Elizabeth's Background and Character

Elizabeth I became queen in 1558. She reigned for almost 45 years, until her death in 1603. She had a rocky start in life and faced some pretty serious problems when she first became queen.

Queen Elizabeth I was from the House of Tudor

The Tudor family had ruled England since Henry VII became king in 1485. Here's their family tree:

Elizabeth I was Cautious, Intelligent and Powerful

1) Elizabeth was Henry VIII’s second child, the daughter of his second wife, Anne Boleyn. As a child, she was third in line to the throne (behind Edward VI and Mary I), so no-one really expected her to become queen.

2) Elizabeth had a difficult upbringing and sometimes feared for her life. In 1554, she was accused of conspiring against her half-sister, Queen Mary I, and placed under house arrest for almost a year.

3) Elizabeth was very cautious and only trusted a few close advisers. She could also be indecisive — she was reluctant to make decisions without carefully considering their possible consequences.

4) She was intelligent, confident and very well educated. Despite having had little training in how to govern, she became a powerful and effective leader.

Some people Didn’t want Elizabeth to be Queen

Gender

1) In the 16th century, most people believed the monarch should be a man. They thought that rule by a woman was unnatural.

2) Most people expected Elizabeth to act as a figurehead, without any real power. They thought she should let her male counsellors take control or find a husband to govern for her (see p.86).

3) However, Elizabeth was determined to rule in her own right and refused to let her counsellors take over.

Illegitimacy

1) In 1533, Henry VIII had divorced his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, and married Anne Boleyn.

2) Divorce was forbidden in the Catholic Church, so many Catholics believed Henry's marriage to Anne was not valid and their daughter, Elizabeth, was illegitimate.

3) Illegitimate children weren’t usually allowed to inherit, so the issue of Elizabeth’s legitimacy weakened her claim to the throne. Some people thought that Mary, Queen of Scots (see p.95) had more right to rule.

Don’t let Elizabeth’s character fade into the background...

It’s important to understand what Elizabeth was like as a person and the early difficulties she faced — her background and character shaped many of the decisions she made during her reign.

Elizabethan England, c.1568-1603
The Elizabethan Court

Elizabeth's court was the heart of social and political life — everyone who was anyone could be found there.

The Court was the Centre of Elizabethan Social Life

1) The royal court was a large group of people who surrounded the monarch at all times. More than 1000 people attended the court, including Elizabeth's personal servants, members of the Privy Council (see p.84), members of the nobility, ambassadors and other foreign visitors, and Elizabeth's 'favourites'.

Some courtiers became Elizabeth's 'favourites'. Early in her reign, Elizabeth was very close to Robert Dudley. She made him Earl of Leicester in 1564 and may have considered marrying him (see p.86). Christopher Hatton was another of her 'favourites'. In 1587, she made him Lord Chancellor, even though he had little relevant experience. Sir Walter Raleigh came to Elizabeth's court in 1581. Elizabeth gave him many valuable gifts, including the right to colonise the New World (see p.93).

2) Courtiers were expected to flatter Elizabeth, shower her with gifts and pretend to be in love with her.

3) Courtly pastimes included plays, concerts, hunting, jousting and tennis. There were also balls and grand meals.

4) Members of the court travelled with Elizabeth when she moved between her palaces, and when great processions were held. They also went with her when she travelled around the country visiting the houses of wealthy noblemen (these trips were known as royal progresses).

Political Power relied on Access to the Queen

1) The Queen was the centre of government, and political power revolved around her. This meant that those closest to Elizabeth had the greatest influence and power.

2) The court was the centre of political life. Anyone who wanted to get ahead and increase their political power had to have a place at court.

3) Courtiers didn't necessarily hold government positions — they became powerful through their close relationship with the Queen.

Elizabeth used Patronage to ensure Loyalty and Stability

1) Patronage involved handing out titles, offices or monopolies (see p.88), which gave men a source of income. Elizabeth had a lot of these offices to give away, including high positions in the Church. Royal patronage was distributed at court.

2) Elizabeth's use of patronage helped to ensure loyalty. Those who received patronage became dependent on Elizabeth for some or all of their income and status, so they were likely to be loyal to her.

3) Elizabeth distributed patronage very widely. This helped to ensure political stability — all members of the elite felt they had a chance to be rewarded by the Queen, so they were unlikely to rebel against her.

4) Patronage was a way for Elizabeth to reward her courtiers without spending royal revenues. This was important because the English economy was weak during Elizabeth's reign and her income was limited.

The court was the place to be in Elizabethan England...

Jot down a quick description of Elizabeth's court, including the names of some of her favourite courtiers. Write a few sentences to explain why patronage was an important part of court life.
The Queen was the head of government. She was advised by her Privy Council, which included her key ministers. Parliament could be involved in granting taxes, passing laws and giving advice.

**The Privy Council was Central to Elizabethan Government**

1) The Privy Council had two main roles. It gave advice to the Queen and managed the administration of government.

