear. This was an easy way to detect rank and privilege.

Parliament introduced a series of laws in 1563, 1572, 1576, 1579, creating the poor law. The attitude towards the poor changed from a harsh approach to a more compassionate view. Prior to Queen Elizabeth's reign, the medieval system had broken down.

One of the main reasons for poverty was the dissolution of monasteries that took place during King Henry VIII reign between 1536 and 1540 leaving monks and nuns homeless.

During the Elizabethan period the wool became very profitable, which meant that the areas that had been formed by peasants were now used to rear sheep. The traditional open field system was replaced by farming units that caused less labour force.

People migrated from the rural areas to towns. Later in 1590 a series of bad harvest occurred what resulted in an increase in food prices, this combined with an increase in population produced starving and homeless.

Attempts were made by the government to identify the number of poor in the realm. In 1552 an Act was passed to know the exact number of poor in each parish register. Each parish had its own church and clergyman. Parliament recommended each parish to appoint two collectors of alms to ask and demand of every man or woman to give a weekly donation that could help or assist the poor of the parish. Through these parish register the Elizabethan government could assess the extent of the problem. Elizabethan Poor Law was passed through Parliament in 1563 to prevent the monarch of civil disorder.

The different types of poor were classified to decide on the treatment they should receive. As the diversity poor the old the young and the sick people who should receive help the “deserving unemployed” those who wanted to work but could not find a job turned to a life of crime or were beggars. People who turning to begging were treated as criminals their punishment was that they would be beaten till they reached the stores that make the town parish.

In 1572 a compulsory poor law tax was made compulsory at the local level. Each parish had to relief the burden of the aged, sick and poor. A tax was collected weekly from those who owned land in the parish by the Justice of Peace.

If people refused to pay they were imprisoned. The money raised was used to help the deserving poor. The Poor Law 1576 Act stated that each town should provide work for the unemployed work houses or Poor houses were founded. They offered raw material such as wool and the poor provided the labor. During that time it was also established that the mother of repeated father of a bastard would be punished.

The Poor Law of 1597 was passed after the poor harvest of 1590. A new position of overseas of the Poor was created to calculate the amount of poor rate required for each parish collect the rate from property owners help them with either money, clothes or foods and to supervise the Parish Poor House.

Finally the Poor Law Act 1601 made provision to levy a compulsory poor rate on every parish, to provide working, materials to provide work for the orphan children or children that could not supported by their parents. Other relief rate from the Deserving poor”, collect a poor relief rate from the owners, to make children to be responsible for their elderly parents.



2.2.3. Crimes and Punishment

The Elizabethan Court was quite different from today’s court. Almost all of the laws were related to religion. Obviously, there were the common ones such as stealing, murdering, or committing treason, but in the Elizabethan society there were no barriers between religion and laws.

The most important Courts were the Great Sessions Courts or the Assizes, which were held twice a year in each country, and the Quarter Sessions Courts, which were held four times a year. These courts dealt with most crimes. The Assizes were famous for its power to inflict severe punishments. Minor crimes were handled by the Petty Sessions Courts, Manor Courts, and Town Courts. The consequences of such lawbreaking activities were not always the same, many of the civil cases were dealt depending on the person, that is to say, if you were a commoner or a noble. The wealthy people were tried by the Star Chamber. Meanwhile, the poor were tried by the Court of Request, it also dealt with criminal cases. Many crimes during the Elizabethan era were crimes connected to the bad situation. Many people were sentenced to death for charge of high treason and other serious crimes.

Religious and moral cases were handled by Church Courts. Something unusual of Elizabethan time was that people in prison had to pay for their own food and lodging. The poor were often given a grant but they were required to give money for their stay and food. People who were accused of a crime or treason were immediately taken to a court where they were given a trial. Normally, the crimes were classified as either misdemeanors or capital offenses. Executions attracted a large audience.

Brutal punishments were treated as exciting events by lower classes and by the whole community. Even royalty was exposed to this most public form of punishment for their crimes. This was the case of the execution of Anne Boleyn 1536 (the mother of Queen Elizabeth I) that was witnessed by hundred spectators except for the upper classes and nobility.

In the cases of high treason the sentence involved being hanged, taken down before dead, ragged face down through the street then hacked into 4 pieces or quartered to leave the remains in a public place as a reminder to discourage others from committing treason. Less serious crimes were sent to prison or the stocks (a physical punishment that involved public humiliation because anybody could assault or aim filth at the victim).

Tortures at that time were used to obtain confessions for crimes, to intimidate the person or the group he belongs, and gather information and obviously to punish for crimes.

The most common ways of tortures a person included starving, burning, beating, or drawn. Tortures were applied to break the will of the prisoner. The most horrible punishments were being Hung, Drawn or Quartered. Those brutal forms of execution were reserved for the worst prisoners who had usually been guilty of treason.

"The greatest and most grievous punishment used in England for such as offend against the State is drawing from the prison to the place of execution upon an hurdle or sled, where they are hanged till they be half dead, and then taken down, and quartered alive; after that, their members and bowels are cut from their bodies, and thrown into a fire, provided near hand and within their own sight, even for the same purpose."

(Retrieved from <http://www.elizabethan-era.org.uk/elizabethan-crime-and-punishment.htm>)

In fact, it was said the Queen Elizabeth I used torture more than any other monarchs in England's history. Punishment varied according to class. Two main social classes were identified during Elizabeth's reign: the upper class which was formed by the nobility and courtiers and the lower class which was formed by the plebeians. The upper class was wealthy and well educated, people associated with royalty and high member of the clergy. A common practice of the upper class was being involved in political conspiracy or matters of religion. Consequently, the nobility could become involved in serious crimes that would result in torture. Trials were planned in favor of the prosecutors and often the defendants would receive legal council just depending of his crime.

