

Early Elizabethan England, 1558-88

REVISION SHEET

Key Topic 1: Queen, government and religion, 1558-69

Society

Hierarchy in countryside	Hierarchy in towns
1. Nobility	1. Merchants
2. Gentry	2. Professionals
3. Yeomen	3. Business owners
4. Tenant farmers	4. Skilled craftsmen
5. Landless and working poor	5. Unskilled workers
6. Homeless and beggars	6. Unemployed

Government

Court – Noblemen who advised the queen
Parliament – Houses of Lords and Commons. Advised Elizabeth's government
Privy Council – Nobles who helped govern the country

Elizabeth's problems when she became queen in 1558:

- She was **young** and **inexperienced**. She was **Protestant** so not supported by English Catholics. Many people (especially Catholics) thought she was **illegitimate** and had no right to the throne. She was **unmarried**.
- **Financial weaknesses** – The Crown (government) was £300,000 in debt. Mary I had sold off Crown lands (making it hard for Elizabeth to raise money) and borrowed from foreign countries (who charged high interest rates).
- **Challenges from abroad** – France, Spain and Scotland were all Catholic countries and believed Mary, Queen of Scots had a stronger claim to the throne of England than Elizabeth. France and Scotland were old allies.

Elizabeth's character – She was very well **educated**, confident and **charismatic**. She believed in her **divine right** to rule. She had an excellent understanding of politics. She was strong willed and **stubborn**.

Religious Divisions in 1558

Catholic	Protestant	Puritan
Pope is head of the church Priests can forgive sins Bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ Services in Latin Churches highly decorated Catholics were the majority in the north and west of England	No pope Only God can forgive sins Bread and wine represent the body and blood of Christ Services in English Churches should be plain and simple Protestants were the majority in the south-east, East Anglia and London	Very strict Protestants (shared many beliefs but more extreme, e.g. no decoration in churches, no bishops or cardinals) Puritans found in London and East Anglia

The Church of England in society – Enforced the Religious Settlement, gave spiritual and practical advice, preached the government's message. Everyone had to pay a 10% **tithe** (tax) to fund the Church.

Elizabeth's Religious Settlement, 1559

- Aimed to establish a religious form that would be acceptable to Catholics and Protestants.
- The **Act of Uniformity** established the appearance of churches and how services should be conducted.
- The **Act of Supremacy** made Elizabeth the **Supreme Governor** of the Church of England. All clergy had to swear an **oath of allegiance** to her.
- The **Book of Common Prayer** introduced a set of new church services to be used in all churches.
- The **Royal Injunctions** forced all clergy to teach Royal Supremacy, keep an English Bible, report people who refused to attend church.

THE MAJORITY OF ORDINARY PEOPLE AND 8,000 OF THE 10,000 CLERGY ACCEPTED ELIZABETH'S SETTLEMENT

Challenges to the Religious Settlement

Puritan challenge at home (THE PURITAN CHALLENGE WAS VERY SMALL)

Disobeyed parts of the Religious Settlement.

Crucifix Controversy - refused to display crucifixes in churches, which had been ordered by Elizabeth to please the Catholics. Elizabeth backed down.

Vestment Controversy -refused to wear the vestments (special clothing worn by clergy). In 1566, 37 Puritan priests resigned after refusing to wear new vestments when ordered.

Catholic challenge abroad

The Catholic Church in Europe began a '**Counter Reformation**' to undo the Protestant changes.
The pope **excommunicated** Elizabeth in 1570, which could encourage attacks on England from Catholic countries.
Elizabeth backed the Protestants in a religious war in France in 1562.

Catholic challenge at home

One third of the English nobility and gentry, particularly in the north and west of England, were **recusants** (refused to attend church) because they did not agree with the Settlement.
This was encouraged by the pope.
This was a major cause of the Revolt of the Northern Earls (1569-70).

Mary, Queen of Scots. Was a problem to Elizabeth because....

1. She was Elizabeth's second **cousin** so had a good claim to the throne of England
2. She was a **Catholic** so her claim to the throne was supported by many English Catholics
3. She was believed to have been involved in her husband's murder, which led to a rebellion in Scotland. Mary fled to England in 1568. This made her more of a threat to Elizabeth, so she was **imprisoned**.

Key Topic 2: Challenges to Elizabeth at home and abroad, 1569-88

The Revolt of the Northern Earls, 1569-70

Why?

To make England Catholic again
The Earls resented their loss of influence in Elizabeth's court when she appointed 'new men' such as William Cecil and Robert Dudley.
To marry Mary, Queen of Scots to the Duke of Norfolk, depose Elizabeth and make Mary queen.