2) The Council was made up of around twenty men, all chosen by Elizabeth. Members of the Privy Council were the Queen’s closest and most trusted advisors. Some key ministers served on the Council for many years.

3) The Queen didn’t have to follow the advice of the Privy Council. Councillors were expected to carry out her instructions, even when doing so went against their advice.

**William Cecil was Elizabeth’s Closest Advisor**

1) When she became queen in 1558, Elizabeth made William Cecil her Principal Secretary. He became her closest advisor, leading the Privy Council and making sure the government ran smoothly.

2) In 1571, Elizabeth gave Cecil the title Lord Burghley. The next year she made him Lord High Treasurer, giving him greater control over royal finances. Cecil continued to serve Elizabeth until his death in 1598.

3) Elizabeth’s other key ministers included Nicholas Bacon, who was Lord Chancellor from 1559 to 1579, and Francis Walsingham, who became Principal Secretary in 1573.

**There were Two Chambers of Parliament**

1) The House of Lords was not elected — it was made up of members of the nobility and senior churchmen.

2) The House of Commons was elected, but only men who owned property over a certain value were allowed to vote. Elections weren’t free — the Crown controlled who got elected in some areas, and in others powerful local figures controlled who was chosen.

**Parliament’s main functions were Advice, Taxation and Legislation**

**Advice**

Parliament was an important point of contact between central government and the leading figures in local government throughout the country. It enabled the Queen and her councillors to gauge the mood of the country and levels of support for their policies.

**Comment and Analysis**

Elizabeth took little interest in the advice of Members of Parliament (MPs), and she could bypass Parliament’s role in passing new laws. For Elizabeth, Parliament’s main purpose was to grant her taxes.

**Taxation**

When the Queen needed extra revenue, she had to ask Parliament’s permission to raise taxes.

**Legislation**

The Queen needed Parliament’s approval to pass new laws. However, she could bypass this function by issuing royal proclamations instead.

**Elizabeth was very powerful, but she didn’t rule alone...**

To really ace the exam, you need to understand the key features of Elizabethan government. Make sure you know the role of the Queen, the Privy Council, key ministers and Parliament.

Elizabethan England, c.1568-1603
The Elizabethan Government

Unlike today, in the 16th century Parliament was only a secondary part of government. Its sessions were temporary and occasional, and its powers were limited.

**Parliament’s Powers were Limited**

1) Elizabeth had the power to summon and dismiss Parliament. She disliked working with Parliament and tried to use it as little as possible — she only called 13 sessions of Parliament during her 44-year reign.

2) Parliament was not free to decide what topics it debated. It had to have permission from the Queen to discuss matters of state (e.g., religion, the succession, foreign policy). As a result, most parliamentary business focused on local matters and social or economic issues, which it could discuss without royal permission.

**Comment and Analysis**

Elizabeth believed in Divine Right — that rulers were sent by God to govern their country. She believed that this gave her a royal prerogative — the right to decide about matters of state without interference from Parliament.

*Elizabeth I in Parliament*

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**The Privy Council helped Elizabeth to Manage Parliament**

1) The Privy Council managed relations between Elizabeth and Parliament very effectively. In particular, Cecil was highly skilled at convincing MPs to support the Queen’s policies.

2) Some members of the Privy Council sat in Parliament. They acted as royal spokesmen and helped to steer debates in favour of royal policies.

3) The Speaker, who kept order in the House of Commons, was chosen by the Queen and closely monitored by members of the Privy Council. This helped the Queen’s councillors to control Parliament and convince MPs to support royal policy.

4) Elizabeth was a strong public speaker. She made a number of powerful speeches in Parliament which helped to persuade MPs to obey her wishes.

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**There were some Disagreements, but Elizabeth stayed In Control**

During Elizabeth’s reign, Parliament didn’t always agree with her policies:

- Throughout her reign, MPs were concerned about who would rule England after Elizabeth’s death — they repeatedly tried to persuade her to marry or name an heir (see p.86).
- Some Puritan MPs challenged the religious settlement (see p.94) and tried to make England more Protestant.
- MPs were worried about the threat from Mary, Queen of Scots, and the Catholic plots surrounding her (see p.95). They tried to convince Elizabeth to take action against Mary.

Occasionally, MPs tried to force the Queen to change her mind by threatening to refuse taxation. Elizabeth never gave in to this kind of parliamentary pressure. Effective management by the Privy Council, combined with Elizabeth’s powers to dismiss Parliament and select the topics it debated, meant that she remained firmly in control.

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**Parliament was no match for Elizabeth and her ministers...**

*How important was Parliament in Elizabethan England? Explain your answer.* [8]
Marriage and the Succession

One of Elizabeth's biggest headaches as queen was the issue of marriage and the succession. She faced constant pressure to marry or name her successor, but was very reluctant to do so.