The following nobility crimes did not allow legal counsel.

- High Treason
- Blasphemy
- Sedition
- Spying
- Rebellion
- Murder
- Witchcraft
- Alchemy

Many crimes committed by commoners were a result of their economical situation or poverty. Sometimes the starving people received terrible punishments, for instance, for stealing anything over 5 pence they could even be hanged. Even stealing birds eggs would result in death sentence.

The most frequent crimes of the commoners were:

- Theft
- Cut purses
- Begging
- Poaching
- Adultery
- Debtors
- Forgers
- Fraud

In England it was considered a privilege to be beheaded. This would be distinguished from a “dishonourable” death on the gallows or through burning at the stake. If the head man’s axe or sword was sharp and his aim was strong, decapitation was quick and was presumed to be a relatively painless form of death. If the instrument was blunt or the executor was clumsy, multiples strokes might be required serve the head. The person executed was told to give the executioner a gold coins to ensure that he did his job with care.

Punishment for commoners during the Elizabethan period included the following:

- Hanging
- Burning
- The Pillory and the Stocks
- Whipping
- Branding
- Pressing
- Ducking stools
- The Wheel
- Boiling in oil water or lead (usually reserved for prisoners)
- Starvation in a public place
- Cutting off various items of the anatomy - hands, ears etc
- The Gossip's Bridle or the Brank
- The Drunkards Cloak

Executions by beheading were regarded as the least harsh of execution methods and were applied to important state prisoners or people of noble birth. Many people from the upper class were housed in the Tower of London, some of them were sentenced to death, and they met their end in public on Tower Hill. However, private executions of the Tower of London prisoners were conducted behind the walls of the Tower if the execution was considered too politically sensitive to carry out in open view, this was mainly applied to the executions of women. The public executions of the Lower Class and less honored members of the upper class, especially traitors, were conducted at Tyburn and Smithfield in London. The execution was held in public and witnessed by many people. Commonly, a raised platform was built which was covered with straw. In the scene there was a minister of the church who would be prepared to offer religious relief to the person. It would be hoped that the headman completed his job quickly and with care. The victim would be presumed to pay and forgive the executioner. After the execution the severed head was held up in the air by the executioner in order to show the head to the crowd. The punishment by beheading, therefore even continued after “death”.

2.3. Elizabethan Society

2.3.1. Family

Elizabethan society was dominated by wealth, power, status and the Feudal System. Everyone was supposed to perform their role. During this era many changes took place and Elizabethan people adapted to these changes quite well. Families were extremely close. The main factor of Elizabethan family life was determined by its social status. If the family was poor or wealthy just in a few occasions joined together for religious causes.

Elizabethan families liked to enjoy life, and meals were home-made and they were served in great quantity. They had a simple breakfast consisting on a light snack, while the main meal of the day was dinner and it could last three hours to eat it. A small supper was usually at 6 o'clock. In general, during Elizabethan era there was little meat and these was commonly reserved to wealthy people. The common meats were; beef, mutton, lamb, veal, pig, and venison. These meats were prepared like baking, roasting, boiling, or frying. The Elizabethan people loved to eat good meals. Nevertheless, the lower and middle classes generally ate grains and vegetables, while the nobility enjoyed eating meat and sweets.

Due to the lack of refrigeration, some techniques were applied to prepare spoiled meat such as the vinegar or several spices. In general, Elizabethan cooking was generally sweet. Meats were usually cooked with fruits, and desserts were usually flavored with almond owing to the fact that sugar was an expensive luxury.

It was well-known that the man was the person who set the rules in the family and women were seen as inferior to men since they were forced to serve and obey men in all aspects of their lives. It was considered a crime against religion if a woman opposed to a man's desire or disobeyed him. In order to maintain wealth and lineage most of the marriages were arranged to suit the family.

Most of the times, the economical situation was an essential factor for the marriage. Women were expected to marry in order to improve the wealth and situation of the family, due to the fact that women could not study since there were no schools or career for girls. With parental permission it was legal for Elizabethan girls to marry at 12 although it was not usual to get married at such a young age.

Being wives, women had to reproduce children if possible male heirs. Apart from bringing up children women had to housekeep.

On the other hand, men were supposed to provide the family and protect them from any unexpected incident. The father was expected to improve the position of all member of the family.

Values and good manners were essential into Elizabethan family. Children respected their parents with absolute obedience. As infant mortality was high during Elizabethan era, children of the family were cherished. Children received toys such as dolls, toy soldiers, hobbyhorses and others. Noble and wealthy families were quite concerned about children's behaviour, good manners were synonyms of good family values and high rank. The main values of childhood and education started at home. Some basic manners were asking their parents blessing, saying their prayers or showing a correct behaviour at the table, this last one included a specific sit at the table. Girls were often taught obedience to the male members of the family. The education of girls was mainly focused on housewife duties and sometimes music and dance.

Education was exclusive to boys. However, it was not necessary for boys to attend schools or universities. Generally boys of upper and middle class attended to schools. Girls were not as lucky as boys. Only the wealthiest families could afford that privilege. Rich parents allowed their daughters to be taught at home. Girls would began at age of five or even younger. They were taught various languages including the Latin, Italian, Greek and French.

