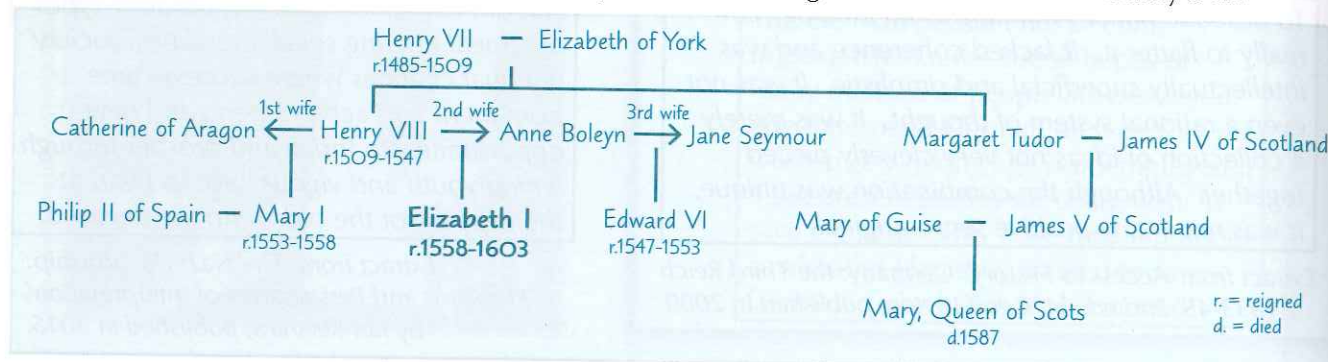


## English Society and Government in 1558

In 1558, England had been governed by **Tudor monarchs** for more than seventy years. The country had **well-organised** systems of central and local government, but there were some major **divisions** in society.

### Queen Elizabeth I was from the House of Tudor

The **Tudor family** had ruled England since Henry VII became king in 1485. Here's their family tree:



### Elizabeth ruled with the Support of the Privy Council

- 1) Elizabeth was the most **powerful** figure in Elizabethan England. Everyone was expected to be **loyal** to the Queen and **obey** her.
- 2) The **privy council** was a group of around twenty of the Queen's most **trusted counsellors**. They **advised** her on all aspects of government and ensured her **wishes were carried out**. They were expected to obey her orders even if they disagreed with her.
- 3) **Parliament** was made up of members of the **nobility** and the **gentry**. The Queen needed Parliament's consent to pass **new laws** or **raise taxes**. Parliament only met when the Queen **summoned** it, and Elizabeth tried to **avoid using it** — she only called Parliament 13 times during her 44-year reign.
- 4) The Queen relied on members of the **nobility and gentry** to enforce **law and order** throughout the country. **Local government** posts like Justice of the Peace and sheriff were **unpaid**, but many men **volunteered** in order to increase their **local power** and **influence**. **Justices of the Peace** were particularly important — they enforced the law, provided for the poor and ensured roads and bridges were maintained.

#### Comment and Analysis

Elizabeth used **patronage** to ensure the **support** of the nobility and gentry. This often involved handing out **titles** and **offices** that gave the holder a source of **income**. Elizabeth distributed patronage **widely** to ensure that no-one felt left out — this helped to ensure **political stability**.

### There were Social and Economic Divisions

- 1) England's **population** had been **rising** steadily since around 1500. Most people lived and worked in **rural areas**, but **towns and cities** were **growing** rapidly. **London** was by far the **largest** and most important city.
- 2) The economy was dominated by **agriculture**, but farming practices were **changing** (see p.107). The export of **woollen cloth** to **Europe** was very important to the economy, but merchants were also starting to explore trade with the **Americas** and **Asia** (see p.109-110).
- 3) Elizabethan society was dominated by a small, **land-owning aristocracy** of nobility and gentry. There was also a growing number of wealthy men who earned their living as **lawyers** or **merchants**.
- 4) There was great **inequality**, and the divide between rich and poor was growing. **Poverty** became a **major problem** in Elizabethan England (see p.107-108).

The **gentry** were part of the **social elite** in Elizabethan England, **below** the level of the **nobility**. Members of the gentry were people who **owned land** and lived off the **income** it provided. They **didn't** have to do other **work** to survive.

### Elizabeth was very powerful, but she didn't rule alone...

To really ace the exam, you need to understand the key features of Elizabethan society and government. Make sure you know the role of the Queen, the privy council and Parliament.





# The Challenges of a Female Monarch

Elizabeth I had a rocky start in life and faced some pretty serious problems when she first became queen.

## Elizabeth I was **Cautious, Intelligent and Powerful**

- 1) Elizabeth was Henry VIII's second child, the daughter of his second wife, Anne Boleyn. As a child, she was third in line to the throne (behind Edward VI and Mary I), so no-one really expected her to become queen.
- 2) Elizabeth had a difficult upbringing and sometimes feared for her life. In 1554, she was accused of conspiring against her half-sister, Queen Mary I, and placed under house arrest for almost a year.
- 3) Elizabeth was very cautious and only trusted a few close advisers. She could also be indecisive — she was reluctant to make decisions without carefully considering their possible consequences.
- 4) She was intelligent, confident and very well educated. Despite having had little training in how to govern, she became a powerful and effective leader.



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## Elizabeth faced many **Difficulties** when she became queen

### She had been declared **Illegitimate**

- 1) In 1533, Henry VIII had divorced his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, and married Anne Boleyn. Divorce was forbidden in the Catholic Church, so many Catholics believed Henry's marriage to Anne was not valid and their daughter, Elizabeth, was illegitimate.
- 2) When Henry's marriage to Anne Boleyn was dissolved and Anne was executed in 1536, Henry declared Elizabeth illegitimate. Although Henry later changed his mind about this, some Protestants still questioned Elizabeth's legitimacy.

### Comment and Analysis

The issue of Elizabeth's legitimacy weakened her claim to the throne and allowed others, especially Mary, Queen of Scots (see p.96), to claim that they had more right to rule.

### People thought it was **Unnatural** for a Woman to be in charge

- 1) In the 16th century, most people believed the monarch should be a man. They thought that rule by a woman was unnatural. The violence and chaos of Mary I's reign had reinforced people's belief that women could not rule successfully.
- 2) Most people expected Elizabeth to act as a figurehead, without any real power. They thought she should let her male counsellors take control or find a husband to govern for her.
- 3) Elizabeth was determined to rule in her own right and refused to let her counsellors take over.

### She was expected to **Marry** and produce an Heir

- 1) Because people believed women couldn't rule effectively, there was pressure for Elizabeth to find a husband who could rule for her.
- 2) There were also concerns about the succession. If Elizabeth died without an heir, there would be a risk of civil war, with different groups competing for the throne. To prevent this, Elizabeth was expected to marry and produce an heir as quickly as possible.
- 3) Elizabeth was reluctant to marry — women had to obey their husbands, so she would lose her power and freedom if she married. Because Elizabeth never married, she became known as the 'Virgin Queen'.

### Comment and Analysis

Choosing a husband could create serious political problems. If Elizabeth chose a member of the English nobility, this would create anger and resentment among those who weren't chosen. But if she married a European prince or king, this could give a foreign country too much control over England.

## It's not easy being queen...

jot down three major difficulties that Elizabeth faced when she became queen.  
Write a sentence or two to explain why each of them was a problem.





## Challenges at Home and From Abroad

As if the difficulties of being a female ruler weren't enough, Elizabeth also had other problems to deal with when she became queen. The economy was weak and there was a serious threat of a French invasion.

### The English Economy was Weak

- 1) Under King Edward VI, huge sums of money had been spent on Wars in Scotland. Queen Mary I had also spent too much money. As a result, Elizabeth inherited enormous debts when she became queen.
- 2) Mary I had sold off large amounts of land owned by the Crown to cover her debts. Although this had raised money in the short term, in the longer term it reduced the monarch's income from rent.
- 3) The taxation system was old-fashioned and ineffective. While ordinary people faced high taxes, it had become very common for members of the nobility and gentry to pay less tax than they owed.
- 4) England was suffering high levels of inflation. This meant that prices were rising, while wages stayed the same or fell. The poor (see p.107) and those living in urban areas were hit hardest by inflation.

#### Comment and Analysis

Elizabeth was reluctant to reform the tax system and raise taxes because she feared it would upset the nobility and gentry who supported her government.

### Elizabeth quickly Ended the War with France...

- 1) In 1557, Mary I took England to war with France. She did this to support her husband, Philip II of Spain, who was already fighting the French.
- 2) The war was not a success. In January 1558, the French conquered Calais, England's last remaining territory on the European mainland. This made it more difficult for the English to control the Channel, and increased the risk of a French invasion.
- 3) When Elizabeth became queen in November 1558, she wanted to end the war with France as quickly as possible. Peace was agreed in 1559.

#### Comment and Analysis

Throughout her reign, Elizabeth tried to avoid foreign wars — a policy partly influenced by England's financial weakness. She feared that raising taxes to pay for a war would be unpopular and might fuel opposition to her rule.

