

LEVELED Book • Z

# Queen Elizabeth I



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## Focus Question

Why is Queen Elizabeth I considered one of the greatest British monarchs?

## Words to Know

alliances  
annul  
armada  
captivating  
depose  
executed

heretics  
maneuverable  
plundering  
reign  
succession  
treason

Front cover: Queen Elizabeth I in a dress she wore to return thanks after England defeated the Spanish Armada in 1588

Title page: Elizabeth I entering London on horseback on the day of her coronation in 1588

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World Leaders  
Level Z Leveled Book  
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**Correlation**

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## England, Ireland, and Scotland, 1500s



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## Elizabeth's World

Elizabeth Tudor was perhaps the greatest English monarch of all time. In order to understand her, we need to know about her family.

Elizabeth's father—Henry VIII—was the king of England. Before Elizabeth was born, he married Catherine of Aragon and had a daughter, Mary. But Henry wanted a son, and while still married to Catherine, he fell in love with Anne Boleyn and wanted to marry her.

Henry asked the pope—the leader of the Catholic Church—to **annul** his marriage to Catherine. The pope refused to grant Henry's wishes.

Henry formed a separate church and established himself as its supreme ruler on Earth. He called the new church the Church of England. Then, he declared his first marriage invalid.

Free from the pope's rule, Henry secretly married Anne who became the queen of England.



## Young Elizabeth

Elizabeth Tudor was born on September 7, 1533, in Greenwich, England. Henry had affection for Elizabeth and favored her over Mary, but desperately wanted a son to inherit his throne.

Henry began to lose interest in Anne Boleyn when it seemed that she, too, would not be able to give him a son.

Henry eventually accused Anne of **treason** and had her **executed**. He declared that their marriage was invalid and their daughter, Elizabeth, was illegitimate—or a child born to unwed parents. It meant Elizabeth could not be heir to his throne.

In 1537, Jane Seymour—Henry's third wife—gave birth to the son Henry desired. He was named Prince Edward. Jane, already weak and exhausted, contracted a high fever and died shortly after giving birth.

In the meantime, Elizabeth had begun her education in earnest. Private tutors educated her in math, history, geography, architecture, and needlework. She also learned to speak and write in fluent French, Italian, Greek, and Latin.



An excellent student, Elizabeth's tutors regarded her highly. Elizabeth was an intelligent girl who relished her schoolwork. She had a witty and **captivating** personality, and she charmed everyone who met her.

In her free time, Elizabeth enjoyed riding horses, dancing, and playing the lute. Although she rarely saw her father, she was often in the company of her older sister and younger brother.

Henry married three more times, but none of these marriages produced another child. Henry's sixth and final marriage, in 1543, was to Catherine Parr. She strongly encouraged Henry to establish a line of **succession**.



A portrait of the Tudor family includes (from left to right) Lady Mary, Prince Edward, Henry VIII, Jane Seymour, and Lady Elizabeth.

## Mary and Elizabeth

At Catherine's urging, Henry reinstated Mary and Elizabeth as heirs to his throne. Their brother, Edward, however, was first in line.

Henry VIII died in 1547, and Prince Edward became king at nine years of age. Under his rule, the Church of England leaned more toward a new kind of Christianity called Protestantism. However, his **reign** was short. In 1553, Edward died and Mary, Elizabeth's older half sister, became queen.

Mary—the daughter of Henry and his first wife, Catherine—was Catholic and believed strongly in the faith. A growing number of people were turning to Protestantism. Mary's goal as monarch was to end all Protestant practices.

Mary thought that people who did not follow the Catholic teachings were **heretics**. During her reign, she ordered executions of about three hundred people convicted of being against the Catholic Church. This earned her the nickname "Bloody Mary."

Elizabeth had been raised a Protestant and strongly valued her faith. However, she did not trust Mary and thought that she needed to appear to be Catholic. In order to save her life, she attended mass openly and studied the Catholic religion.



Artwork shows the Tower of London as it appeared in the sixteenth century. People were sent to the tower to be imprisoned. Many were tortured or killed.

Despite Elizabeth's actions, Mary believed Elizabeth was practicing the Protestant faith in secret. When people attempted to overthrow Mary, she thought that Elizabeth was behind it. She had her arrested and sent to the Tower of London. Although Elizabeth professed her innocence, she was kept there for two months until she was released and placed under house arrest for a year.