The Children of Noble and upper class were always taught by tutors at home. From the age of 7 to 14, children of a lower standing went to Grammar Schools. Many schools were financed by the local Guild.

While girls learning how to be good housewives, boys would have spent their early childhood being taught by Ushers, a junior master or senior pupil at the Grammar School. The boys first learnt the rudiments of Latin with the assistance of the Tudor text-book known as Lily's Latin Grammar.

The textbooks had been authorized by Henry VIII as main books of Latin grammar to be used in education and schools.

After finishing the introduction to the grammar schools boys between 10 and 14 learnt lessons like; Latin to English translations; literature; the study of Greek; the religious and arithmetic. Afterwards, boys at the age of 14 would leave grammar school to attend University.

The most popular universities in Elizabethan era were Oxford and Cambridge. Various faculties were available to University students.

- The University Faculty of the Arts (The Arts would have included Philosophy, Rhetoric, Poetics, Natural History education, etc).
- The University Faculty of Liberal Arts (this would have included Grammar, Logic, Music, Astronomy, Arithmetic and Geometry education).
- The University Faculty of Theology (this included religious education).
- The University Faculty of Medicine (this included the study of Hippocrates, Galen, Arabic and Jewish medical texts).
- University Faculty of Law

The nobility and upper class usually studied in universities due to the fact that they were the only ones who were able to travel abroad.

2.3.2. Entertainments

In the Elizabethan Era there were different kinds of entertainments that amused both the nobility and the common class. Society was fond of leisure activities, due to the fact that the mortality rate was high and life expectation was low. Trivial events like weddings, victories and festivals were motive of celebrations. There were many days devoted to holidays, such as May Day, Midsummer Day, Ascension Day and others. Elizabeth loved enjoyments as she helped to develop many kinds of entertainments. Court usually made great banquets often accompanied by music and dancing. Queen Elizabeth used to be accompanied with lords and ladies; they sat down to eat and drink, watching the performance of a professional jester or buffoon.

There were places such as taverns, playhouses, and bowling alleys in which townspeople could meet to spend a good time. Popular Elizabethan activities such as animal fighting, team sport, individual sports, games, play, music, and the art were popular in the whole country. Many of the entertainments depended on the social classes, wealth and literacy; there were sports like tournaments, tennis, hunting and hawking that were practice just by nobles or upper class.

On the other hand, there were other entertainments enjoyed by all the people, like card games and gambling. Everybody seemed to delight in the ferocious blood sport considered a form of entertainment known as bear-baiting, being this sport without doubt Queen Elizabeth's favourite pastime

Hunting was another popular sports enjoyed by the Elizabethan Upper Class and the Nobility. Queen Elizabeth loved to hunt and this included the sport of Hunting or falconry. This sport provided training for war because of the tracking skills, weapon usage, horsemanship, and courage that were required. Both men and women engaged in hunting. A variety of animals were hunted. There were different types of hunts which were, therefore, more suited to either men or women.

In Elizabethan England, going to the theatre was the favourite activity of the masses. In earlier times, there were no theatres since authorities in England used to reject public performances. Nevertheless, many strolling players performed their plays on the courtyards of inns or in streets.

Elizabeth was fond of plays that were one of the reasons that she and her Privy Council supported the construction of a number of new theatres in London and its surroundings. The most famous playhouse was the Globe, built in 1599 by the company in which Shakespeare had invested.

To watch plays in theatres of London was modern and fashionable. Famous playwrights such as William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe wrote many of the plays performed in the theatres of London. They thrilled and stimulate the audiences with a mixing of tears and laughter; gentle and violent passions; blood, and ironic comedy. Plays were usually a variety of incidents in which no women were allowed on stage. Young boys used to play female roles wearing some women dress and make-up.

Many plays were based on politics issues, propaganda, facts of history and common concern. Others topic such as mythology, witty, legend, and fictions were good subject to perform on stage. The beginning of theatres was a chance of business. These theatres could hold thousand of people, the stage was in front of an open pit and nobles and upper class could watch the play from a chair set on the side of the stage itself. Prosperous women would wear a mask to disguise their identity.

Music in the Elizabethan era played a vital role in the lives of the people. The popularity of music grew like a phenomenon in great proportion; music was present in most of the form of entertainment and events. It was performed by musicians and was simple represented by songs and ballads. The kind of music sang in the Elizabethan era were the Anthem (short religious songs for a choir), the Madrigal (a song for several singers, usually without musical instruments), the Masque (a play written in verse, often with music and dancing) and Opera. In this era there were great composers such as William Byrd (1543- 1623), Thomas Campion (1567- 1620), John Dowland (1563-1626), John Farmer (1570-1620), Orlando Gibbons (1583-1625), Robert Johnson (1500-1560) and Thomas Tallis (1505-1585).

Popular music was sung in the village, field and in each country. Street music also gained ground in the Elizabethan era, buskers used to delight the pedestrians with beautiful songs played with fiddles or lutes.

The introduction of new musical instruments such as the early violin called the viol, the early oboe called the hautboy, the keyboard musical instrument called the spinet, and the virginal produced a much refine and better quality of sounds. Queen Elizabeth herself was keen on playing musical instruments. It was her love for music that let her to encourage many composers and musicians to develop their skills in music.