### ...but there was still a French Threat in Scotland

- 1) When Elizabeth became queen, Scotland was controlled by France's Catholic royal family and there were many French troops in the country. However, French rule was unpopular with many Scots.
- 2) In 1558 Mary, Queen of Scots (p.96) married the heir to the French throne. As Catholics, the French royal family disliked Elizabeth (a Protestant), and wanted England to be ruled by a Catholic. Mary's marriage increased the risk that the French might invade from Scotland to try and put her on the English throne.
- 3) In the late 1550s, Scottish Protestants, led by the preacher John Knox, rebelled against French rule. They appealed to England for support, and in 1560 English troops and ships were sent to help them.
- 4) The French were defeated and forced to leave Scotland. The departure of the French, combined with the death of Mary's French husband in 1560, greatly reduced the threat of invasion.

#### Comment and Analysis

There were many Catholics in England who wanted to be ruled by a Catholic monarch. If the French invaded, there was a risk that the Catholics would betray Queen Elizabeth (a Protestant) and support the French.

The French Wars of Religion began in 1562 and continued until 1598. This long period of civil war between Catholics and Protestants weakened France and largely removed the threat of a French invasion for the rest of the 16th century.

### Foreign wars — a luxury Elizabeth couldn't afford...

Include plenty of specific information in your answers. For example, don't just say that Elizabeth had lots of problems at the start of her reign, explain the different challenges she faced.

EXAM TIP



## Religious Divisions in 1558

By 1558, 30 years of dizzying religious change had created deep divisions between Catholics and Protestants.

### **The Protestant Reformation created religious divisions**

The Protestant Reformation began in Germany in the early 16th century and gradually spread across Europe. Reformers challenged many Catholic beliefs and practices.

- The Protestant reformers believed Christians were saved by faith, not by good deeds.
- They questioned the authority of the Pope.
- They translated the Bible from Latin into languages that ordinary people could understand.
- They thought churches should be plain and simple, unlike highly decorated Catholic churches.

### **There had been constant Religious Changes since the 1530s**

#### **Henry VIII Broke Away from the Roman Catholic Church**

- 1) Until the 1530s, England was a Catholic country, and most people were Catholics.
- 2) In the early 1530s, Henry VIII divorced his first wife, Catherine of Aragon. The Pope refused to accept the divorce, and so Henry broke away from the Roman Catholic Church. He rejected the Pope's authority and made himself head of the Church of England.
- 3) Henry did not support the Protestant Reformation. He didn't try to reform the English Church and make it Protestant, so Catholic beliefs and practices remained largely unchanged.

#### **Edward VI tried to make England More Protestant**

- 1) Edward VI was a strong supporter of Protestantism and tried to reform the English Church.
- 2) He made churches and church services simpler. Statues and decorations were removed from churches and priests weren't allowed to wear their elaborate Catholic vestments. A new, Protestant prayer book was issued, and church services were held in English, not Latin.

Vestments are the robes that priests wear during church services.

#### **Mary I Restored Catholicism and Persecuted Protestants**

- 1) Queen Mary I was a devout Catholic. She restored the Pope as head of the English Church, removed Edward's Protestant reforms and brought back Catholic beliefs and practices.
- 2) Under Mary, Protestants were harshly persecuted. More than 280 people were executed for their beliefs, and hundreds more (known as Marian exiles) fled to Protestant countries in Europe.

#### **Elizabeth I wanted Religious Stability**

- 1) Elizabeth I had been raised as a Protestant. Although she hid her beliefs during Mary's reign to avoid being imprisoned, she was deeply religious and committed to Protestantism.
- 2) Elizabeth had seen the turmoil caused by Edward VI's extreme Protestant reforms and the violence of Mary I's Catholic restoration. She wanted to end the constant religious changes of the last 30 years by creating a stable and lasting religious settlement.

### **All these religious changes are making my head spin...**

These religious divisions can be pretty confusing, so be careful not to get in a muddle. Remember that Elizabeth was a Protestant, and she faced opposition from many Catholics.





## The Religious Settlement of 1559

After the turmoil of her predecessors' reigns, Elizabeth was determined to bring religious stability to England. In 1559, she passed her religious 'settlement', a clever compromise between Protestant and Catholic beliefs.

### The Act of Supremacy gave Elizabeth Control over the Church

- 1) Henry VIII and Edward VI had used the title Supreme Head of the Church of England. In her Act of Supremacy (passed in 1559), Elizabeth altered this title to make herself the Supreme Governor of the English Church.
- 2) The Act of Supremacy required churchmen and people holding public office to swear the Oath of Supremacy. They had to recognise the Queen as Supreme Governor and promise to be loyal to her.
- 3) Most parish priests took the Oath. However, all but one of the Catholic bishops refused and lost their posts. They were replaced by Protestant bishops, some of whom had been Marian exiles (see p.93).

#### Comment and Analysis

The Act of Supremacy gave Elizabeth control of the English Church, without explicitly describing her as its 'Head'. This compromise satisfied those who believed a woman could not lead the Church.

### The Act of Uniformity made Moderate Protestant Reforms

The Act of Uniformity and the Royal Injunctions, both passed in 1559, imposed moderate Protestant reforms on the English Church, but they also made some concessions to English Catholics:

#### Reforms

- Going to church was compulsory — there were finer for missing a church service.
- A new Book of Common Prayer was issued, which had to be used in all churches.
- All parishes had to have a copy of the Bible in English.

#### Concessions

- The wording of the communion service (an important Christian ceremony) was kept deliberately vague, so that it could be accepted by both Protestants and Catholics.
- Churches were allowed to keep some decorations, and priests had to wear certain Catholic vestments (robes).

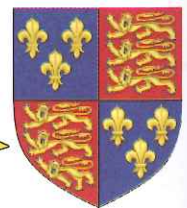
Elizabeth wanted everyone in England to conform to her religious settlement. Royal commissioners were ordered to visit churches throughout the country to ensure that the Acts and Injunctions were being enforced.

#### Comment and Analysis

The Elizabethan religious settlement made England a Protestant country, but allowed some elements of Catholic belief and practice to continue. This clever 'middle way' was designed to satisfy the majority of the population, who held moderate religious beliefs and were willing to make some compromises for the sake of peace and stability.

### The Church played an important role in English Society

- 1) Senior churchmen were involved in government — all bishops held a seat in the House of Lords, and the Archbishop of Canterbury was usually a member of the privy council.
- 2) Parish priests were often the most educated people in their communities, which made them respected and influential figures. As well as providing religious guidance, parish priests gave advice, helped to resolve disputes and played an important role in providing charitable support for the poor and elderly.
- 3) The Church helped promote national unity and obedience to the Queen. The Queen's coat of arms was often displayed churches, and church services included prayers for the Queen and her councillors.



### Sometimes the 'middle way' is the only way...

Divide a piece of paper into two. Jot down the key features of the Act of Supremacy on one side and the Act of Uniformity and the Royal Injunctions on the other.





## Challenges to the Religious Settlement

Elizabeth's religious settlement faced many challenges in the 1560s. Some were more serious than others.

### **The Puritans wanted to make the English Church More Protestant**

- 1) The Puritans were extreme Protestants. For them, Elizabeth's religious settlement was only a first step, and they wanted her to make further reforms to remove all traces of Catholicism from the English Church.
- 2) Many Puritans had been Marian exiles. While in exile in Protestant parts of Europe, some had come into contact with the teachings of leading reformers like Martin Luther and John Calvin.
- 3) The Vestment Controversy of the 1560s was a serious Puritan challenge to the religious settlement. Puritan priests refused to wear the surplice, a white vestment used by Catholics, which the Royal Injunctions had made compulsory.
- 4) Elizabeth tolerated this at first, but in 1565 she ordered the Archbishop of Canterbury to ensure that all priests wore the surplice. Those Puritans who still refused lost their jobs or were imprisoned.

Many of the Protestant bishops appointed from 1559 supported the Puritans and were in favour of further reforms. However, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Matthew Parker, was a moderate who helped Elizabeth to uphold the 'middle way' of the religious settlement.

### **Many members of the Nobility continued to practise Catholicism**

- 1) A large proportion of the nobility were still Catholic. The compromises in the religious settlement won some of them around, but others refused to attend church services — they were known as recusants.
- 2) The Catholic nobility was influential in areas outside the south-east, especially Lancashire. They used their strong local power bases to protect Catholics and maintain their traditional religious practices.
- 3) These Catholic nobles posed a potential threat to the religious settlement — there was a risk that they might try to overthrow Elizabeth and restore Catholicism.
- 4) To minimize this threat, Elizabeth did not force the Catholic nobility to attend church services. As long as they didn't make a public show of their beliefs, they were allowed to continue practising Catholicism.

The threat posed by the Catholic nobility became more serious when Mary, Queen of Scots, (a Catholic claimant to the English throne) arrived in England in 1568 (p.96).

### **France and Spain were Distracted by Domestic Difficulties**

- 1) There was a risk that the Catholic rulers of France or Spain might try to reverse the religious settlement and replace Elizabeth with a Catholic monarch. However, neither country was really in a position to challenge the religious settlement during the 1560s.
- 2) The threat of a French invasion was serious in the first years of Elizabeth's reign, but faded with the start of the Wars of Religion in 1562 (see p.92).
- 3) In the 1560s, Spain was facing a growing revolt in the Netherlands. To prevent an alliance forming between England and the Protestant Netherlands, Spain tried to stay on good terms with Elizabeth and avoided challenging her religious settlement.

