

# Queen Elizabeth I

A Reading A-Z Level Z2 Leveled Book  
Word Count: 2,183

LEVELED BOOK • Z<sup>2</sup>

## Connections

### Writing

What were Elizabeth's most important accomplishments during her reign? What were the most challenging events she endured? Write an essay explaining your answer using facts from the book and outside resources.

### Social Studies

Research to learn more about the similarities and differences between the Church of England and the Catholic Church. Write an essay comparing and contrasting these two churches.

# Queen Elizabeth I



Written by Martina Deignan

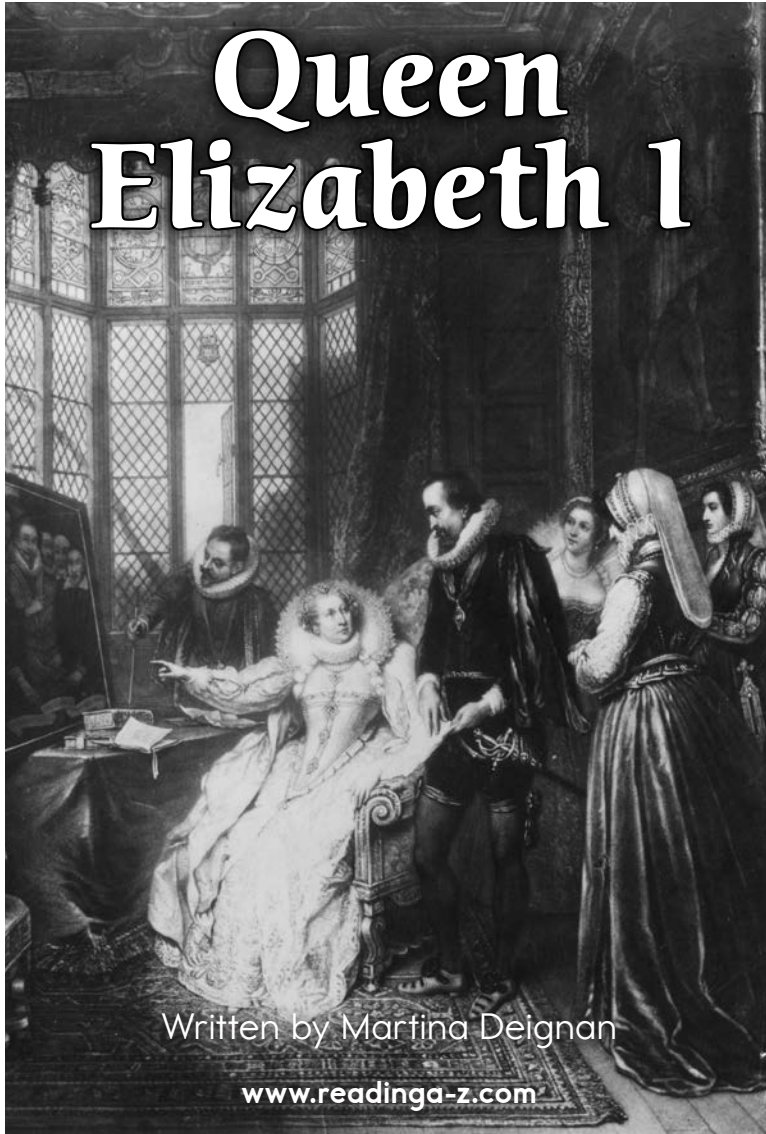
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## Focus Question

How did Queen Elizabeth I strengthen England and help it become a global empire?

## Words to Know

abdicate	conspired
alleviate	depose
ambassador	heretics
annul	illegitimate
armada	plundering
commerce	succession

Front cover: Artwork shows Queen Elizabeth I during a knighting ceremony for Sir Walter Raleigh.

Title page: Elizabeth meets with her Secretary of State in 1586.

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### Correlation

#### LEVEL Z2

Fountas & Pinnell	Y-Z
Reading Recovery	N/A
DRA	70+



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## The Tudor Family

Considered by many to be the greatest monarch in English history, Elizabeth Tudor came from a complex background. Long before Elizabeth was born, her father, King Henry VIII, the ruling monarch of England, married Catherine of Aragon. They had a daughter, Mary, who was first in line to inherit his throne. Henry, however, wanted a male to succeed him, and he was disappointed when the sons Catherine gave birth to died.

A few years later, Henry met Anne Boleyn, who had come to his court as a lady-in-waiting. Henry wanted to marry Anne.

Determined to end his marriage to Catherine, Henry petitioned Pope Clement VII—the leader

of the Roman Catholic Church—to **annul** the marriage. The pope refused to grant Henry’s request, which enraged him.