In fact, it was known that Elizabeth hired around 70 musicians and composers for her court. Moreover, Queen Elizabeth could play musical instruments, such as the lute and the virginal. Apart from playing musical instruments, Queen Elizabeth was a good dancer. She used to dance the difficult and demanding Galliard every morning in order to keep herself fit. She loved dancing with her courtiers, and she was fond of Volta. In this dance the man had to hold the lady by her waist in order to jump high in the air. As Elizabeth got older she could not dance as much as she used to instead she enjoyed watching her ladies dance. Elizabeth I also enjoyed singing and it was known that she sang well.

The music in this era was quite different from Tudor times. Elizabethan music had a more steady rhythm and polyphony. Another characteristic of Elizabethan music was its reflection of moods and expression of emotion.

The music of 16th century was popular and widespread through the whole country. It was classified into kinds which included: church music, court music, town music, street music and theatre music. The importance of music in Elizabethan times was reflected in the plays of her close friend William Shakespeare who made more than five hundred references to music in his plays and poems. In fact, the music applied in the plays intensified the drama and create the right atmosphere to express different emotions. Through the Elizabethan era music developed into sophisticated and varied forms. Elizabethan musicians liked to experiment with carious combinations of musical instruments. The combination which was most remarkable in the era would become known as the English consort. This mixture of instruments consisted of four musical instruments; the violin, the flute, the lute, the violin.

Musical instruments were also used to indicate the status of the person. For instance, wind instruments such as the trumpets were used to denote the arrival of royalty. The viol, lute, trumped, sackbuts, hautboy, harp and others musical instruments were used to compose music in the Elizabeth era. As a matter of fact, in Elizabethan era people became to appreciate the value of music in their daily lives. An important factor of this change in music was indeed Queen Elizabeth, since she was the main precursor of new rhythms, lyrics and melodies.

2.3.3. Art, Literature and Theater

The fine arts in England during the Tudor and Stuart times were dominated by foreign and imported talent from Hans Holbein the Younger under Henry VIII to Anthony van Dyck under Charles I.

The reign of Elizabeth I was characterized by the admiration of the Queen towards the arts; it was clearly appreciated during her reign, where portraits and miniatures dominated. Some of the most famous Elizabethan England works of Art were the miniatures paintings. They were a revived classical form of art; resulting from tradition of illuminated manuscripts as well as from the Renaissance's portrait medals. The most famous artist who worked in miniatures was Nicholas Hilliard. He was able to produce miniatures which were painted on ivory card, or vellum which functioned as lockets or cameos. He was the Queen's favorite artists and many of the court's larger portraits of the Queen were based on Hilliard's portraits and miniatures.

Textiles also started to be more elaborated in this time; costumes were decorated with embroidery, ruffs, lace and weapons. This artificial style was the main characteristic of Elizabethan England Art.

At the same time the architecture during Elizabethan England showed wealth as well as status. Symmetry and ornamentation characterized the architectural style of the English Renaissance with tall houses and towers, for example, accented by elaborated gardens and stables. The interiors and exteriors of homes were decorated with elaborate relieves, and ornate chimneys.

Queen Elizabeth also showed an enormous interest in her portraits. She guided many artists such as Nicholas Hilliard and Marcus Gheeraerts to create stylized imageries which portrayed her as a stylish, powerful and wealthy woman. These artists painted the Queen's portraits using a variety of techniques based on the European Mannerism as well as from the school of Fontainebleau. They created large-scale and full length painting which portrayed nobility as an exuberant class.

Art during Elizabethan England reached a high standard, sculpture found a place in architectural decoration and tombs. London was considered to be the heart of England, for this reason it was a centre for both culture and commerce. Elizabethan England decorative arts were dominated by silver works. The Elizabethan style closely followed the Tudor style but it was succeeded by the Italian style which was introduced by Inigo Jones.

Literature prospered enormously in the Elizabethan era, especially in the field of drama. "*drama is the specific mode of fiction represented in performance*" (retrieved from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drama>). Some of the most astonishing works of art were created at that time, such as the prolific work of William Shakespeare.

Shakespeare was not a man of letters by profession, and probably had only some grammar school education. But he was very gifted and incredibly versatile. His first plays were primarily drama which was a change from the previous plays that were shown in England in former eras.

The audience of that time loved Shakespeare's works. His plays were plentiful in different forms such as comedies, satires, tragedies and romances. He wrote great plays such as: Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth, Antony and Cleopatra, The Tempest, Julius Caesar and A Midsummer Night's Dream. Shakespeare also popularized the English sonnet which made significant changes to the existing model.

Elizabethan styles took many motifs from the Italian, Continental Gothic as well as Flemish designs. English writers of the period began introducing complicated poetic structures in both verse and prose. Beaumont and Fletcher are less-known, but it is almost sure that they helped Shakespeare write some of his best dramas, and were quite popular at the time.

The greatest literary figures in Elizabethan era:

- Francis Bacon, (1561 – 1626). He was an [English philosopher](#), [statesman](#), [scientist](#), [lawyer](#), [jurist](#) and [author](#). He was a practitioner of the [scientific method](#) and pioneer in the [scientific revolution](#).
- Thomas Dekker (1572 –1632). He was one of the most famous dramatists in [Elizabethan](#) era.
- John Donne (1572 – 1631). He was an [English](#) poet, and a notable representative of the [metaphysical poets](#) of the period. His poets are noteworthy for their realistic and sensual style and vigor language.
- John Fletcher (1579 – 1625). A [playwright](#) he was among the most prolific and influential dramatists of this era. He was able to remain between the Elizabethan and tradition and the popular drama of the Restoration.
- Christopher Marlowe (baptised 1564– 1593). He was an English [dramatist](#), poet and [translator](#) of the [Elizabethan era](#). As the major [Elizabethan tragedian](#), he is known for his [blank verse](#), his overreaching [protagonists](#).
- Thomas Kyd (baptised 1558 – 1594). He was an [English dramatist](#) and one of the most important figures in the development of [Elizabethan drama](#). Author of [The Spanish Tragedy](#).
- Thomas Middleton (1580 – 1627) was an [English Jacobean playwright](#) and [poet](#). One of the most successful and prolific playwrights who wrote Renaissance dramatists to achieve equal success in [comedy](#) and [tragedy](#).