#### Comment and Analysis

The Catholic aspects of the settlement encouraged Catholic countries and the Pope to think that Elizabeth might eventually return to Catholicism. This helped to reduce the threat of a foreign challenge during the early years of the settlement.

### **The Papacy Lacked Military Support**

- 1) The Pope had the power to excommunicate Elizabeth (expel her from the Catholic Church). This might encourage Catholic countries to invade England. It could also encourage rebellion at home by releasing Elizabeth's Catholic subjects from their duty of loyalty to her.
- 2) However, neither France nor Spain had the military resources to invade England, and there was no clear support for a revolt against Elizabeth at home, so the Pope didn't take any action against her in the 1560s.

### **Despite the settlement, things took a while to settle down...**

Do you agree that foreign opposition was the most serious threat to the Elizabethan religious settlement in the 1560s? Explain your answer. [16]





## Mary, Queen of Scots

Even though Elizabeth and Mary, Queen of Scots, were cousins, Elizabeth wasn't too pleased when Mary arrived in England for an unexpected visit in 1568. In fact, she was so unimpressed, she put Mary in prison...

### Mary, Queen of Scots, had a **Strong Claim to the English Throne**

- 1) Mary was the only child of James V of Scotland. She was related to the Tudors through her grandmother, Margaret Tudor. Margaret was Henry VIII's sister, the wife of James IV and mother of James V (see p.90).
- 2) As a granddaughter of Margaret Tudor, Mary had a strong claim to the English throne. Because Mary was a Catholic, her claim was supported by many English Catholics.
- 3) Mary became queen of Scotland in 1542 when she was just six days old. Her mother acted as regent (she ruled on Mary's behalf), while Mary was raised in France.
- 4) In 1558, when Mary was 15 years old, she married the heir to the French throne. However, her husband died suddenly in 1560, and Mary returned to Scotland.



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#### Comment and Analysis

Mary wanted to be named as heir to the English throne, but Elizabeth was unwilling to do this. She feared that making Mary her heir would encourage Catholic plots, both at home and abroad, to overthrow her and make Mary queen.

### Mary Fled to England in 1568

- 1) In 1565 Mary married the Scottish nobleman Lord Darnley. The marriage was not a happy one. Darnley hated Mary's personal secretary, David Rizzio, and became convinced that the two were having an affair. In 1566 a group of Scottish nobles, accompanied by Darnley, stabbed Rizzio to death.
- 2) In 1567, Darnley was murdered. Many people believed that Mary and her close friend, the Earl of Bothwell, were behind the murder. Their suspicions seemed to be confirmed when Mary married Bothwell a few months later.
- 3) This marriage was unpopular with the Scottish nobles, who rebelled against Mary. They imprisoned her and forced her to abdicate (give up the throne) in favour of her one-year-old son, James. In 1568, Mary escaped from prison and raised an army. Her forces were defeated in battle and she fled south to England.

Some people (including Elizabeth) thought that the Scottish nobles had no right to overthrow Mary. As a result, they didn't accept her abdication, and still viewed her as the legitimate queen of Scotland.

### Mary was **Imprisoned**, but still posed a **Threat**

- 1) Mary hoped that Elizabeth would help her regain control of Scotland. Elizabeth was not willing to do this — Mary's claim to the English throne meant that there would be a constant threat of invasion from the north if Mary regained power in Scotland.
- 2) Instead, Elizabeth had Mary imprisoned and set up an inquiry to investigate whether she had been involved in Darnley's murder.
- 3) Elizabeth didn't want the inquiry to find Mary guilty. A guilty verdict would lend support to the actions of the Scottish nobles, who had overthrown Mary, their legitimate queen.
- 4) However, Elizabeth didn't want a not-guilty verdict either, because this would force her to release Mary. Once free, Mary might use her claim to the English throne to try and overthrow Elizabeth.
- 5) In the end, the inquiry didn't reach a verdict — this enabled Elizabeth to keep Mary in captivity. Elizabeth hoped that imprisoning Mary would prevent her becoming the centre of Catholic plots, but Mary's presence caused problems for Elizabeth throughout the next 20 years (see p.97-99).

The so-called 'Casket Letters' were presented to the inquiry. They included several letters apparently written by Mary to Bothwell, which implicated the pair in Darnley's murder. Mary's supporters insisted that the letters were forgeries, but most members of the inquiry believed they were genuine.

### Elizabeth really wasn't a fan of uninvited guests...

Why was Mary, Queen of Scots, a threat to Queen Elizabeth I? Explain your answer. [12]





## The Revolt of the Northern Earls, 1569-1570

Mary, Queen of Scots, had barely been in England five minutes when she began causing trouble for Elizabeth.

### The Northern Earls were unhappy for Several Reasons

- 1) Many northern nobles were still committed Catholics. They wanted to see the restoration of Catholicism in England under a Catholic monarch. The arrival of Mary, Queen of Scots, in 1568 (see p.96) gave them hope that Elizabeth could be replaced with Mary.
- 2) Elizabeth had confiscated large areas of land from the Earl of Northumberland and shared them between Northumberland's main rival in the north and a southern Protestant. Northumberland was also angry that Elizabeth had claimed all the profits from copper mines discovered on his estates.
- 3) Elizabeth had reduced the power of the northern nobles and increased her control in the north. In part, she did this through the Council of the North, which helped to govern the region. Under Elizabeth, the Council was controlled by southern Protestants. The northern nobles deeply resented this.
- 4) The northern nobles blamed Elizabeth's advisors for these policies. They believed that some privy councillors, especially William Cecil, had become too powerful. They wanted to remove these 'evil counsellors' and replace them with men who would be more sympathetic to their interests.

### The Revolt of the Northern Earls broke out in November 1569

- 1) In 1569, the Duke of Norfolk (the wealthiest landowner in England) hatched a plan to marry Mary, Queen of Scots, and have her recognised as Elizabeth's heir. This plan was supported by Catholic nobles, including the Earls of Northumberland and Westmorland, because it meant that Elizabeth would be succeeded by a Catholic queen.
- 2) When the plan was uncovered, the Earls feared they would be executed for their involvement. In a desperate attempt to escape punishment, they rebelled and tried to overthrow Elizabeth.
- 3) In November 1569, the Earls captured Durham, where they celebrated Catholic Mass in the cathedral. They then marched south, probably making for Tutbury in Derbyshire, where Mary was imprisoned.
- 4) Before the rebels reached Tutbury, a large royal army forced them to retreat. Many of their troops deserted, and the two Earls fled to Scotland. Elizabeth showed the rebels little mercy. Westmorland fled abroad, but Northumberland was executed, as were at least 400 rebel troops.

### The revolt was a Serious Threat to Elizabeth's rule

- 1) The Revolt of the Northern Earls was the most serious rebellion of Elizabeth's reign. It posed a major threat to Elizabeth's rule and showed the danger that Mary, Queen of Scots, represented as a rallying point for English Catholics.
- 2) News of the rebellion created widespread fear among English Protestants about Catholic plots and revenge. These fears were fuelled by memories of the harsh persecution of Protestants during the reign of Queen Mary I.
- 3) In 1570, Pope Pius V excommunicated Elizabeth. This was supposed to strengthen the revolt, but news of it didn't arrive until after the rebels had fled. But the excommunication did make the Catholic threat seem more serious, because it meant that Catholics no longer had to obey the Queen and were encouraged to overthrow her.

There was little support for the revolt among the rest of the Catholic nobility and ordinary people — when faced with a choice between Elizabeth and their religion, most Catholics chose to support the Queen. 1569-70 was the last time English Catholics tried to remove Elizabeth by force.

#### Comment and Analysis

The Revolt of the Northern Earls and the papal excommunication changed Elizabeth's attitude towards Catholics, who were now seen as potential traitors. From 1570, Elizabeth became less tolerant of recusancy and took increasingly harsh measures against English Catholics.

### Those Northern Earls were Revolting...

As well as knowing what happened in Elizabethan England, you also need to know why things happened — so be sure to learn what caused events like the Revolt of the Northern Earls.





## Catholic Plots at Home

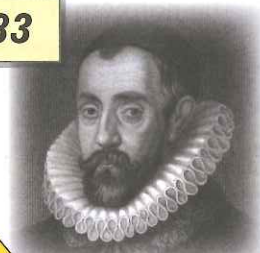
During the 1570s and 1580s, there were several Catholic plots to assassinate Elizabeth and replace her with Mary. The plots involved European conspirators and were supported by France, Spain and the Pope.

### **The Ridolfi Plot aimed to put Mary on the English Throne**

- 1) Roberto di Ridolfi was an Italian banker who had played a small part in the Revolt of the Northern Earls. In 1571 he used his Catholic contacts in England and Europe to develop a plot to overthrow Elizabeth.
- 2) Ridolfi planned to assassinate Elizabeth, then marry Mary to the Duke of Norfolk and make her queen. He was supported by the Pope, and by King Philip II, who agreed to provide troops for a Spanish invasion.
- 3) The plot failed, largely because Elizabeth's allies passed the names of the main conspirators to her. They also intercepted letters sent by Mary, which implicated her and Norfolk in the plot.
- 4) Norfolk was arrested and executed. Mary was not punished, although her supervision was made tighter.