What happened?

Rebels, led by the Earls of Westmorland and Northumberland, marched to Durham and took control of the cathedral. They then continued south.
BUT support did not arrive from Spain.
Elizabeth moved Mary to Coventry, away from the rebellion.
Many northern landowners stayed loyal to Elizabeth.

Why is this failed rebellion significant?

It showed that Mary, Queen of Scots couldn't be trusted.
It led to Elizabeth's **excommunication** by the pope, which encouraged further plots against Elizabeth.

Further plots against Elizabeth

Ridolfi Plot, 1571

An Italian banker, **Roberto Ridolfi**, who was a spy for the pope, planned to murder Elizabeth, start a Spanish invasion and put **Mary, Queen of Scots** on the throne. Mary would then marry the **Duke of Norfolk**.
Ridolfi travelled to the Netherlands to discuss the plot with **Philip II of Spain** and the Duke of Alba. Philip instructed Alba to gather 10,000 troops for the invasion.
Sir William Cecil discovered the plot and had the Duke of Norfolk tried for treason and executed. Elizabeth would not agree to the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots.
Significant because... it confirmed that Spain, English Catholics and Mary were all still a major threat to Elizabeth.

Throckmorton Plot, 1583

The French **Duke of Guise** plotted to invade England, overthrow Elizabeth and make England Catholic.
Philip II of Spain offered to help pay for the revolt. The **pope** gave his approval. Francis Throckmorton offered to pass letters between the plotters and Mary.
Sir Francis Walsingham (Secretary of State) discovered the plot. Throckmorton was executed.
Significant because... it showed the threat from France and Spain. Elizabeth cracked down on Catholic sympathisers: 11,000 were imprisoned or kept under house arrest.

Babington Plot, 1586

The **Duke of Guise** planned to invade England, murder Elizabeth and put **Mary, Queen of Scots** on the throne. This plot was also supported by **Philip II** and the **pope**.
Walsingham intercepted letters between Mary and Babington which proved her involvement in the plot.
Babington and the other plotters were executed. In October 1586, Mary was sentenced to death. Elizabeth signed Mary's death warrant in February 1587.
Significant because... it led to the **execution of Mary, Queen of Scots**. Persecution of Catholics intensified.

Francis Walsingham and the use of spies

Walsingham was Elizabeth's Secretary of State or 'spy master'. He used a network of spies and informants in every town and city in England, as well as abroad. He used ciphers (codes) for all his correspondences. He used torture and execution to deter people from committing crimes against Elizabeth.

Why was Mary, Queen of Scots executed in 1587?

- Walsingham's evidence proved that she had been involved in the Revolt of the Northern Earls and the plots against Elizabeth.
- The Spanish support for the attempts to put Mary on the throne threatened England's security.
- Her claim to the English throne gave Catholics an alternative monarch to Elizabeth, especially once the pope had excommunicated Elizabeth.

Relations with Spain

Political and religious rivalry Spain=Catholic, England=Protestant - saw each other as a threat. Philip II had been involved in the plots against Elizabeth. Many in Elizabeth's government were angry at Spain's persecution of Protestants in the Netherlands and encouraged Elizabeth to get involved. She secretly provided money to the rebels fighting against Spain and encouraged English privateers to attack Spanish ships. After the Spanish Fury , when unpaid Spanish troops looted the town of Antwerp, 17 Dutch provinces joined an alliance against the Spanish (the Pacification of Ghent) calling for Spanish troops to leave the Netherlands. By late 1584, Spain had largely re-established control of the Netherlands but blamed England for supporting the rebels and for privateers attacking Spanish ships.	Commercial rivalry England and Spain were rivals for trade and resources from the New World, Turkey, China, Russia and North Africa. English traders resented Spanish control of the trade routes into parts of Europe and that traders to the New World had to have a licence from Spain. English privateers (financed by investors including Elizabeth) raided Spanish colonies and ships. Between 1577 and 1580 Sir Francis Drake captured £400,000 of Spanish silver and gold. English sailors often attacked Spanish ships travelling to the Netherlands. By 1580, loss of silver meant that the Spanish government couldn't afford to pay its troops in the Netherlands. Elizabeth knighted Francis Drake, showing her support for his actions against Spanish ships. This angered Philip further.
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War with Spain

- In 1585 England signed the **Treaty of Nonsuch** with the Dutch Protestant rebels. This said that England would pay for 7400 soldiers, led by Robert Dudley, to fight with the Dutch rebels against the Spanish. This gave Philip a justification for raising an Armada to attack England.
- In April 1587, Francis Drake attacked the Spanish navy in port at Cadiz, under Elizabeth's orders. 30 ships and the majority of their supplies were destroyed. This attack became known as '**singeing the King of Spain's beard**'. It took Spain a year to rebuild the fleet.
- In 1588 Philip ordered an Armada of 130 ships to sail to the Netherlands, collect 27,000 troops under the command of the Duke of Parma, transport them to England and attack London.

