

Queen Elizabeth I

Elizabeth I, also known as Good Queen Bess, was the daughter of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn. She was Queen of England and Ireland for 44 years from 17 November 1558 until her death on 24 March 1603. This makes her one of England's longest-reigning monarchs. Elizabeth's reign is known as the Elizabethan era. Elizabeth was childless, and so she was the fifth and last monarch of the Tudor dynasty.

Elizabeth I was born on 7 September 1533. She was naturally intelligent and curious, and she was well-educated in languages and music. By the time Elizabeth was crowned, many years of bitter rivalry between Roman Catholics and Protestants had left England divided and weak. Her sister, Mary, who had been on the throne and who had just died, had also used up all of the royal money.

Elizabeth inherited her father's intelligence and political skills and, using these, she helped to make England stronger and more prosperous than it had ever been. Elizabeth returned England to the Church of England. But this meant she was hated by the Pope and many Roman Catholic kings in Europe. She was always fearful of attack from Catholic France, Spain and Scotland, all of whom claimed the English throne.

By the mid-1580s, war with Spain was underway with the building of the great Armada of ships in Spanish ports. When Spain began its attempt to conquer England in 1588, the Royal Navy started by her father, the incompetence of the Spanish leaders, and Elizabeth's bravery and good standing among the English, made her a part of one of the greatest military victories in English history.

During her reign, she depended on a group of trusted advisers, especially those who ran the secret service. Their job was to stop the many threats to Elizabeth's life. One such threat was believed to be from her cousin, Mary, Queen of Scots. Elizabeth had Mary imprisoned for 19 years, and then finally executed in 1587.

During Elizabethan times, England became more prosperous. Elizabeth oversaw the great Tudor Age of Discovery, when the likes of Sir Francis Drake sailed around the world. Trading networks expanded. Playwrights like William Shakespeare and other writers and artists thrived. For these reasons, Elizabeth I's reign is sometimes thought of as a 'Golden Age' in British history.

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During the time of the Armada, Elizabeth went to the port of Tilbury to address her troops. It was one of the most famous speeches in history, and it helped to keep the spirits of the troops high. This is what she said:

"My loving people,

We have been persuaded by some that are careful of our safety, to take heed how we commit our selves to armed multitudes, for fear of treachery; but I assure you I do not desire to live to distrust my faithful and loving people. Let tyrants fear, I have always so behaved myself that, under God, I have placed my chiefest strength and safeguard in the loyal hearts and good-will of my subjects; and 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 honour 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; to which rather than any dishonour shall grow by me, I myself will take up arms, I myself will be your general, judge, and rewarder of every one of your virtues in the field. I know already, for your forwardness you have deserved rewards and crowns; and We do assure you in the word of a prince, they shall be duly paid you. In the mean time, my lieutenant general shall be in my stead, than whom never prince commanded a more noble or worthy subject; not doubting but by your obedience to my general, by your concord in the camp, and your valour in the field, we shall shortly have a famous victory over those enemies of my God, of my kingdom, and of my people."

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Understanding words:

- a) Write the sentence in which you found the word 'dynasty'.
- b) From that sentence, suggest what 'dynasty' means.
- c) Write a new sentence using the word 'dynasty'.
- d) Use a dictionary to find words with a similar meaning (synonyms) to 'dynasty'.
- e) Draw a small picture showing what you think 'dynasty' means.

Sequencing:

Write these sentences in the correct order, so they make sense:

- But this made Elizabeth unpopular with the Pope and Catholic kings in Europe.
- After her sister, Mary, had died, Elizabeth came to the throne in 1558.
- In the 1580s, England was at war with Spain, who were building up their Armada of ships.
- Elizabeth I was born in 1533, and was an intelligent, well-educated child.
- By the time Elizabeth died in 1603, she had reigned for 44 years, during which time England had become more powerful and prosperous.
- As queen, Elizabeth returned England to the Church of England.
- But Elizabeth defeated the Armada in 1588.

Get to the facts:

1. Where were Elizabeth I's parents?
2. How long did Elizabeth I reign for?
3. When did Elizabeth I defeat the Spanish Armada?
4. Who did Elizabeth I execute in 1587?
5. Which playwright thrived under Elizabeth I?

Make a story...

Spanish Armada

I stood on the deck of the ship, looking out over the sea. I waited silently for the enemy to appear. Just then, the first Spanish ships appeared in the distance, sailing towards us... (now complete the story)