### **Walsingham uncovered the Throckmorton Plot in 1583**

- 1) The Throckmorton Plot of 1583 aimed to assassinate Elizabeth and replace her with Mary. The conspirators planned for an invasion of England by French troops, financed by Philip II of Spain and the Pope.
- 2) A leading figure in the plot was Francis Throckmorton, a young Catholic man who carried messages between Mary and Catholic conspirators abroad. The plot was uncovered by Walsingham, who placed Throckmorton under surveillance for several months.
- 3) In response to the Throckmorton Plot, Elizabeth's closest advisors drafted the Bond of Association, which aimed to prevent any more such plots. The Bond, which was signed by the English nobility and gentry, required the signatories to execute anyone who attempted to overthrow the Queen.



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Francis Walsingham was Elizabeth's principal secretary and spymaster. He established a large spy network in England and Europe. Walsingham intercepted the letters of Catholic conspirators and worked with an expert cryptographer to decode them. He also used double agents to infiltrate Catholic networks.

### **The Catholic Plots posed a Real Threat to Elizabeth...**

- 1) Mary's presence in England and her strong claim to the throne made the plots seem credible and meant that they posed a real threat to Elizabeth's rule. Many people were afraid that they would be successful.
- 2) As the head of the Catholic Church, the Pope could rally support for the plots. For some Catholics, obedience to the Pope was more important than obedience to Elizabeth.
- 3) Foreign powers, especially France and Spain, were involved in the plots, so there was a danger they would lead to a foreign invasion.

### **...but they had some Significant Weaknesses**

- 1) Elizabeth was a popular ruler and the conspirators lacked public support. As the failure of the Revolt of the Northern Earls (see p.97) had shown, there was little appetite in England for a Catholic revolution.
- 2) Philip II was reluctant to destroy his alliance with Elizabeth. As a result, his support for the Catholic plots was half-hearted — although he promised to help the conspirators, he rarely followed through on his promises.
- 3) Elizabeth's informants, and later Walsingham's highly efficient spy network, ensured that the plots were uncovered before they were fully developed.

### **Don't lose the plot, just learn this page...**

Read this page through once more, then cover it up and scribble down the main features of the Ridolfi and Throckmorton Plots. How serious a threat did these plots pose to Elizabeth's rule?





## Catholic Plots at Home

In 1586, Walsingham used his spy network to prove that Mary had supported the Babington Plot. His evidence persuaded Elizabeth to put Mary on trial and execute her for treason.

### ***Walsingham knew about Every Stage of the 1586 Babington Plot***

- 1) The Babington Plot was another conspiracy involving France and Spain. Again, the conspirators planned to assassinate Elizabeth and give the English throne to Mary, this time with the support of a joint Franco-Spanish invasion force.
- 2) Anthony Babington was one of the key conspirators. He was responsible for sending information to Mary from her supporters in England and Europe, and passing back her replies.

Through his spy network, Walsingham followed every stage of the plot. Using a double agent, he managed to secretly intercept all letters sent to and from Mary, and have them decoded. One of Mary's letters approved plans to assassinate the Queen and free Mary from prison.

- 3) By August 1586, Walsingham had all the evidence he needed to break the plot. Babington and the other conspirators were arrested, tried and executed for treason.

### ***The Babington Plot led to the Execution of Mary, Queen of Scots***

- 1) Mary had been implicated in Catholic plots before, but Elizabeth had always been reluctant to take action against her. The evidence gathered by Walsingham finally persuaded her to put Mary on trial.
- 2) In October 1586, Mary was found guilty of treason and sentenced to death.
- 3) After hesitating for several months, Elizabeth eventually signed Mary's death warrant. The execution took place on 8th February 1587.

#### Comment and Analysis

Because Mary was queen of Scotland, Elizabeth was very reluctant to execute her. Elizabeth believed in the Divine Right — that rulers were sent by God to govern their country. Therefore, she felt she had no right to execute a legitimate monarch. She also feared that executing Mary would undermine her own claim to rule by Divine Right and might fuel more plots against her.

### ***Mary's execution Reduced the Threat from Catholics at Home...***

The execution of Mary, Queen of Scots, removed the long-standing Catholic threat to Elizabeth at home. English Catholics now had no-one to rally around, and they lost hope of ever overthrowing Elizabeth and reversing the religious settlement. There were no more major Catholic plots during Elizabeth's reign.

### ***...but it Increased the Threat from Abroad***

- 1) Mary's execution inflamed Catholic opposition abroad and increased the threat of a foreign invasion.
- 2) In 1587, relations with Spain were at a low point — the two countries were at war over the Netherlands, and King Philip II had been preparing for an attack on England since 1585 (see p.101-103). Mary's execution made the situation worse. Philip was now even more determined to invade.
- 3) There was also a danger that Mary's son, James VI of Scotland might seek revenge for his mother's death. There were fears that he would form an alliance with other Catholic powers in Europe in order to invade England.

### ***The Babington Plot wasn't very well executed...***

Why did Queen Elizabeth have Mary, Queen of Scots, executed in 1587?  
Explain your answer. [12]





## Relations with Spain

England and Spain had tried to stay on good terms, but the rivalry between them led to growing tensions.

### England and Spain were **Political and Religious Rivals**

- 1) King Philip II of Spain had been married to Queen Mary I of England, and the two countries had fought together against France in the 1550s. The war with France ended in 1559 (see p.92), but Elizabeth and Philip tried to maintain good relations with each other.
- 2) Spain was a great imperial power. In Europe, Philip ruled Spain, the Netherlands and parts of Italy. He also had a large empire in North and South America. In 1581, Philip became king of Portugal. This gave him control of the important Atlantic port of Lisbon, as well as Portugal's overseas empire. By the 1570s, England was starting to have ambitions for an empire of its own, and hoped to become an imperial power to rival Spain (see p.109-111).
- 3) Philip was a very devout Catholic and disliked the Elizabethan religious settlement of 1559. He became involved in several Catholic plots against Elizabeth in the 1570s and 1580s, although his involvement in these plots was mostly reluctant and half-hearted (see p.98).

#### Comment and Analysis

Spain's military and naval forces were much greater than England's, so Elizabeth was always reluctant to do anything that might destroy her alliance with Philip and lead to war with Spain.

### There was **Commercial Rivalry in the Spanish Netherlands...**

English exports to Europe were vital to the English economy. Many English goods reached the European market via Dutch ports, especially Antwerp (which was in the Netherlands in the 16th century). Because Spain ruled the Netherlands, Philip could limit English access to these vital Dutch ports.

In 1568, Spanish ships laden with gold bullion took refuge in English ports to escape bad weather. Elizabeth seized the gold for herself, which enraged Philip. In response, Philip seized English ships in Antwerp and banned English trade with the Netherlands for a time. This damaged England's economy and caused much hardship for English people.

### ...and in the **New World**

- 1) Trade with Spain's colonies in North and South America was very profitable, but foreigners weren't allowed to trade with them unless they had a licence. Very few Englishmen were granted licences.
- 2) Elizabeth encouraged privateers (men who sailed their own vessels) to trade illegally with Spanish colonies, raid Spanish ships and attack the treasure fleets carrying gold and silver from the Americas to Spain. Because the privateers were supposedly independent, Elizabeth could deny any responsibility for their activities. This helped to prevent open conflict with Philip.
- 3) Elizabeth received a share of the privateers' profits. Given England's financial weakness (see p.92), this was a very important source of income for her. The treasure she received from Drake in 1580 was worth more than all the rest of her income for that year put together.

#### Comment and Analysis

The Ridolfi Plot of 1571 (see p.98) damaged Elizabeth's trust in Philip and made her more willing to support the activities of English privateers.

Francis Drake was a leading privateer. He was involved in several expeditions in the New World in the late 1560s and 1570s. Between 1577 and 1580 Drake sailed around the world (see p.110). He carried out a number of raids on Spanish settlements and ships, returning with huge amounts of treasure.

© Mary Evans / INTERFOTO / Bildarchiv Hansmann

### The Americas — a whole New World of commercial rivalry...

England's relationship with Spain was a major headache for Elizabeth throughout her reign. Make sure you understand how and why the relationship changed over time.

EXAM TIP



## War with Spain, 1585-1588

By the 1580s, the tension between England and Spain had reached boiling point. Elizabeth and Philip were still reluctant to confront one another, but in 1585 they finally went to war over the Netherlands.

### Elizabeth's Support for the Dutch Rebels led to War with Spain

- 1) In 1581, Protestant rebels in the Netherlands declared independence from Spain and established a Dutch republic. Elizabeth gave limited financial help to the rebels, but she was reluctant to provoke Philip by getting directly involved.
- 2) In 1584 the rebel leader, William the Silent, was assassinated, and the Dutch revolt was in danger of being defeated. Elizabeth decided to give direct assistance to the rebels — in 1585 she signed the Treaty of Nonsuch, which placed the Netherlands under her protection and promised military assistance.
- 3) Several factors influenced Elizabeth's decision to sign the Treaty of Nonsuch:

#### Religious

Elizabeth wanted to protect Dutch Protestantism and prevent Philip forcing Catholicism on the Netherlands.