He broke away from the church and appointed himself the supreme ruler of a new one: the Church of England. Henry then married Anne Boleyn in secret and had his marriage to Catherine annulled by the Church of England’s religious leader, the archbishop of Canterbury. This happened while England was already divided between Catholicism and Protestantism.

One day, as queen, Elizabeth would face great challenges due to her father’s actions.



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

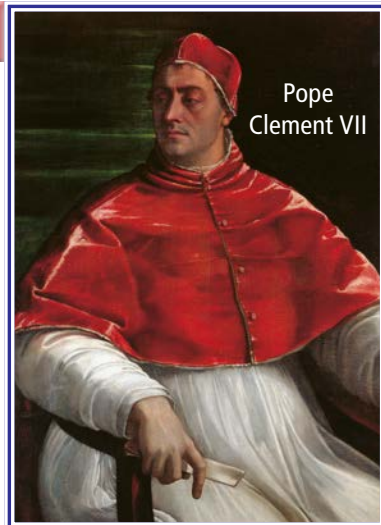
### The Making of a Queen

Elizabeth was born on September 7, 1533, to Henry and his newly crowned queen, Anne Boleyn. Even though her father was the powerful ruling monarch, no one imagined Elizabeth would rule England.

After Elizabeth’s birth, Henry felt that Anne had failed him by not delivering a son. In 1536, Henry accused Anne of treason and had her executed. He declared Elizabeth **illegitimate**, even though he had been married to her mother when she was born. The government declared the marriage invalid from the start, which meant Elizabeth was removed from her place in line for the throne. Henry married Jane Seymour who gave birth to Prince Edward—the son and heir he desperately wanted. Jane died shortly after Edward’s birth, and Henry went on a search for another wife—his fourth.

### The Reformation

In the 1500s, many people in Europe were questioning the practices of the Roman Catholic Church. This period became known as the Reformation, which led to a new form of Christianity and the establishment of Protestant churches. Under Henry VIII, the Church of England followed Catholic practices but did not support the authority of the pope.





Henry's remarriage did not mean Elizabeth was neglected. She received a thorough education 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. In her free time, she enjoyed riding horses, dancing, and playing the lute. She rarely saw her father, but sometimes lived in the company of her sister and brother.

Henry married three more times, but none of these marriages produced another child. His sixth and final marriage in 1543 was to Catherine Parr, who encouraged Henry to establish a clear line of **succession**. Henry reinstated Mary and Elizabeth as the second and third heirs to his throne after their brother, Edward.

Henry VIII died in 1547, and Prince Edward became king at nine years of age. During his reign, the Church of England adopted more Protestant ways. Just six years after he was crowned, Edward died and Mary became queen.

Mary, whose mother had been Catholic, believed strongly in the Catholic faith and wanted to end all Protestant practices. She thought people who did not follow Catholic teachings were

**heretics** and ordered the deaths of hundreds, earning her the nickname "Bloody Mary."

Although Elizabeth valued her Protestant religion, she attended mass and studied the Catholic faith. She believed this would help save her life and keep her in Mary's good favor.

Mary suspected Elizabeth secretly practiced the Protestant faith and **conspired** against her. When people rebelled and tried to dethrone her, Mary thought that Elizabeth was behind it. Mary had her arrested and imprisoned in the Tower of London. Elizabeth professed her innocence, but Mary ordered her kept in the tower for two months and then held under house arrest for nearly a year.

Mary died from an illness in 1558, and Elizabeth, next in line for the throne, was crowned queen at the age of twenty-five on January 15, 1559. Her years of rejection and imprisonment were finally over. She quickly established herself as a Protestant monarch, but she was tolerant of those who disagreed with her religious beliefs.

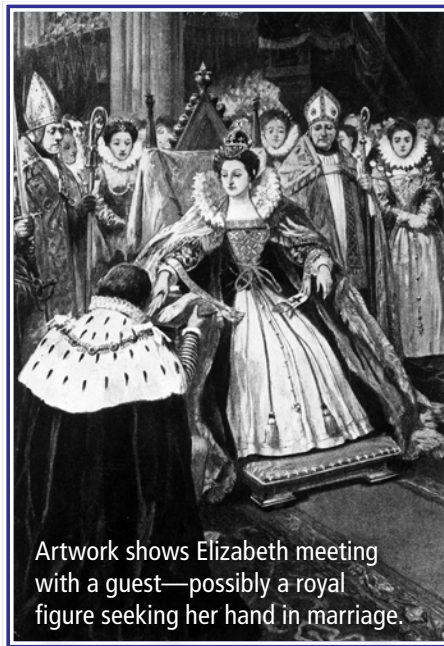
Elizabeth employed Catholic and Protestant advisors and tried to find a middle ground between them. She was not always successful and was criticized by both sides. Some Protestants thought she was too lenient with Catholics,

and some Catholics called her a heretic for turning her back on the faith.