- Philip Massinger (1583 – 1640). He was an [English dramatist](#). His finely plotted plays, including [A New Way to Pay Old Debts](#), [The City Madam](#) and [The Roman Actor](#), his works are famous for their satire and realism, and their political and social themes.
- Sir Thomas More (1478 – 1535), also Saint Thomas More. He was an [English lawyer](#), [social philosopher](#), [author](#), [statesman](#) and noted [Renaissance humanist](#). He was an important counselor to [Henry VIII](#). He is also recognized as a [saint](#) within the [Catholic Church](#) and in the [Anglican Communion](#). He was an opposed the [Protestant Reformation](#) and of [Martin Luther](#) and [William Tyndale](#).
- William Shakespeare (1564-1616). He was an [English poet](#) and [playwright](#), widely considered as the greatest writer in the [English language](#) and the world's dramatist. He is often called England's [national poet](#) and the "Bard of Avon". His works consist of about 38 [plays](#), 154 [sonnets](#), two long [narrative poems](#), and several other poems. His plays have been translated into every major living language.
- Edmund Spenser (1552 – 1599). He was an English poet best known for [The Faerie Queen](#), an epic poem and fantastical [allegory](#) celebrating the [Tudor dynasty](#) and [Elizabeth I](#). He is recognized as one of the premier craftsmen of Modern English verse in its infancy, and one of the greatest poets in the English language.
- Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503 – 1542). He was an English [lyrical poet](#) credited with introducing the [sonnet](#) into English.

During Elizabeth times literature was not only appreciated by the upper class, the lower class also appreciated literature and drama plays. As a result, theater became a national pastime across social classes in England.

Marlowe's works were characterized in Elizabethan theatre by his magnificent blank verse, as well as that he focused more on the moral drama of the Renaissance man than in any other thing, he introduced Dr. Faustus to England, (a scientist and magician who is obsessed with the desire to push man's technological power to its limits)

Ben Jonson was a dramatist, poet and actor, his most famous play is "Volpone" and "The Alchemist," He was also known for his rivalry with Shakespeare.

On Monsieur's Departure

“ I grieve and dare not show my discontent,
I love and yet am forced to seem to hate,
I do, yet dare not say I ever meant,
I seem stark mute but inwardly do prate.
I am and not, I freeze and yet am burned,
Since from myself another self I turned.

My care is like my shadow in the sun,
Follows me flying, flies when I pursue it,
Stands and lies by me, doth what I have
done.

His too familiar care doth make me rue it.
No means I find to rid him from my breast,
Till by the end of things it be suppress.

Some gentler passion slide into my
mind,
For I am soft and made of melting snow;
Or be more cruel, love, and so be kind.
Let me or float or sink, be high or low.
Or let me live with some more sweet content,
Or die and so forget what love ere meant.

In the first stanza Elizabeth expresses that she hides strong unhappiness and love. The second stanza is about her unhappiness which has become her constant companion, and she feels that only death could set her free. In the third stanza Elizabeth asks for less intense feelings saying she is fragile. In general, the overall sincerity of the poem is unclear.

It is believed that this poem was written by Elizabeth I but it is not known for certain who wrote it.

3.1. Wars



3.1.1. The English War with Spain (1585 – 1603)

For more than five centuries the English had feared a foreign invasion. On July 12th the Spanish fleet left Corunna to meet its fate. Elizabeth seized the opportunity to make visible her qualities of heart that one might not expect to find on those moments.

She came ashore to review her army. She accepted the invitation of the Earl of Leicester, who was the Lieutenant and Captain of the queen's armies and companies. She came ashore to review her army. She addressed them with a historic speech when faced with the imminent invasion of the Spanish Armada in that act she risked her livelihood and safety to bring comfort to the troops.

" . . . therefore I am come amongst you, as you see, at this time, not for my recreation and disport, but being resolved, in the midst and heat of the battle, to live and die amongst you all; to lay down for my God, and for my kingdom, and my people, my honors and my blood, even in the dust. I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman; but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too, and think foul scorn that Parma or Spain, or any prince of Europe, should dare to invade the borders of my realm . . . " . (knight, 1857)

These words encouraged the troops with a sense of pride and confidence and in a coup of good fortune combined with superior tactics and ship design, the English fleet of thirty four ships and one hundred and sixty three armed merchant vessels defeated a powerful Spanish Armada of one hundred and thirty two ships. These prevented any European nation from landing on England.

On July 28, England defeated Spain in a decisive battle backed up by the stormy weather and a new naval technique called "broad siding" the English had begun to improve, it involved facing the enemy with the port (left-handed) or starboard (right-handed) side of a ship, rather than facing them head on. Only 10,000 Spanish soldiers of the 30,000 who had been sent to invade survived.

