Elizabethan Society

Education

Most children were given a basic education at home which included behaviour, and religion. From a young age, boys were taught basic work skills, whilst girls learnt household activities. At the age of 6, they went to Sunday school, where they learnt the 10 commandments and the lord’s prayer.

Petty Schools were small local schools run by the local priest. They would teach reading, writing and maths. There was not a set curriculum, but most lessons had a religious focus. These schools did not have books, they mainly used the hornbook – a wooden board with the alphabet and the lord’s prayer. Students were mostly boys, and would stay there until they could read and write.

Grammar schools were private schools which were expensive to go to. Some schools offered free places for bright boys from poor backgrounds. However, most parents needed their children to work at home, rather than continue education. Grammar school started at age 7, with lessons focusing on Latin, and classic literature.

Some boys went on to one of the two universities in England – Oxford and Cambridge. University courses were almost entirely in Latin. Students would study written and spoken Latin, before moving on to study arithmetic, music, Greek, astronomy, ect.

Sports and Pastime

The nobles and gentry of Elizabeth’s court often participated in her favourite sports, including hunting, tennis bowls and hawking. These sports required expensive equipment, so were only played by the rich.

Ordinary people worked Monday-Saturday, and went to church on Sunday, which meant that they had little time for activities. However, there were occasional festival days, when people would have the day off. Football was popular, and often played between two villages. There could be an unlimited number of players, and few rules, meaning that these games often descended into fights. Blood sports such as bull or bear baiting was very popular, and people would often gamble on the winner of the fight.

Theatre also became quite popular in later Elizabethan England. There were no permanent theatres, instead traveling companies would perform in village squares and inns. The theatre was affordable for both the rich and the poor. Later on, theatres were built in London. The poor would stand around the stage in ‘the pits’, whereas the rich would sit in the covered ‘galleries. Elizabeth enjoyed plays, and would often have them performed in her court, and even created here own travelling theatre company, ‘The Queen’s Men”.

Poverty

Exploration and Discovery

Raleigh and Virginia