Why did the Spanish Armada fail?

- English ships were better armed and equipped (e.g. cannons could be reloaded and fired more quickly).
- Drake used fireships at the Battle of Gravelines, causing many Spanish ships to cut their anchors and drift in to the North Sea. English tactics were superior.
- Gale force winds destroyed many Spanish ships.
- Spanish ships lacked food and supplies.
- The Duke of Parma and the Duke of Medina Sidonia (commanding the Armada) were unable to communicate.

Consequences: The victory enhanced Elizabeth's authority in England and abroad. Many saw it as a victory for Protestantism. The defeat of the Spanish led to a gradual decline of the Spanish Empire.

Key Topic 3: Elizabethan society in the Age of Exploration, 1558-88

Education: the purpose of education was to prepare people for their expected roles in life. Only 15-20% of the population could read and write. Very few went to school. BUT attitudes were changing: growth in trade and Protestantism increased the need for people to be able to read and write. The printing press made books cheaper.

Schools: **Parish/Petty schools** (taught basic literacy to children of yeomen and craftsmen); **Grammar schools** (for ages 10-14. Fee paying but scholarships available for boys from poorer families); **Public schools** such as Eton and Winchester, **Universities** (Oxford and Cambridge) and **Private tutors** (richer boys and girls taught at home).

Sports and Pastimes

Nobility: Hunting, hawking, fishing, real tennis, bowls, fencing, baiting, cock fighting, dancing and music.

Farmers, craftsmen and lower orders: Football, wrestling, bull and bear baiting, cock fighting, dancing and music.

Theatre - was very popular during Elizabeth's reign and many new plays were written. New theatres such as the Globe and the Rose were purpose-built. Many wealthy patrons, including the queen, sponsored groups of professional actors (e.g. Leicester's Men were sponsored by the Earl of Leicester).

Reasons for an increase in poverty in Elizabethan England

- Population growth (1551 = 3 million, 1601 = 4.2 million) increased demand for food, housing and land.
- Bad harvests (1562, 1565, 1573 and 1586) reduced food supplies and drove up prices.
- Enclosure drove many people off their lands. They became **vagrants/vagabonds**.
- Economic recession caused by trade embargos (e.g. imposed by Spain) caused unemployment.

Attitudes and policies towards the poor

Many believed that poverty led to social disorder, while the poor became an increasingly visible presence in towns and cities. Elizabethans distinguished between the **deserving poor** (who couldn't help themselves) and the **idle poor** (who chose not to work). Charity and **Poor Rates** were raised at a local level to help the **deserving poor**. The **Statute of Artifices 1563** (punishing those who refused to pay poor rates), **1576 Poor Relief Act** and the **1572 Vagabonds Act** (punishing those guilty of vagrancy) were government attempts to deal with the problem of the poor.

Reasons for exploration during the Elizabethan age

- Expanding trade routes (especially the Trade Triangle) and markets for products, especially the New World.
- Improvements in ship design (bigger sails, faster and more manoeuvrable), maps and new technology (development of quadrants and astrolabes made voyages faster and more direct).
- Men such as Francis Drake sought adventure and to discover or explore new lands.

Drake's circumnavigation of the globe, Dec 1577 – Sept 1580. Increased England's reputation as a great sea-faring nation, encouraged further exploration and increased trade. BUT contributed to declining relations with Spain.

Colonisation of Virginia

1. Expedition of 1584-5 was organised by Sir Walter Raleigh (he raised the money but didn't travel with them).
2. 107 colonists (mainly soldiers and sailors, but a few craftsmen and farmers too), led by Richard Grenville, set out for Roanoke, Virginia.
3. Went to Virginia because the native people were thought to be friendly; they wanted a base to attack Spanish settlements, they hoped to establish trade with native people and planned to ship resources back to Europe.
4. The colony **failed** because: Lack of food (arrived too late to plant crops, food damaged on the voyage); poor leadership (Grenville and Raleigh did not get on); lack of experience and skill (e.g. lack of stonemasons or enough men used to the physical work needed); attacks from Native Americans (angered by the diseases the colonists had brought with them and the demands for food) and war with Spain (few ships were available to resupply the colony).