The English were the winners setting the path as the world's strongest naval power. Elizabeth's popularity reached its peak; it was another personal triumph, for she proved the world that being a woman, she could lead her army as effectively as a man. On November 24, the victory over Spain was celebrated with a national day of Thanksgiving.

In 1596 and 1597 there were further attempts of invasion, but the English navy repelled Spain's attempts. As England faced the invasion from Catholic Spain's Armada the Catholics living in England supported their queen after ruling England for thirty years, she even had the support of her religious opponents.

The conflict with the Spanish Armada put an end to the long struggle between Protestant England and Catholic Spain. Another major achievement of her reign was the reformation of the Scottish Church to Protestantism. England supported the Scottish Protestant rebellion of 1560 led by John Knox.

3.1.2. The Wars in Ireland, also known the Desmond Rebellions.

The reasons for the Elizabethan War in Ireland were:

A series of Rebellions regarding control over the province of Munster over three decades 1560's, 1570's and 1580's, by the Irish family of the Earl of Desmond and his followers. They fought against the threat of extensions of Elizabethan English Government over the province. The Desmond rebellion was supported by Catholic Spain. The rebellions were motivated by the desire to maintain the independence of feudal Lords from their monarch, but also had an element of religious antagonism between Catholic Geraldines and the Prevalent English State. The result was the destruction of the Desmond dynasty and the subsequent colonization of Munster with English settlers.

Between 1569 and 1573 the first rebellion started when hundreds of Irish rebels were executed by Drury, the new Lord President of Munster. Many Irish Lords fled to Europe, one of them James Fitzmaurice Fitzgerald, launched an invasion of Munster in 1579. After the excommunication of Queen Elizabeth I, the Pope had ruled that Irish Catholics did not owe allegiance to Protestant England. The English government paid 1000 pounds of silver to O'Moriarty's who betrayed to the Earl of Desmond.

As a result of the Irish War and the Desmond rebellion, the Desmond clan was defeated so the extended Desmond states were assigned to the English who had fought in the war.

3.1.3. The Tyrone Rebellion, also known as the Nine Years War (1594 – 1603)

The Tyrone Rebellion burst because The Catholic Irish Hugh O'Neill, the Earl of Tyrone fought the Protestant English who settled in Ireland. In the North of Ireland the war had its main conflicts and from this point it extended to the country. The religious reasons, made Catholics in Ireland stand against the Protestant England.

Queen Elizabeth and all the Protestants were considered heretic by the Irish. The Earl of Tyrone was supported by King Philip of Spain. One week after Queen Elizabeth's burial, James I of England took the throne and the Irish surrendered, on good terms, to the new English monarch.

3.2. Elizabeth's Twilight

3.2.1. Later years

One of the most positive periods in English history was the reign of Elizabeth I. Literature in the Renaissance blossomed through the works of Spenser, Marlowe and Shakespeare, after 1588 the main European countries considered Queen Elizabeth the most important ruler of all times; Francis Drake and Walter Raleigh were relevant in expanding English culture through the New World. Elizabeth's religious compromise favored pragmatism as she always tolerated religious difference under her reign, but in her last years she became very frightened of a conspiracy against her led by Jesuits, an order of Catholic priests. Therefore with this feeling of fear, Elizabeth began to hunt Catholic conspirators; she named Richard Topcliffe chief of the operation. Topcliffe demonstrated a particular cruelty against the Catholics, it was the first period of Catholic persecution under Elizabeth reign. As a consequence she decided this measure had been a mistake, and became upset at the Privy Council, which had convinced her, into initiating the Jesuit hunt.

After the English navy defeated the Spanish Armada, Elizabeth's main advisers passed away and new problems for Elizabeth and her reign started; these difficulties lasted for fifteen years until the end of her reign. During this time, Elizabeth continued her persecution against the Catholics, this time she authorized commissions to interrogate and kept an eye on Catholic householders. What caused that repression against the Catholics was more intensified, than at the beginning. But she wished to maintain the appearance of peace and wealth inside the country; she increasingly relied on internal spies and propaganda.

In her sixties, Elizabeth had changed her advisers, now she had younger and less experienced officers helping her. As she became older some people in her court thought she was becoming frail and senile, and tried to take advantage of her, the best example of this was the Earl of Essex, who was politically ambitious and thought he could escape with everything around the queen. However, her actions proved that despite of being old, she had not lost her cleverness. Essex, in fact, being a talented military leader, ignored prudent warnings and did not think how smart the elderly Elizabeth still was.

Theirs was a romantic relationship; even though the difference of age was great. When Essex rose to power he was twenty-one, while Elizabeth was already fifty-four. According to the story Essex received from the queen a ring, Elizabeth told him that if they ever had problems, he could send her that ring and they would reconcile. However, when Essex tried to send her the ring during the last days of his life, his enemies intercepted it to avoid the reconciliation between them. Although this romantic interpretation probably is far from real since Elizabeth's life was always characterized by the use of sound judgment and paranoia.

During war time the system of giving monopolies favoured only the upper class at the public's expense producing resentment among commoners. It soon led to price-fixing. In the 1601 Parliament session; the commons stated their opposition to this practice. In her "Golden Speech" giving in November, 1601 Elizabeth expressed her complete ignorance about the ill-treatment being very persuasive with her impressive rhetoric, she promised to fix the mistake.

At the end of her reign the economy of the country started to decline. The years of prosperity led to a sudden inflation and the royal funds ran low. Elizabeth who had always been careful with the use of money faced enormous economical problems. Nonetheless she continued worrying about the welfare of her subjects showing a profound concern about them.