#### Commercial

The Netherlands' ports were essential entry points into Europe for most English exports.

#### Military

If the rebels were defeated, Philip might use the Netherlands as a base for an invasion of England.

#### Strategic

In 1584, Spain was seeking control of the French crown. If the Dutch rebels were also defeated, then Spain would control almost the entire Channel and Atlantic coasts of Europe.

#### Comment and Analysis

Because of her belief in the Divine Right, Elizabeth didn't want to remove Philip as ruler of the Netherlands. She just wanted to ensure freedom of worship for Dutch Protestants and protect England's military, commercial and strategic interests.

### Dudley's campaigns in the Netherlands were Unsuccessful

- 1) Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, was appointed to lead the military expedition to the Netherlands. When he arrived, he accepted the position of Governor-General. This was a serious mistake — it suggested that Elizabeth had taken control of the Netherlands for herself, which risked provoking Philip even further. Elizabeth forced Dudley to resign the position immediately.
- 2) Dudley's campaigns of 1586-1587 were unsuccessful. He suffered several heavy defeats at the hands of the Spanish general, the Duke of Parma, and had no clear military successes. He resigned his post in 1587 and returned to England.
- 3) There were several reasons for the failure of the English campaigns in the Netherlands:

- Dudley wasn't a talented general.
- His officers were bitterly divided over questions of strategy.
- Dudley had a very small army compared to the number of Spanish troops.
- The English army was poorly equipped.
- Elizabeth didn't provide sufficient funds to pay the English troops.

- 4) English naval support for the Dutch rebels was more effective — a fleet of English ships patrolled the Dutch coastline, preventing the Spanish from landing some of their forces by sea.

### England and Spain — reluctant enemies...

'Commercial rivalry was the most important reason for the outbreak of war with Spain in 1585.'  
Do you agree with this statement? Explain your answer. [16]





## Drake's Raid on Cadiz, 1587

In 1587, Francis Drake attacked the Spanish port of Cadiz. The attack, which became known as 'the singeing of the King of Spain's beard', was a major setback in Spain's preparations for the Armada.

### Drake was sent to Disrupt Spanish Preparations for the Armada

- Philip saw the 1585 Treaty of Nonsuch as a declaration of war on Spain. In response, he began building a huge fleet (an Armada) that he planned to use to invade England.
- Elizabeth was aware of Philip's plans. In 1587, she sent Francis Drake, one of her most successful privateers (see p.100), to spy on Spanish preparations and attack their ships and supplies.

### Drake Attacked the Spanish port of Cadiz in 1587

- Most of the new ships for the Armada were being built in the Portuguese port of Lisbon. This deep water port was protected by strong fortifications, and Drake knew he couldn't attack it with any hope of success.
- Instead, Drake decided to attack the port of Cadiz, which wasn't well defended. Fewer naval ships were anchored there, but the port was the centre for a large number of naval supplies, which Drake intended to seize or destroy.
- In April 1587, Drake sailed into Cadiz harbour and began to attack the ships anchored there. He destroyed around 30 ships and seized many tonnes of supplies, including food and weapons.
- After his successful raid on Cadiz, Drake sailed along the coast of Spain and Portugal, seizing Spanish ships and destroying supplies which were being sent to Lisbon for the Armada.
- Drake also captured the San Filipe, a Spanish ship returning from the Americas laden with gold, spices and silk. Its valuable cargo easily covered the cost of Drake's expedition, and enabled Elizabeth to improve England's defences.



### The raid on Cadiz was a Serious Setback for the Spanish Armada

- The raid on Cadiz had a major impact on Philip's plans to invade England, delaying the Armada by more than a year.
- Obtaining fresh supplies and weapons was very expensive and seriously strained Spain's finances.
- During his raids, Drake captured more than 1000 tons of planks made from seasoned wood, which were needed to make the barrels used to carry food and water. As a result, the Spanish had to make their barrels from unseasoned wood, which couldn't preserve food and water very well.
- This caused supply problems for the Armada and affected the morale of Spanish troops and sailors. Fresh water supplies were lost and many tons of food rotted as the fleet sailed to England in 1588.

#### Comment and Analysis

Drake described his raid on Cadiz as 'singeing the King of Spain's beard'. He meant that he had inflicted temporary damage on King Philip's Armada, but hadn't destroyed it entirely — it would 'grow back' in time.

### I've always thought facial hair was a fire hazard...

The 'singeing of the King of Spain's beard' might sound silly, but it's a really handy phrase — it tells you a lot about the impact of Drake's raid on Philip's preparations for the Armada.





# The Spanish Armada, 1588

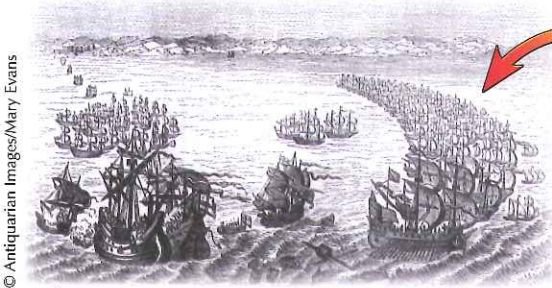
The Spanish Armada was launched in 1588, but right from the start, things didn't go according to plan...

## The Armada Planned to meet the Duke of Parma at Dunkirk

- 1) By the spring of 1588, the Spanish Armada was complete and Philip was ready to launch his 'Enterprise of England'. The Armada was a huge fleet of around 130 ships, manned by approximately 8000 sailors and carrying an estimated 18,000 soldiers.
- 2) Philip appointed the Duke of Medina Sidonia to lead the Armada. Philip respected the Duke's high social status and trusted him to obey instructions. However, the Duke had little military or naval experience, and he tried unsuccessfully to turn down the command.
- 3) The Spanish had thousands more soldiers stationed in the Netherlands under the leadership of the Duke of Parma. Philip's plan was for the Armada to meet Parma's army at Dunkirk. The combined forces would then sail across the Channel to England under the protection of the Armada's warships.

## The Armada reached the English Channel in July 1588

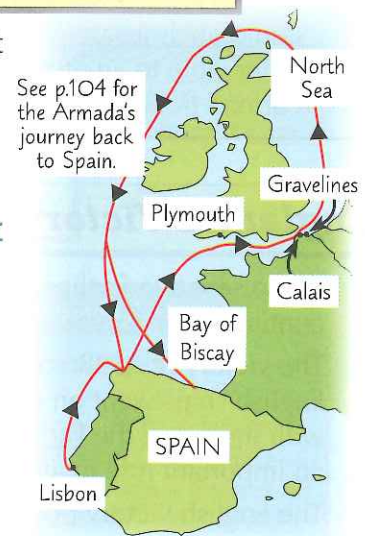
- 1) The Armada set out in May 1588, but was delayed for several weeks by bad weather in the Bay of Biscay and by the attempts of an English fleet to intercept it.
- 2) In July the Spanish fleet was sighted off Cornwall and beacons (signal fires) were lit along the south coast to send the news to Elizabeth in London. English ships set sail from Plymouth to meet the Armada.
- 3) The Armada sailed up the Channel in a crescent formation. This was an effective defensive strategy, which used the large, armed galleons to protect the weaker supply and troop ships.
- 4) The English navy carried out a few minor raids, but was unable to inflict much damage. Only two Spanish ships were lost, and these were both destroyed by accident.



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## The English Attacked the Spanish at Calais and Gravelines

- 1) Having sailed up the Channel, Medina Sidonia anchored at Calais to wait for Parma's troops. However, Parma and his men were being blockaded by Dutch ships and weren't able to reach the coast in time.
- 2) In the middle of the night, the English sent eight fireships (ships loaded with flammable materials and set on fire) among the anchored Spanish ships. This caused panic among the Spanish sailors, who cut their anchor cables, broke their defensive formation and headed for the open sea.
- 3) The Spanish ships regrouped at Gravelines, but the weather made it impossible for them to return to their defensive position at Calais. The English moved in, and the following battle lasted for many hours. Five Spanish ships were sunk, and the rest of the fleet was forced to sail away from the French coast and into the North Sea.
- 4) An English fleet followed the Spanish as far north as Scotland to make sure they did not regroup and return to collect Parma's army.



## So much for King Philip's cunning plan...

Have another read of the last three pages, then cover them up and jot down a timeline of the Spanish Armada. Include all the key events from the Treaty of Nonsuch to the Battle of Gravelines.





## The Spanish Armada, 1588

The English navy had defeated the Armada, and the Spanish ships now faced a dangerous journey home.

### **The Armada's Journey back to Spain was a Disaster**

- 1) Medina Sidonia decided to call off the attack on England and return to Spain by sailing round Scotland and Ireland. The Spanish sailors were unfamiliar with this very dangerous route, and they encountered several powerful Atlantic storms.
- 2) Many ships sank or were wrecked on the Scottish and Irish coasts, where the local inhabitants showed the survivors little mercy. Those ships that completed the journey ran short of supplies, and many men died of starvation and disease. In all, less than half the fleet and fewer than 10,000 men made it back to Spain.