In spite of these difficulties, Elizabeth was hardworking and possessed a great deal of personal charm. She brought music and art back into the court, in stark contrast to the brutal and violent years of Mary's rule. Those around Elizabeth respected her intelligence and wit.

From the beginning of Elizabeth's reign, her marriage prospects were a matter of great interest to the people in her court and the general public. A good match would mean England could create new alliances with other countries and would ideally provide an heir.

However, Elizabeth knew that marriage might threaten her power as queen. She also knew that if she married a foreign king, England could fall under another country's rule. She received many proposals and rejected all of them.



Artwork shows Elizabeth meeting with a guest—possibly a royal figure seeking her hand in marriage.

## Battles Near and Far

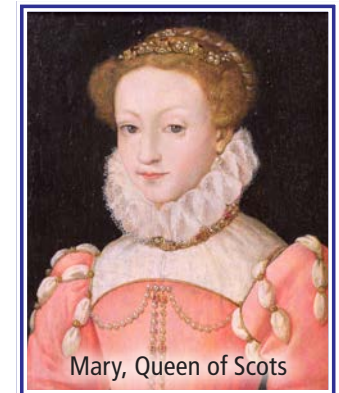
### *The French Civil War*

Elizabeth had become a strong and powerful ruler in Protestant England, but in sixteenth-century France, the majority of the population was Catholic. French Protestants, known as Huguenots (HYOO-guh-nots), began to think they could overpower the Catholic rulers who had become their constant enemies. In 1561, Elizabeth sent an **ambassador** to France to persuade the French monarchy to transition the country over to the Protestant faith.

In 1562, war broke out between the Catholics and Huguenots. Elizabeth sent six thousand English soldiers to France to help in the fighting, but the Catholics proved a stronger force. Elizabeth evacuated the remaining English troops and acknowledged defeat. Protestants across Europe were demoralized.

### *Mary, Queen of Scots*

During the unrest in France, Elizabeth focused on trying to block France from becoming an ally of Scotland—England's neighbor to the north and an old enemy.



Mary, Queen of Scots

Mary, Queen of Scots, the Catholic queen of Scotland, as the grandniece of Elizabeth's father, was Elizabeth's cousin. Mary and many Catholics did not acknowledge Elizabeth as the rightful heir. They did not recognize the marriage of her mother to Henry VIII and deemed Elizabeth illegitimate.

Over the course of many years, different Catholic groups plotted to **depose** and kill Elizabeth so that Mary could take the throne. Some plots were linked to Mary. Elizabeth and Mary's relationship was always strained. Eventually, Mary was forced to **abdicate** the throne in favor of her son. She fled Scotland's political unrest for England, where Elizabeth had Mary imprisoned for nineteen years.

In 1586, Elizabeth learned of yet another plot to assassinate her. Elizabeth realized she must take action or threats to her rule would continue. Mary was arrested and found guilty of treason. Elizabeth reluctantly signed her death warrant. Mary was executed on February 8, 1587.

### *The Spanish Armada*

Elizabeth faced another challenge—this time from Spain. King Philip II, a Catholic, had been planning to invade England before Mary's death, but after she was executed, he was ready to attack.

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. Drake's strike was preemptive; it was designed to loot Spanish ships and weaken Spanish morale. Philip became convinced that he should do everything in his power to overthrow Elizabeth.

England readied itself for war, and the Spanish **Armada** set sail. Philip's plan was to sail to the Netherlands—now under Spanish control—to join a force of about seventeen thousand Spanish soldiers who were waiting to invade England.

However, the English were excellent seamen and had better, faster ships and powerful weapons. The weather was horrible and the seas were rough. The Spanish Armada sustained heavy damages in the battle and was forced to retreat northward to sail the extremely difficult waters around Scotland and Ireland.

## Route of the Spanish Armada, 1588



Many of the Spanish ships crashed along the rocky coastlines, and thousands of sailors lost their lives. By the time they struggled home to Spain, only half of the ships and seamen remained. England celebrated its defeat of the armada, and Elizabeth survived another challenge to her rule.

## Elizabeth's Later Years

After its victory over the Spanish Armada, England struggled with the costs of war. People were experiencing debt, failed harvests, epidemics, and worry over who would succeed their unmarried queen.

