

Queen Elizabeth I

Queen Elizabeth I is one of England's most famous monarchs. She was the last of the five monarchs in the House of Tudor.

Early Life

Elizabeth was born at Greenwich Palace in London in 1533. She was the daughter of King Henry VIII and his second wife, Anne Boleyn. Henry had been desperate for a son to be king after him and was disappointed when Anne had a daughter. In 1536, Anne was arrested for treason and was beheaded.



After her mother's execution, Elizabeth was removed from the line of succession. Despite this, she was well educated and by the end of her education in 1550, Elizabeth was said to be fluent in Latin, Italian, Welsh, Irish and many other languages. Elizabeth was also raised as a Protestant in order to honour her mother's faith.



Life as Princess

Towards the end of Henry VIII's life, Elizabeth and her older sister, Mary, were restored to the line of succession. After her father's death in 1547, Elizabeth's brother, Edward, became king and Elizabeth went to live with her father's sixth wife, Catherine Parr, for a while. While she was there, rumours grew of a relationship between the princess and Catherine's new husband, Thomas Seymour, and she was sent back to live at the royal estate at Hatfield.

After Edward's death in 1553, Elizabeth's half-sister, Mary, became queen. In 1554, a plot was discovered to replace the Catholic queen Mary with Elizabeth. The conspirators were arrested and many were executed. Elizabeth, who had denied any knowledge of the plot, was also arrested but was released shortly after and she returned to Hatfield, where she remained until her sister's death on 17th November 1558.

The Virgin Queen

After Mary's death, Elizabeth was crowned Queen of England at the age of 25. The people welcomed their new queen, although they were concerned about trouble with Catholics.

Throughout her reign, Elizabeth was regularly asked to choose a suitor to marry, though Elizabeth felt a marriage would lessen her power as queen as it had done when her sister Mary had married her husband, King Phillip II of Spain. She continued to consider marriage for many years but by 1570, her government had accepted that Elizabeth would not marry. Because she never married or had children, Elizabeth is often referred to as 'The Virgin Queen'.



A Golden Age

Elizabeth's reign is said to have been the 'Golden Age'. England grew wealthier and more powerful in a time of peace and William Shakespeare wrote his famous plays making the country a cultural centre of Europe. England was also seen as a rising power on the seas, with English sailors such as Sir Francis Drake and Sir Walter Raleigh exploring the New World.

It was not all happy times during Elizabeth's reign, however. In 1588, King Phillip II of Spain ordered a fleet of 130 warships to invade England and restore it to the Catholic faith. This is known as the Spanish Armada. The ships were defeated by the English fleet, which engaged the Spanish in battle in order to use up their ammunition and sent ships full of gunpowder into their fleet to explode. After this and having being damaged by storms, the Spanish fleet retreated. They had lost over half their ships and over 20,000 men. The victory over the Armada was seen as God's approval for England being Protestant.

Later Life

As she grew older, Elizabeth was becoming more conscious of her image after catching smallpox in 1562, leaving her half bald and her skin scarred. She wore wigs and heavy make-up in a hope to appear more youthful. Elizabeth stayed healthy until the autumn of 1602, when she fell sick and began to keep more to herself.

She died on 24th March 1603 at the age of 69. After her death, King James VI of Scotland was crowned King James I of England, uniting both countries.

Queen Elizabeth I - Questions

1. Where was Elizabeth born?

2. Fill in the missing words.

Henry had been _____ for a _____ to be king after him and was _____ when Anne had a _____.

3. Which monarch reigned before Elizabeth?

4. When was Elizabeth crowned queen? Tick **one**.

☐ 1558

☐ 1588

☐ 1554

☐ 1547

5. Why was Elizabeth arrested in 1554?

6. Which of these people were explorers during Elizabeth's reign? Tick **two**.

☐ Phillip II of Spain

☐ Sir Walter Raleigh

☐ Sir Francis Drake

☐ Thomas Seymour

7. Why did Elizabeth choose not to marry? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

8. The text says that people saw England's victory over the Armada as God's approval for England being Protestant. Why do you think they thought this?

9. Do you think Elizabeth was intelligent? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.