### **Several Factors contributed to the Defeat of the Armada**

#### English Strengths

- The English had improved their ship building, giving them several technological advantages. Spain relied on large ships which were heavy and difficult to handle, whereas the English built long, narrow ships which were faster and easier to handle. English cannons could also be reloaded much more quickly than Spanish ones.
- English tactics were more effective. Spanish ships aimed to come alongside their opponents, board their vessels and overcome the enemy in hand-to-hand fighting. The Spanish couldn't use this tactic against the English, who used their greater manoeuvrability to stay out of range. Instead of boarding the Spanish ships, the English fired broadsides (massive barrages of cannonballs) which could sink them.

#### Spanish Weaknesses

- Most of Spain's men lacked experience of naval warfare, whereas the English fleet was manned by experienced sailors.
- The Spanish plan to meet the Duke of Parma at Dunkirk was seriously flawed. Spain didn't control a deep water port where the Armada could anchor safely, so the ships were extremely vulnerable to an attack while it waited for Parma's troops to escape the Dutch blockade.

#### Luck

- The death of Spain's leading admiral, Santa Cruz, in February 1588, led to the appointment of the inexperienced Duke of Medina Sidonia to lead the Armada.
- The weather made it impossible for the Spanish fleet to return to the Channel after the battle of Gravelines, forcing it to travel into the dangerous waters off the Scottish and Irish coasts.

### **England's Victory Removed the threat of a Spanish Invasion**

- 1) Philip sent two further Armadas in the 1590s, but they were both unsuccessful. Although war with Spain continued for 15 years, the Armada of 1588 was the last serious Spanish threat to Elizabeth's throne.
- 2) The victory of 1588 contributed to England's development as a strong naval power to rival Spain. English ships went on many voyages of discovery and established valuable trade routes, especially with India and the Far East (see p.110). By the end of Elizabeth's reign, the navy was also playing an important role in attempts to set up an English colony in North America (see p.111).
- 3) The English victory boosted Elizabeth's popularity and strengthened the Protestant cause — it was seen as a sign that God favoured Protestantism.

### **The defeat of the Armada — a great English victory...**

'Luck was the main reason why England managed to defeat the Spanish Armada.'

Explain whether you agree or disagree with this statement. [16]





## Education

During Elizabeth's reign, people increasingly began to recognise the importance of education. Many new schools were set up and more people than ever learned how to read and write.

### Children received a **Basic Education at Home**

- 1) Children received their early education at home. Most parents probably taught their children how to behave correctly and gave them a basic religious education. From the age of six, all children had to go to Sunday school, where they learnt things like the Lord's Prayer, the 10 Commandments and the Creed (a basic statement of the Christian faith).
- 2) From a young age, boys were trained in simple work skills, while girls helped their mothers with household activities.
- 3) Some children from noble households were taught at home by a private tutor. Others were sent to live with another noble family and educated there.

This kind of education was intended to teach children how to behave in noble society and give them the skills to be successful at court.

### Petty Schools taught Reading, Writing and Maths

- 1) Petty schools were small, local schools that provided a basic education. Many petty schools were run by the local parish priest. Others were attached to grammar schools, or were set up by private individuals.
- 2) The schools taught basic reading and writing, and sometimes a little maths. There wasn't a set curriculum, although lessons usually had a strong religious focus. The schools didn't usually have any books — instead the main teaching aid was the hornbook, a wooden board showing the alphabet and the Lord's Prayer.
- 3) Most pupils were boys, although some petty schools admitted a few girls. There was no fixed age for pupils to start school, but they usually started at about six and stayed until they could read and write.

Only a small minority of children in Elizabethan England went to school, but the number was growing. Education was increasingly important for many careers, including trade and government administration.

### There was a **Big Increase in the number of Grammar Schools**

- 1) Grammar schools had existed for centuries, but there was a big expansion during Elizabeth's reign, with the foundation of around 100 new grammar schools.
- 2) It was very rare for girls to go to grammar school — most pupils were boys from the upper and middle classes. Some schools offered free places to bright boys from poorer backgrounds, but few poor boys were able to attend because their parents needed them to work at home.
- 3) Children usually started grammar school around the age of seven. Lessons focused mainly on Latin and classical literature (literature from Ancient Greece and Rome), and a few schools also taught Greek.

There was no state education system at this time. Instead, most schools were set up by wealthy individuals.

### The number of University Students was Increasing

- 1) When they left grammar school, some boys went on to study at one of the two English universities, Oxford and Cambridge. The growing prosperity of the upper and middle classes meant that the number of university students increased during Elizabeth's reign.
- 2) University courses were conducted almost entirely in Latin. Students studied advanced written and spoken Latin, before moving on to study arithmetic, music, Greek, astronomy, geometry and philosophy. After completing an undergraduate degree, students might specialise in law, theology or medicine.

#### Comment and Analysis

The printing press had been introduced to England in the late 15th century. As printing spread, it encouraged increased literacy levels because it made books much cheaper and more widely available.

### Those Elizabethans really loved their Latin...

Write down these headings: Home, Petty School, Grammar School, University.  
Under each heading, jot down the main things pupils were taught in that place.





## Sports, Pastimes and the Theatre

Some Elizabethan pastimes, including tennis, fencing, football and the theatre, are still popular today.

### **Hunting and Sports were an Important part of Court Life**

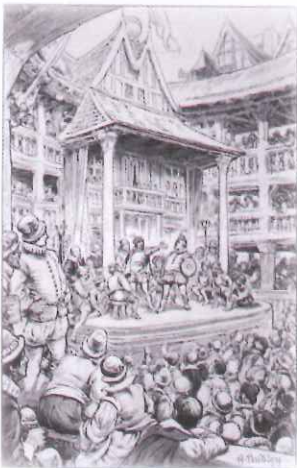
The royal court was a large group of people who surrounded the Queen at all times. Over 1000 people attended the court, including Elizabeth's personal servants, members of the privy council, nobles, ambassadors and other foreign visitors. The Queen's favourite sports became an important part of court life.

- Elizabeth and her courtiers often hunted deer and other wild animals. As well as being a form of entertainment, hunting was an important source of food for the court.
- The Queen was skilled at hawking, spending many hours with her trained falcons as they hunted. Training falcons was an expensive process, which only the rich could afford.
- Elizabeth's courtiers and other noblemen were expected to be skilled at fencing — they practised from a young age. Tennis and bowls were also becoming increasingly popular. These sports required expensive equipment, so they were only played by the rich.

### **Ordinary people had Little Time for Leisure Activities**

- 1) Most people worked six days a week and went to church on Sundays, so they had little leisure time. However, there were several festival days in the calendar, including Midsummer's day and Ascension day. On these days, people were free to enjoy sports, feasting and other pastimes.
- 2) Football was a popular sport, often played between two villages. An unlimited number of players could participate, and there were few rules. As a result, games often descended into long and violent fights.
- 3) Blood sports like cockfighting and bull- or bear-baiting were also very popular. People would gamble on the outcome of the fights.

### **The Theatre became Very Popular later in Elizabeth's reign**



A performance at London's Globe Theatre, which was built in 1599.

- 1) There were no permanent theatres in England at the start of Elizabeth's reign. Instead, companies of actors travelled around, performing in village squares or the courtyards of inns.
- 2) The first theatres were built in London in the 1570s. They included The Theatre and The Curtain. They were usually round, open-air buildings with a raised stage that stretched out into the audience.
- 3) The theatre appealed to both rich and poor. Poorer audience members, known as groundlings, stood around the stage, while richer people sat under cover around the theatre's walls.
- 4) Elizabeth enjoyed plays and often had them performed at court. She supported her favourite performers and even set up an acting company, The Queen's Men.

#### Comment and Analysis

The London authorities and the Puritans opposed the theatre because they saw it as a source of crime and immorality. As a result, many theatres were built just outside the City of London in Southwark.

Support from the elite was essential to the development of Elizabethan theatre — acting companies relied on members of the elite to fund or promote their performances and protect them from opponents of the theatre. Two of the most important Elizabethan companies, The Admiral's Men and The Lord Chamberlain's Men (William Shakespeare's company), were supported by members of the privy council.

### **I'm not sure I like the sound of Elizabethan football...**

Remember that there were social distinctions in leisure activities — the rich and the poor mostly enjoyed different pastimes and even at the theatre the two groups didn't mix.

EXAM TIP



# Poverty

The growing number of people living in poverty was a major problem in Elizabethan society.

## Population Growth led to Rising Prices

- 1) In the 16th century, England's birth rate rose and the death rate fell. This led to huge population growth — during Elizabeth's reign, the English population grew from around 3 million people to over 4 million.
- 2) Food production didn't keep pace with the growth in population. As a result, food prices rose and sometimes there were food shortages.
- 3) England also suffered several poor harvests in the 1550s and 1560s. This led to food shortages and made the problem of rising food prices even worse, causing serious hardship for the poor.
- 4) Prices for food and other goods rose much more quickly than wages. Standards of living fell for many workers as they struggled to afford the necessities — many were forced into poverty.
- 5) Because of the rapid population growth, there was growing competition for land, and so rents increased. This trend was made worse by changes in farming practices.