Elizabeth encouraged global exploration and enlisted explorers to go to the New World and beyond. As more goods were transported to Europe from around the world, she took the opportunity to improve **commerce** for England and **alleviate** debt by encouraging global trade in commodities such as silk, food, and spices. As a result, while there were people living in poverty, there was also a growing merchant class that was becoming prosperous.

Also during Elizabeth's reign, due to improvements in printing presses and partly to Elizabeth's love of literature and her encouragement of such endeavors, there was a tremendous growth in education. This led to a substantial increase in the number of people who

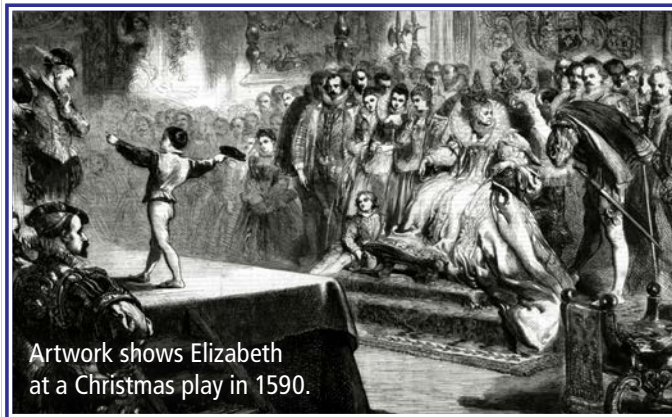




could read among middle and lower classes. There was a growing sense of national pride. A majority of Elizabeth's subjects loved and respected her.

Elizabeth was well educated and believed strongly in supporting the arts. During her reign, she continued to support growth in the areas of music, art, and literature. Painters, poets, writers, and 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 immensely popular during Elizabeth's reign and often brought his plays and troupe of actors to her court. Some of his plays reflected the events occurring in England at the time, and some were comedies that Elizabeth particularly enjoyed. She also loved Shakespeare's sonnets and became his enthusiastic royal patron as well as a great admirer of his work.



Artwork shows Elizabeth at a Christmas play in 1590.

## The End of an Era

In the last years of Elizabeth's reign, England led the world in global explorations, its empire was expanding, and the arts continued to flourish.

In the winter of 1603, Elizabeth's health began to suffer. Although she tried to maintain her powerful appearance, it was clear to members of her court that she was deteriorating. The sweets she usually enjoyed went untouched, and she began to have trouble swallowing. It was thought she may have been suffering from tonsillitis and had developed ulcers in her throat.

On March 21, 1603, Elizabeth lost her ability to speak. Three days later, on March 24, she died quietly in her sleep. She was sixty-nine years old and had ruled for forty-four years.

Her funeral took place on April 28 and was attended by thousands of her grieving subjects. She was interred in Westminster Abbey in a tomb shared by her half-sister, Queen Mary I.

Elizabeth's coffin is in a chapel under a monument constructed by her successor, King James I.



## Elizabeth's Successor

Henry VIII's six marriages caused chaos and instability, and many people worried about who would succeed Elizabeth. The queen continued to refuse to name a successor, and it became a matter of great concern to her advisors and subjects alike. Although Elizabeth never publicly announced who would succeed her, she did so privately; there was no dispute over her choice.

James VI, Elizabeth's closest living relative and son of Mary, Queen of Scots, would be king. Mary and James were direct descendants of Henry VII, the first Tudor king. After Elizabeth died, James took the throne and became James I of England. The new Protestant king's succession was peaceful, and by her action, Elizabeth finally brought together the thrones of England and Scotland. In 1707, the two countries united, ending one of the more bitter rivalries between two European countries.

Elizabeth left James a strong government and a powerful navy. She had encouraged trade with foreign countries and funded the exploration of the New World. England was set to become a global empire and the Elizabethan Age came to be known as the "Golden Age" of England.

## Elizabeth's Legacy

One of Elizabeth's greatest accomplishments was to reduce the religious strife that had torn England apart. Under her rule, Protestantism was established as the official religion of England.

During Elizabeth's reign, women, too, experienced a new level of freedom. Elizabeth helped to foster the idea that women, as well as men, could do anything they wanted to do. She loved her country and proved to her enemies and allies alike that a woman—as much as a man—could be an intelligent, effective, and successful leader.