She revoked the monopolies she had previously granted to favour her people, talking to her people she said: “Though God hath me high” she took into consideration her greatest happiness and glory to have “reigned with your loves...and though you have had, and may have, many princess more mighty and more wise sitting in this sit, yet you never have had nor shall have any that will be more careful and loving”

After 1601 when her life was coming to an end she presented signs of mental insanity however everybody was reluctant to admit she was doing mistakes. Before her death some rumors were circulating about her denial to live long enough. It was supposed that she was closer to death. When the years passed Elizabeth’s image changed drastically, the portraits based on it were less realistic, because she looked younger than she was. Until her last day of life, she maintained a glamorous air on her face that didn’t show her real age.

The great question was who would come to the throne after Elizabeth. After becoming infected with a bad cold Elizabeth realized that she would not live long, she appointed her nephew King James I of Scotland, Mary Queen of Scots’ son, as a rightful heir the day before she died by doing this she forgot her personal quarrels for the well-being of the country. Finally, on March 24 1603, Elizabeth died at Richmond Palace in London.

3.2.2. Elizabeth’s Death

At the end of her life she was far from the delightful, smarter, graceful Queen that she had been during all the years of her reign. In her latest days, she started to be irrationally anxious and increasingly bitter. She felt alone since all those she had cared for, had passed away including her great love Robert Dudley in 1588, her good friend Blanche Parry in 1590 and her friend and advisor, William Cecil, Lord Burghley in February 1598. Another significant event leading up to the death of Queen Elizabeth was undoubtedly the death of Robert Devereux Earl of Essex, who was accused of treason and put on trial for leading an uprising against his Queen. For that reason he was found guilty and sentenced to death. It is also important to mention that he was executed on Tower Green on February 25th 1601 when he was only thirty three. On February 1603, the death of Catherine Howard, Countess of Nottingham, the niece of her cousin and close friend Lady Catherine Knollys, came as a particular blow.

She was alone, she missed Essex and she was slowly losing the interest in life, and the firm grip, she had always had on the running of the country. The man she had loved and those who had shared her life had all nearly gone. Consequently, she depended on Robert Cecil, whose father William had served for her so well in her Golden Years.

It is paramount importance to highlight that her physical appearance also changed at the end of her life. Elizabeth lost most of her teeth for exceeding the sugary food that she ate. She suffered from hair loss and she also refused to be assisted and bathed by her chaperons. In March Elizabeth felt sick and stayed in a "settled and irremovable melancholy". She retired to one of her favorites homes - Richmond Palace.

From this moment it was clear to realize that this was the end of the great old queen. Her Councilors congregated around her, soft music was played to calm her, and old Archbishop Whitgift sat by her bedside to pray for her. He tried to persuade her to gain strength, but she did not show interest in responding. Nonetheless, when he started to talk about Heaven, she pressed his hand contentedly. She could only express herself with body gestures; being unable to use words or communicate orally. All these signs showed that the great, impressive Elizabeth was dying. Her ladies-in-waiting attended her and suddenly she fell into a deep sleep. She died on March 24th of 1603 at Richmond Palace, at the age of 70 it was Thursday, the day that her father and sister passed away. Hunter described the day of the queen death as it follows:

"This morning, about three o'clock her Majesty departed from this life, mildly like a lamb, easily like a ripe apple from a tree, cum levi quadam febre absque gemilu. Dr Parry told me he was present, and sent his prayers before her soul; and I doubt not but she is amongst the royal saints in heaven in eternal joys." (1845:101)

The preparation for the funeral began as soon as the proclamation of the queen's death was written; Elizabeth's coffin was carried downriver at night to Whitehall, in a flatboat lit with torches; the coffin was draped in purple velvet and drawn by four horses which were covered in a black livery. Supported by six knights of the Realm, the coffin was covered by a large canopy, behind the hearse was the queen's Master of the Horse, leading her palfrey. It was with sadness that the queen's death was presented on the streets of London the following morning, and witnesses described the strange silence of the stunned crowd.

At her funeral on April 28th, the streets were full of people who had come to pay their last respect to the great Queen Elizabeth I who had reigned so wisely on her way until her final resting place at Westminster Abbey.

The great Queen Elizabeth I was buried next to her half-sister. The sister who had always resented her origins and who had put her in the Tower of London - the Catholic Bloody Mary. The tomb inscription reads in translation:

"Consorts both in throne and grave, here we rest two sisters, Elizabeth and Mary, in hope of our resurrection." (Smith, 2007)

As the Queen wished, there was no examination to determine the cause of her death. Her body was embalmed and placed in a lead coffin. Queen Elizabeth I had been the ruler of England for forty four years and one hundred and twenty seven days and her reign was to be known as "The Golden Age". She was the last Tudor monarchy.

The real causes of Elizabeth I death are not completely clear, for there was not a postmortem, therefore even nowadays the causes are only based on speculations, the most common are:

- Blood Poisoning: caused by the arsenic and sulfur of her white cosmetics, that she wore in order to cover the scars left by the smallpox.
- Pneumonia or Bronchitis
- Ulcerated Throat: she had a pain in her throat that made it difficult to swallow, because of this she started to eat even less.
- Depression: It is the only theory that is firmly documented.

Not only left this world but also she left her people with an enormous melancholy because of her departure.

3.2.3. Elizabeth's Legacy

As a monarch Elizabeth became legendary. She had the ability to change a small country, which nobody knew in Europe, into a major international power. The English population increased nearly two times during her reign. The British Navy was seeing as an enormous threat to the rest of the world including the New World, testing the dominance of the main influences of those times Spain and France.