In 1563, the government passed the Statute of Artificers, which set a maximum daily wage for skilled workers (e.g. butchers and carpenters). This made things even more difficult for workers, because it prevented wages from rising to match price increases.

### Comment and Analysis

Henry VIII's financial problems were still having a knock-on effect early in Elizabeth's reign. Henry VIII had debased the coinage — he issued coins that were not pure gold and silver, but had cheaper metals mixed in. Businessmen believed that the coinage was worth less than before, so they put their prices up. Elizabeth's government began to tackle this problem in 1560, but it still contributed to rising prices at the start of her reign.

## Developments in Agriculture left many people Unemployed

- 1) Traditional farming methods involved many farmers renting strips of land in large open fields. This was subsistence-level farming — each farmer only grew enough crops to supply himself and his family.
- 2) This kind of farming was very inefficient, and in the 16th century landowners began changing their farming techniques to try and make more money from their land. Instead of sharing open fields among many farmers, they enclosed these fields to create a few large farms.
- 3) These new, enclosed farms required fewer labourers, so farmers who rented land were evicted, leaving them unemployed and homeless.
- 4) Exporting wool to Europe was more profitable than selling grain, so many landowners stopped growing grain and began sheep farming. This fall in grain production contributed to rising food prices. It also meant that the country was more likely to suffer food shortages when there was a bad harvest.

### Comment and Analysis

These enclosures of farm land forced many people to leave their villages and migrate to towns or cities in search of work. The government viewed these migrant workers as 'vagabonds'. They feared that the growth of vagabondage would encourage riots and rebellions.

## Religious Changes meant there was Less Support for the Poor

- 1) Between 1536 and 1541, Henry VIII had closed down England's monasteries and sold off most of their land (this was called the 'dissolution of the monasteries').
- 2) The monasteries had performed important social functions, including providing support for many poor, ill and disabled people. The dissolution of the monasteries removed a valuable source of assistance for people in times of need.

## The enclosures closed the door to many farm labourers...

Do you agree that population growth was the main reason for rising levels of poverty in Elizabethan England? Explain your answer. [16]





## Poverty

Elizabeth's government introduced a series of Poor Laws to try and tackle the problem of poverty.

### **The Government became More Involved in Poor Relief**

- 1) Traditionally, the main source of support for the poor was charity — rich people made donations to hospitals, monasteries and other organisations that helped the poor. However, during Elizabeth's reign the problem of poverty became so bad that these charitable donations by individuals were no longer enough.
- 2) People began to realise that society as a whole would have to take responsibility for helping the poor, and so the government began to take action to tackle the problem of poverty.

#### Comment and Analysis

The government feared that the rising poverty levels were a serious threat to law and order. As poverty levels rose, crime rates had also increased, and the government feared that the poor might rise up in rebellion if the problem of poverty wasn't tackled.

### **People believed the Poor could be split into Three Categories**

#### The Helpless Poor

Those who were unable to support themselves — including young orphans and the elderly, sick or disabled.

#### The Deserving Poor

People who wanted to work, but weren't able to find a job in their home town or village.

#### The Undeserving Poor

Beggars, criminals and people who refused to work. Also migrant workers ('vagabonds') who left their homes and travelled around looking for work.

### **The Poor Laws gave Help to the Helpless and Deserving Poor**

- 1) Because voluntary donations were no longer sufficient to fund poor relief, the government began to introduce taxes to raise money for the poor.
- 2) The 1563 Poor Law gave magistrates the power to raise local funds for poor relief and introduced finances for people who refused to pay. However, each person was still free to decide how much they would contribute.
- 3) Another Poor Law in 1572 gave local officials the power to decide how much people should pay. By the end of the century there was a national system of taxation to pay for poor relief.
- 4) These taxes were used to provide hospitals and housing for the elderly, sick and disabled. Poor children were given apprenticeships, which usually lasted at least seven years, and local authorities were expected to provide work for the deserving poor. The Poor Law of 1576 said that poor people could be sent to prison if they refused to take work.

### **The Undeserving Poor were treated Harshly**

Under the 1563 Poor Law, the undeserving poor could be publicly whipped. In 1572 the punishment was made even harsher — they faced whipping and having a hole bored through their right ear. Repeat offenders could be imprisoned or might even face execution.

#### Comment and Analysis

The undeserving poor were treated so harshly because they were seen as a serious threat to society. Many people believed that poor criminals and vagabonds had encouraged the Revolt of the Northern Earls in 1569 (see p.97). The harsh punishments for the undeserving poor introduced in 1572 were probably a direct response to the Revolt.

### **The Poor Laws helped some, but punished others...**

Write a brief description of two features of government policies towards the poor in early Elizabethan England. [4]





## Exploration and Discovery

Elizabeth's reign was an exciting time to be a sailor. Developments in navigation and ship-building were finally opening up the oceans and enabling explorers to discover the world beyond Europe.

### **The English were Slow to take an interest in Exploration**

- 1) The Portuguese and Spanish were the first to explore the world beyond Europe. In the 1400s, their fleets began to set out on voyages of discovery to Africa, the Americas and Asia. By the time Elizabeth became queen in 1558, both Portugal and Spain had established many colonies in the Americas.
- 2) However, it was only from the 1560s that English sailors began to take an interest in global exploration and set out on their own voyages of discovery.

### **New Technology made Longer Journeys possible**

- 1) Until the 15th century, most European sailors relied on coastal features to navigate. This made it impossible for them to cross oceans, where they could be out of sight of land for weeks at a time.
- 2) As the Portuguese and Spanish began to explore the oceans, they developed more advanced navigational techniques. They learnt how to navigate by the position of the stars or the Sun using a special instrument called a sea astrolabe.
- 3) During Elizabeth's reign, English sailors began to learn these techniques. In 1561, a key Spanish book, 'The Art of Navigation' by Martin Cortés, was translated into English. This gave English sailors detailed information about how to navigate across the Atlantic using a sea astrolabe.
- 4) Other innovations helped English sailors to navigate more accurately. From the 1570s, they began using the log and line, which helped them to estimate their speed with more accuracy. In the 1590s, English navigator John Davis invented the backstaff, which was easier to use and more accurate than the sea astrolabe. There were also improvements in map-making, which made maps and naval charts more detailed and reliable.

Improvements in ship-building also encouraged exploration. From the 1570s, the English began to build larger, longer ships. These new ships were better-suited to long ocean voyages because they were faster, more stable and easier to navigate. They could also carry larger cargoes, which made their journeys more profitable.

### **Rivalry with Spain encouraged Exploration**

- 1) In the 1550s, English international trade was dominated by exports of woollen cloth to Europe. Most exports were traded through Antwerp, which was controlled by the Spanish. As tensions between England and Spain rose (see p.100), it became increasingly difficult for English merchants to trade freely through Antwerp.
- 2) This encouraged English merchants make their international trade more varied. Some looked for new routes into Europe, trading with German towns or through the Baltic. Others began to look further afield, especially to the Americas and Asia (see p.110).
- 3) As the commercial and political rivalry between England and Spain grew, Elizabeth realised that England needed to compete with Spain globally, not just within Europe. She encouraged English merchants to get involved in long-distance trade and privateering (see p.110), and to explore opportunities to establish English colonies in the Americas (see p.111).

Elizabeth encouraged the development of England's international trade by granting some merchants monopolies, which gave them exclusive rights to trade in a particular part of the world. E.g. in 1577 she gave a group of English merchants called the Spanish Company a monopoly on English trade with Spain's colonies, and in 1600 she gave the East India Company a monopoly on trade with Asia (see p.110).

### **No sat-nav? I'd have been lost in Elizabethan England...**

Navigating by the Sun and stars might not sound very advanced compared to modern technology, but don't forget that for the Elizabethans these techniques were at the cutting-edge.