Mary married Prince Philip of Spain and had hoped to produce an heir. She wanted to keep England Catholic and prevent her sister Elizabeth from succeeding to the throne. Mary had no children. She had to accept that Elizabeth—next in line for the throne—would be her lawful successor.

Mary died from an illness in 1558, and Elizabeth was crowned queen on January 15, 1559.

## Early Challenges

Elizabeth was twenty-five years old. Although she quickly established herself as a Protestant monarch, she was tolerant of Catholics.

From the beginning of Elizabeth's reign, some of her advisors tried to find her a suitable husband. A marriage for Elizabeth would mean England could create new **alliances** with other countries. Also, if Elizabeth had a child, England would be assured an heir to the throne.

However, Elizabeth knew that if she married a foreign king, England might fall under another country's rule. If she married a fellow Englishman she would be marrying beneath her royal status. She also might lose power as queen. She received many proposals and rejected all of them.

### Elizabeth's Fashion

Elizabeth had fair skin and hair. People considered her beautiful in Tudor England.

When Elizabeth became queen, she began to dress very elaborately, favoring bright oranges and reds accented with jewels. She exuded power and authority.

Elizabeth I in her coronation robes



Elizabeth had more urgent concerns. Early in Elizabeth's reign, Europe was split by the Catholic and Protestant religions. Elizabeth was focused on stopping the Catholic nations of Spain and France from invading England to defeat Protestantism or becoming an ally of her enemy and neighbor to the north—Scotland.

Mary, Queen of Scots, Elizabeth's cousin, was the Catholic queen of Scotland. Mary posed a grave threat to Elizabeth. Many Catholics in England tried to **depose** Elizabeth to allow Mary to ascend to the English throne and restore Catholicism. Some threats were linked to Mary. When Mary came to England, Elizabeth had her imprisoned for nineteen years.

In 1586, Elizabeth's patience was at an end. When she learned that Mary was involved in yet another plot to assassinate her, she had Mary tried for treason.

A court found Mary guilty of plotting against Elizabeth. She was executed on February 8, 1587.

Mary was imprisoned by Elizabeth for nineteen years before her execution at the age of forty-four.



## A Spanish Threat

King Philip II of Spain, a Catholic, had been planning to invade England before Elizabeth had Mary, Queen of Scots executed. Mary's death convinced him that Elizabeth should be overthrown. He wanted the Catholic faith to be brought back to England.

Up to this point explorer Sir Francis Drake, with the support of Elizabeth, had been angering Philip with his **plundering** of Spanish ships as they returned from newly discovered territories in the Americas. Drake would order his seamen to raid the Spanish ships and take large amounts of gold and silver they were carrying back to Spain.

In 1587, Drake sailed into Cadiz Harbor, Spain, and destroyed many of the Spanish ships at anchor. After this setback, Philip got ready to attack England and overthrow Elizabeth.

In 1588, Philip ordered the Spanish **Armada** to set sail with the intention of invading England. Philip also had a force of about seventeen thousand ground troops in the Netherlands. These troops were now under Spanish rule and supported Philip's Armada. However, they were not ready for the invasion.

The English were superior seamen and had ships that were more **maneuverable**. They were able to scatter the Spanish ships and force them into the North Sea. In addition, the winds were not in the Spanish ships' favor as they sailed north, and the weather slowly defeated them. Elizabeth's troops had triumphed, and she had survived another challenge to her crown.



## Elizabethan Age

Elizabeth had developed a strong government and a powerful navy. Wanting to bring expansion and wealth to her beloved country, she encouraged exploration of new places and trade with foreign countries. Trade of such goods as silk, food, and spices, greatly helped England's economy.

Elizabeth believed strongly in supporting the arts. During her reign, she encouraged growth in the areas of music, art, and literature. Musicians, poets, writers, and other artists were always welcome in her court.

By 1590, the arts in England were flourishing. William Shakespeare, arguably the greatest playwright of all time, became very popular during Elizabeth's reign and often brought his troupe of actors to perform in her court.

England was set to become a global empire and the Elizabethan Age came to be known as the "Golden Age" in English history. As a result, England became one of the most important countries in the world.

Queen Elizabeth I knights English explorer Sir Francis Drake for his achievements in exploration.



## Elizabeth's Last Years

During her rule, Elizabeth eased the religious arguments that had torn apart her country. Protestantism was quietly established as the official religion of England. Great strides were made in education and the arts, which she firmly supported. Additionally, more people than ever before learned to read and write.