Queen Elizabeth I had a lasting legacy, where nobody knew what a myth was or what a fact was, because both were frequently mixed. She was a strong woman in a world dominated by men. She was also remembered as the “Virgin Queen” who loved her country and cared about her subjects.

One of the most effective methods Elizabeth I used was through speeches and those served to build a legend based on her life. Perhaps the most famous of her speeches is the one she made to English troops at Tilbury, as they prepared to face the intimidating Spanish Armada in 1588.

This speech was so majestic that was an immediate success. Adaptations from the speech circulated among the troops the following day. One of her most relevant contributions to the world was the protection of Protestantism in England, although she was able to avoid direct implication in the religious matter contrary to what her sister Mary had done with Catholicism, being useful for them in their colonial conquests in the coming centuries.

Elizabeth was admired as the heroine of the Protestant cause as she always desired to be recognized as an able manager of the nation's affairs. In 1559 she told the Parliament that she could look after England's interests effectively without a husband on her behalf. When Elizabeth made her last speech to Parliament in 1601 she was still unmarried. During James's reign there was still an enormous wistfulness for Elizabeth.

Elizabeth's reign was a time where crown, Church and Parliament worked in constitutional balance. During the Napoleonic Wars, her memory was revived when the nation faced again the threat of an invasion. In the Victorian era, the Elizabethan legend was adapted to the imperial ideology of the day, and in the mid-20th century, Elizabeth was a romantic symbol of the national opposition to foreign threat. Elizabeth's reign was interpreted as a Golden Age by the progress done in that period.

One of her main characteristics was her wisdom, that helped her with the foreign policies, and the defense given the Protestant nations against Spain and the Habsburgs, she is more often regarded as cautious in her foreign policies. She offered minimal aid to foreign Protestants and failed to provide her commanders with the funds to make a difference abroad. The national identity was gotten through the English church that Elizabeth established and the one that persists until today. She was commended as a Protestant heroine but those who praised her failed to notice her refusal to drop all Catholic practices.

Despite of her defensive policy England during her reign got a huge status abroad. England with Queen Elizabeth, as its queen, gained self-confidence and the awareness of sovereignty, she understood that a monarch ruled for her country and by its country.

Elizabeth was convinced that God was protecting her and for this reason she was called lucky by some historians. She always proclaimed herself “mere English”. Elizabeth trusted on God’s honest advice and the love of her subjects for the success of her rule. To her God was her only source of trust. In a prayer she thanked God by saying, *“when wars and seditions with grievous persecutions have vexed almost all kings and countries round about me, my reign hath been peaceable, and my realm a receptacle to thy afflicted Church. The love of my people hath appeared firm, and the devices of my enemies frustrate”*.

Conclusions

Elizabeth I was the last of the exceptional Tudor Monarchs and the most talented woman who ever ruled. She was the elusive queen who never married despite the fact that she had many suitors. Elizabeth shaped her own legend through intelligence, talent and perseverance as she became the most powerful queen on earth.

She was able to overcome incredible pressures and accomplish great goals despite the fact that she was brought up in a dysfunctional family; as her father was busy marrying, she did not receive the royal treatment she deserved.

After years of living in the shadows she ascended to the throne in 1558. She received a bankrupt country devastated by religious struggles. Nonetheless, she managed to transform England and remained in control of her kingdom for many years.

During the forty-four years of Elizabeth's reign, England flourished in all aspects, from economics to literature. In fact Elizabeth set in motion many successful improvements and this period came to be known as the "Golden Age". Achievements such as peace and stability at home, religious settlement, the victories against Spain, English explorers travelling to unknown places and the Renaissance of English culture led to a successful period.

It can be said that Queen Elizabeth's reign overshadowed the other monarchies of Europe, restored the English pride, empowered the Anglican Church and promoted justice for all. Despite the threats against her life, she managed to stay alive and show the English citizens and aristocrats that she possessed potential and character to decide on matters pertaining England's best interests.

"I shall desire you all, my lords, (chiefly you of the nobility, everyone in his degree and power) to be assistant to me that I, with my ruling, and you with your service, may make a good account to Almighty God and leave some comfort to our posterity on earth" (Elizabeth at the beginning of her reign).

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ELIZABETH I SIGNATURE



The image shows a handwritten signature in a highly decorative cursive script. The signature reads "Elizabeth R". The letters are interconnected with elaborate flourishes, particularly under the 'z' and 'e', and a large, ornate 'R' at the end. The ink is black on a white background.

Elizabeth I



QUEEN ELIZABETH I'S FAMILY TREE



Henry VII
1447-1509
(Grandfather)



Elizabeth of York
1466-1503
(Grandmother)



Sir Thomas Boleyn
1477-1539
(Grandfather)



Lady Elizabeth Howard
1480-1538
(Grandmother)



Henry VIII
1491-1547
(Father)



Anne Boleyn
c.1504-1536
(Mother)



Mary I
1516-1558
(Half-Sister)



Elizabeth I 1533-1603



Edward VI
1537-1553
(Half-Brother)

Elizabeth I's Stepmothers



THE ADVISERS OF ELIZABETH I



William Cecil
Lord Burghley



Sir Francis Walsingham



Sir Nicholas Bacon



Sir Robert Cecil

THE QUEEN'S LOVERS



Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester



Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex



Duke of Anjou



Sir Walter Raleigh