## Exploration and Discovery

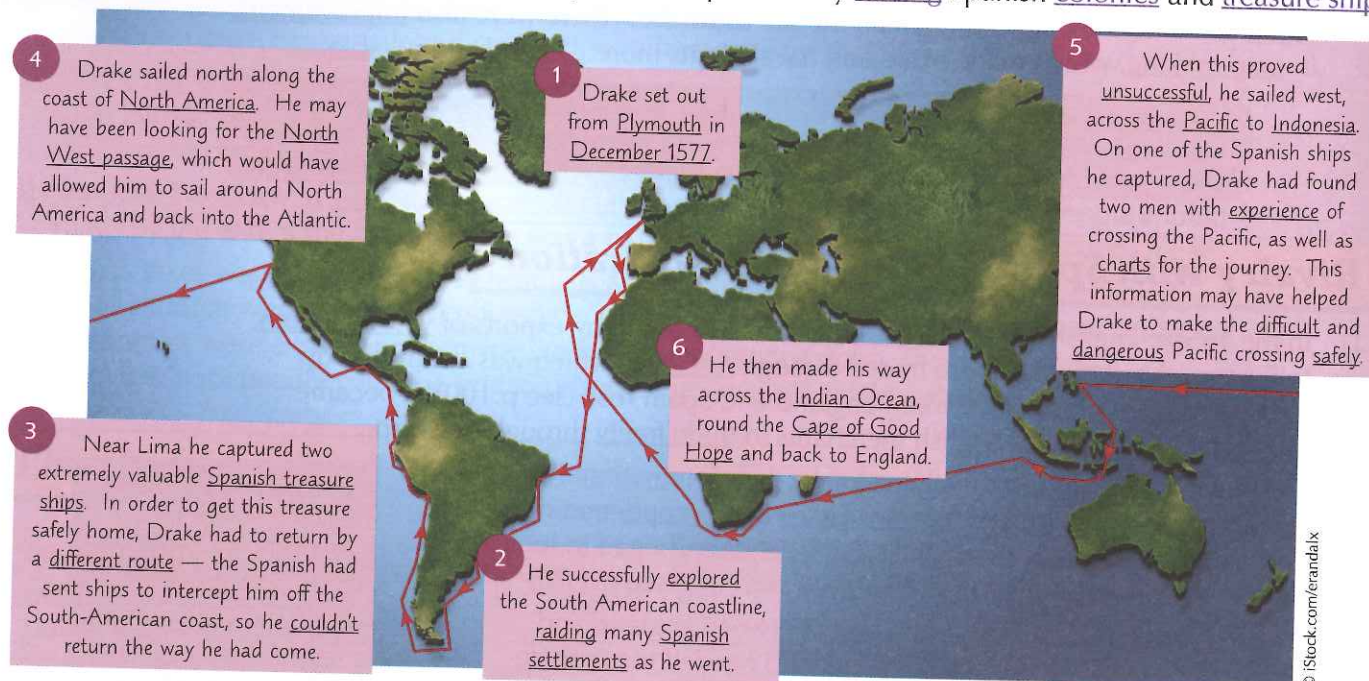
English sailors weren't that interested in voyages of discovery at first, but once they recognised the economic opportunities on offer in the Americas and Asia, there was no stopping them.

### Explorers were Attracted by Economic Opportunities

- 1) Spanish trade with its colonies in the Americas was highly profitable — their treasure ships returned to Europe full of silver and gold. The wealth of the region attracted English sailors who hoped to get rich by trading illegally with Spain's colonies and raiding Spanish settlements and treasure ships. Some also hoped to profit by establishing English colonies in the region.
- 2) English merchants were also keen to develop trade with Asia. Traditionally, trade in Asian luxuries like silk and spices was dominated by merchants from Venice, who kept prices very high.
- 3) From the 1570s, English explorers began to look for new routes to Asia which would enable them to bypass these Venetian middlemen. Some tried to find the so-called North West passage around the top of North America, while others sailed through the Mediterranean and then went overland to India. In 1591, James Lancaster sailed to India around the Cape of Good Hope (the southern tip of Africa).
- 4) Following Lancaster's success, the East India Company was set up in 1600 to trade with Asia. It sponsored successful trading expeditions to the region in 1601 and 1604.

### Francis Drake sailed Around the World

- 1) Between 1577 and 1580, Francis Drake (see p.100) sailed all the way around the world. This was only the second global circumnavigation (journey around the world) and the first by an English sailor.
- 2) Drake probably wasn't trying to sail around the world. It seems that he was sent by Queen Elizabeth to explore the coast of South America, looking for opportunities for English colonisation and trade. He almost certainly planned to make money on the expedition by raiding Spanish colonies and treasure ships.



- 3) On his return to England, Drake was knighthood by Queen Elizabeth aboard his ship, the Golden Hind. This royal recognition and the vast wealth that Drake brought back from the journey encouraged more English sailors to set out on long-distance journeys.

### Circumnavigation — taking the roundabout route...

Why did English sailors get more involved in global exploration during Elizabeth's reign?  
Explain your answer. [12]





## Raleigh and Virginia

In the 1580s, England tried to challenge Spain's dominance as an imperial power by establishing a colony in North America. But creating a permanent settlement turned out to be pretty tricky...

### Walter Raleigh received Permission to Explore and Colonise

- 1) By the early 1580s, England had claimed some territory in North America, but hadn't managed to establish a successful colony yet. During his journey around the world, Drake had claimed New Albion (in California) for England.
- 2) The English also claimed Newfoundland in eastern Canada. In 1583, Sir Humphrey Gilbert set out to establish a colony in Newfoundland, but the expedition failed.
- 3) After Gilbert's failure, Elizabeth gave Walter Raleigh permission to explore and colonise unclaimed territories. She wanted Raleigh to establish a colony on the Atlantic coast of North America.

#### Comment and Analysis

An English colony would challenge Spain's dominance in the Americas and could be used as a base for attacking Spanish treasure ships. It was also hoped that the colony would provide opportunities for trade and be a source of raw materials that might be useful in future wars with Spain.

### Raleigh's attempts to Colonise Virginia were Unsuccessful

- 1) In 1584, Raleigh sent a fact-finding mission to North America. The fleet landed on Roanoke Island, explored the area and returned to England with two Native Americans. They gave a glowing report of the region, which encouraged Raleigh to organise a second expedition.
- 2) The next year, Raleigh sent five ships to Virginia, led by Sir Richard Grenville. 108 settlers (known as planters) tried to establish a permanent colony on Roanoke, while Grenville went back to England for supplies.
- 3) When Francis Drake visited Roanoke in 1586, Grenville still hadn't returned and the planters were running low on supplies. Most of the planters decided to return to England with Drake, although a small group of men were left to maintain the colony.
- 4) A third expedition reached Roanoke in 1587 and found it deserted — it's thought that the men who stayed behind in 1586 were killed by local people. Around 100 planters settled on the island and began to build a colony. They were expecting supplies from England in 1588, but the fleet was delayed by the Spanish Armada (see p.103-104).
- 5) When the supply ships finally reached Roanoke in 1590, all the planters had disappeared. They were never found, and Roanoke soon became known as the 'Lost Colony'.



Raleigh named his colony Virginia after Elizabeth, who was known as the 'Virgin Queen'.

### Several Factors led to the Failure of the Roanoke Colony

#### Bad Timing

If the supply ships hadn't been delayed by the Armada, the Roanoke colony might have survived.

#### Lack of Supplies

The planters didn't take enough supplies with them and found it difficult to grow food on Roanoke. This made them more vulnerable to problems like the delay of the supply ships in 1588.

#### Poor Planning

Establishing a colony thousands of miles from England was a major challenge, which required detailed planning and organisation. However, initial exploration of Roanoke was inadequate and the whole project was poorly organised. This was largely because Raleigh's funds were too limited.

### As Raleigh learned, if you fail to plan, you plan to fail...

Make a timeline of Raleigh's attempts to colonise Virginia. Include all the expeditions to Roanoke Island between 1584 and 1590, and the key events of each expedition.





## Revision Summary

That's the Elizabethans all done and dusted — time to test your knowledge with a quick revision summary.

- Try these questions and tick off each one when you get it right.
- When you've done all the questions for a topic and are completely happy with it, tick off the topic.

### Queen, Government and Religion, 1558-1569 (p.90-96) ☐

- 1) Who were Queen Elizabeth I's parents? ☐
- 2) What was the role of the privy council? ☐
- 3) Describe Queen Elizabeth's character. ☐
- 4) Give three reasons why the threat of invasion by the French had lessened by 1562. ☐
- 5) Write down four key beliefs of the Protestant reformers. ☐
- 6) Name the two Acts of the Elizabethan religious settlement. ☐
- 7) Why did the Puritans oppose the religious settlement? ☐
- 8) Explain what the word 'recusant' means. ☐
- 9) Why did Mary, Queen of Scots, have a strong claim to the English throne? ☐
- 10) What were the 'Casket Letters'? ☐

### Challenges at Home and Abroad, 1569-1588 (p.97-104) ☐

- 11) Give three reasons for the 1569 Revolt of the Northern Earls. ☐
- 12) Name three Catholic plots against Queen Elizabeth. ☐
- 13) Who was Francis Walsingham? ☐
- 14) Why was Queen Elizabeth reluctant to execute Mary, Queen of Scots? ☐
- 15) Why were there growing tensions between England and Spain in the 1570s and 1580s? ☐
- 16) Give four reasons why Dudley's campaign in the Netherlands failed. ☐
- 17) Why did Francis Drake sail to Spain in 1587? ☐
- 18) Explain what the phrase 'the singeing of the King of Spain's beard' means. ☐
- 19) Who led the Spanish Armada? ☐
- 20) How did the English attack the Armada at Calais? ☐
- 21) Write down four reasons why the English navy defeated the Spanish Armada. ☐

### Elizabethan Society in the Age of Exploration, 1558-1588 (p.105-111) ☐

- 22) What was a petty school? ☐
- 23) Give three subjects students studied at university. ☐
- 24) Name three pastimes that were popular at Elizabeth's court. ☐
- 25) Name two theatres that were built in London during Elizabeth's reign. ☐
- 26) Why was the problem of poverty growing in Elizabethan England? ☐
- 27) What were the three categories of poor people in Elizabethan England? ☐
- 28) Give two measures that were introduced by the 1563 Poor Law. ☐
- 29) How did new technology encourage global exploration? ☐
- 30) Explain why Francis Drake sailed across the Pacific. ☐
- 31) Who organised the attempted colonisation of Virginia in the 1580s? ☐
- 32) Why is Roanoke Island known as the 'Lost Colony'? ☐