When Elizabeth died in 1603, she had reigned for forty-four years. She had named James VI, the son of Mary, Queen of Scots as her successor—bringing together England and Scotland.

Elizabeth was highly educated and a keen observer of human nature. During her reign, she proved to her allies and enemies alike that a woman could be an effective and successful monarch and ruler. As a result, the English loved and respected her. They would forever remember their queen.

Elizabeth I was the last monarch of the Tudor family. They had ruled England since 1485.



## Queen Elizabeth I

1533: Elizabeth born to Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn

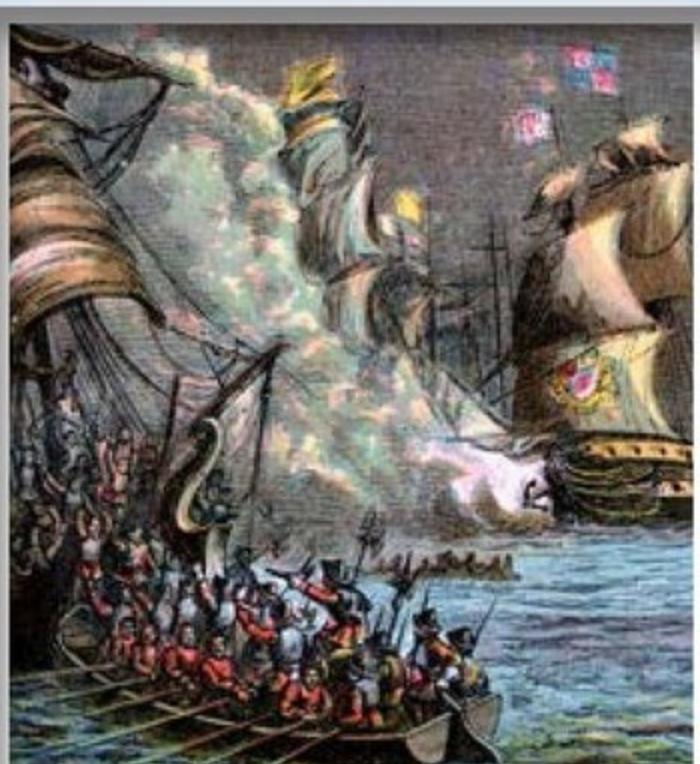
1536: Anne Boleyn executed

1547: Henry VIII dies; Edward becomes king

1553: Mary crowned queen on October 1

1554: Mary orders Elizabeth imprisoned

1563: Elizabeth is defeated in the French Civil War



1588: Elizabeth defeats the Spanish Armada

1590: The arts begin to flourish due in large part to Elizabeth's support

1530  
1540  
1550  
1560  
1570  
1580  
1590  
1600  
1610



1544: Order of succession for the throne is established

1553: King Edward VI dies on July 6

1558: Mary dies; Elizabeth becomes queen



1587: Mary, Queen of Scots executed

1603: Elizabeth dies on March 24; James I becomes king of England and Scotland, uniting the two countries

## Glossary

<b>alliances</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	close associations between countries or other groups who work together (p. 9)
<b>annul</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	to officially end something; to declare something legally invalid (p. 4)
<b>armada</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a large fleet of boats, usually warships (p. 11)
<b>captivating</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	attractive and charming; able to hold the attention and interest of others (p. 6)
<b>depose</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	to suddenly remove a leader or authority figure from power (p. 10)
<b>executed</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	killed, especially as punishment for committing a crime (p. 5)
<b>heretics</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	those who go against official or accepted beliefs or practices (p. 7)
<b>maneuverable</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	able to move or change direction quickly and easily (p. 12)
<b>plundering</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	stealing everything of value using force (p. 11)
<b>reign</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	the period of time during which a single ruler is in power (p. 7)
<b>succession</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	the order in which or the process by which people inherit a position of power (p. 6)
<b>treason</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a crime of betrayal or disloyalty against one's government or ruler (p. 5)

# Queen Elizabeth I

*A Reading A-Z Level Z Leveled Book*

*Word Count: 1,486*

## Connections

### Writing

What do you consider to be Elizabeth's greatest accomplishment as queen? Why? Write an essay explaining your answer using facts from the book and outside resources.

### Social Studies

Using a Venn diagram, compare and contrast Queen Mary I and Queen Elizabeth I. Summarize this information in a paragraph.

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