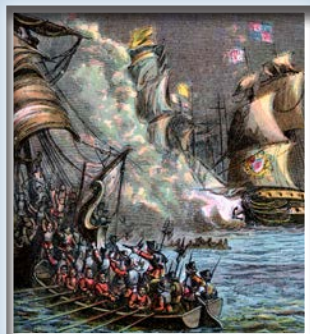
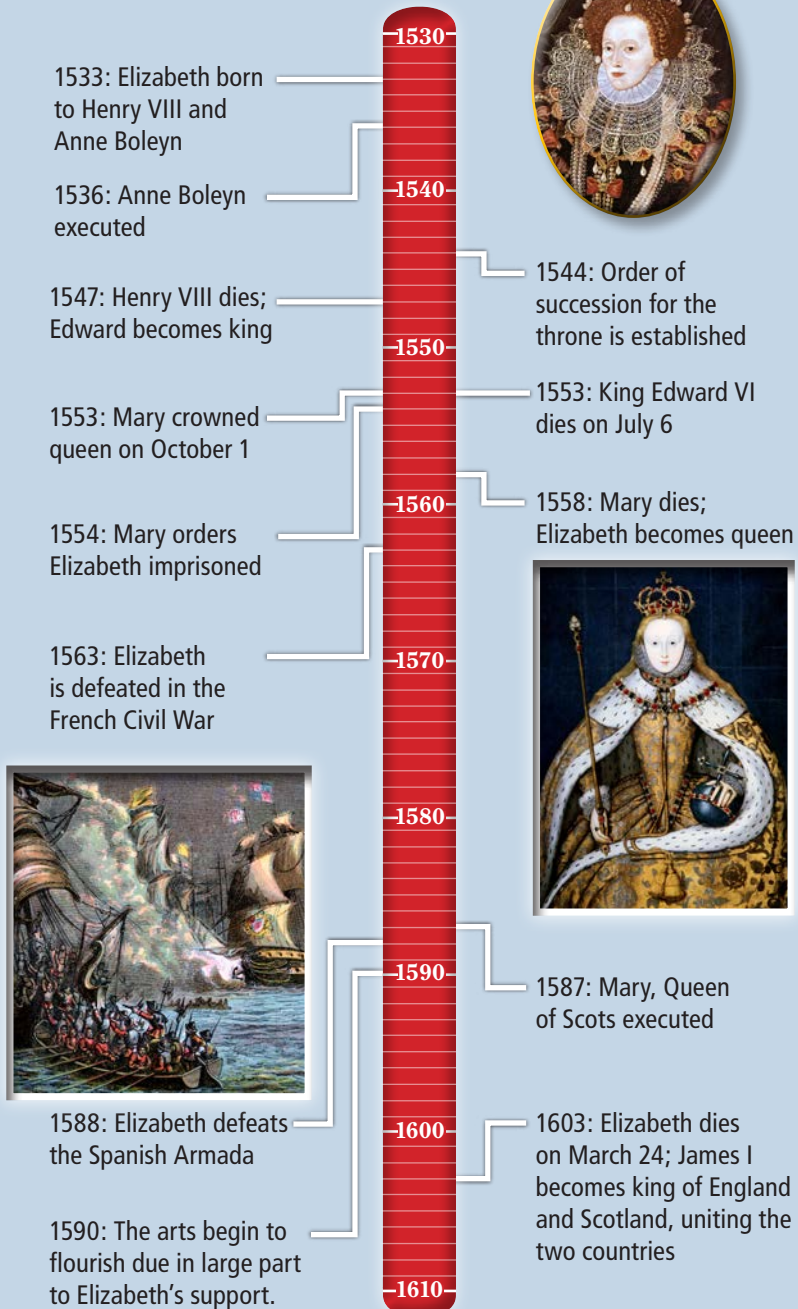
Elizabeth was considered a giant among monarchs and one of the most popular and best-known female rulers in history. She was praised for her strong leadership and held in high regard for her support of the arts. Historically, she was also one of the most beloved and compelling personalities to ascend the English throne.

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





## Queen Elizabeth I



## Glossary

<b>abdicate</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	to give up one's role as king or queen (p. 11)
<b>alleviate</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	to lessen pain, suffering, or trouble (p. 14)
<b>ambassador</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	an official who travels to or resides in a new location to represent his or her country or population (p. 10)
<b>annul</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	to officially end something; to declare something legally invalid (p. 5)
<b>armada</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a large fleet of boats, usually warships (p. 12)
<b>commerce</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	the buying and selling of goods; business or trade (p. 14)
<b>conspired</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	made secret plans with others to do something that is illegal or harmful; plotted (p. 8)
<b>depose</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	to suddenly remove a leader or authority figure from power (p. 11)
<b>heretics</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	those who go against official or accepted beliefs or practices (p. 8)
<b>illegitimate</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	born to parents who were not married (p. 6)
<b>plundering</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	stealing everything of value using force (p. 12)
<b>succession</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	the order in which or the process by which people inherit a position of power (p. 7)