Elizabeth was expected to Marry and produce an Heir

1) Because people believed that women couldn't rule effectively (see p.82), there was pressure for Elizabeth to find a husband who could rule for her.
2) There were also concerns about the succession. If Elizabeth died without an heir, there would be a risk of civil war, with different groups competing for the throne. To prevent this, Elizabeth was expected to marry and produce an heir as quickly as possible.
3) The Privy Council and Parliament were deeply concerned about the succession. They repeatedly asked the Queen to marry or name her heir, but she always refused. When they asked Elizabeth to find a husband in 1563, she refused to even discuss the matter.

It was Difficult to find a Suitable Husband

1) If Elizabeth married a European prince or king, this could give a foreign country too much influence over England. In the past, Queen Mary I's marriage to King Philip II of Spain had forced England to become involved in an expensive war with France.
2) If Elizabeth chose a member of the English nobility, this would create anger and resentment among those who weren't chosen.
3) The religious settlement had made England a Protestant country (see p.94), so it was difficult for Elizabeth to marry a Catholic. Growing anti-Catholic feeling in England would have made a Catholic husband unpopular and might have undermined support for Elizabeth's rule.
4) Elizabeth was reluctant to marry anyone — women were expected to obey their husbands, so she would lose much of her power and freedom if she married.

Elizabeth Considered many Suitors, but she Rejected them All

1) Early in her reign, Elizabeth received proposals from foreign rulers, including King Philip II of Spain, Archduke Charles of Austria and King Eric of Sweden. She and her Privy Council seriously considered King Eric's proposal, but in the end all these early suitors were rejected.
2) Elizabeth seems to have been in love with her 'favourite', Robert Dudley, and seriously considered marrying him. However, members of the Privy Council and the nobility, including Cecil, were strongly opposed to this match and it did not go ahead.
3) In the 1570s, Elizabeth was courted by Duke Francis of Anjou, brother of the King of France. Although there was some support for the match, there was also strong opposition to the idea of Elizabeth marrying a French Catholic, and in the end the marriage negotiations were abandoned.

Comment and Analysis

Marriage negotiations could be a useful tool in foreign policy. Anglo-Spanish relations were breaking down in the 1570s (see p.100), and England needed a new European ally. The proposed marriage to Duke Francis played an important role in efforts to create an alliance with France.

By the late 1570s, Elizabeth was in her mid-forties and it was clear that she would never have children. The issue of the succession still needed to be resolved, but Elizabeth refused to name a successor. She was concerned that a successor might become the focus of plots to overthrow her. Towards the end of her reign, her advisors began secret negotiations to make James VI of Scotland (son of Mary, Queen of Scots) heir to the throne. When Elizabeth died in 1603, James became king of England.

Elizabeth couldn't find a suitor who suited her...

Scribble down a spider diagram showing all the reasons why it was difficult for Elizabeth to find a husband. Name two suitors Elizabeth considered and explain why she didn't marry them.

Elizabethan England, c.1568-1603
The End of Elizabeth’s Reign

The last 15 years or so of Elizabeth’s rule were so different to her early years that they’re sometimes called her ‘second reign’. One of the main differences was the growth of competing groups at court.

Elizabeth’s Court split into Rival Groups in the 1590s

1) The make-up of Elizabeth’s Privy Council changed towards the end of her reign. Several of her key ministers, including Christopher Hatton and Francis Walsingham, died around 1590. William Cecil died in 1598 and was succeeded by his son, Robert Cecil.

2) In 1593, Elizabeth made Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, a member of the Privy Council. Essex’s rise led to the growth of two conflicting groups at court, one around the Earl of Essex and the other around William and Robert Cecil.

3) The two groups were constantly competing for royal patronage and influence. They also disagreed over important matters, especially strategy in the war with Spain (see p.100). Elizabeth’s inability to control this conflict undermined her authority.

Essex launched a Rebellion in 1601

1) In 1599, Elizabeth sent Essex to Ireland at the head of a huge army. His task was to crush Tyrone’s Rebellion (also known as the Nine Years’ War), which had been going on since 1594.

2) Essex made some limited attempts to fight the rebels, but when these were unsuccessful, he made a truce with them. He then abandoned his post and returned to England without the Queen’s permission.

3) As a punishment, Elizabeth put Essex under house arrest for a time, banished him from court and took away most of his public offices. In November 1600, she also took away his main source of income, a monopoly (see p.88) on the distribution of sweet wines.

4) The loss of his political power and his income drove Essex to revolt. On 8th February 1601, he launched a rebellion in London. Essex aimed to seize the Queen and force her to replace her closest advisers, especially Cecil, with himself and his followers.

5) Essex’s rebellion failed within just a few hours. He received no support from ordinary Londoners, and most of his own supporters quickly abandoned him too. Essex was arrested, tried for treason and executed on 25th February 1601.

The Conflict at court Undermined Elizabeth’s Authority

1) The lack of popular support for Essex’s rebellion shows that it wasn’t a serious threat to Elizabeth’s rule. She was still a popular and respected queen, and there was no desire to overthrow her or her government.

2) However, the rebellion does suggest that Elizabeth’s authority over her court became weaker towards the end of her reign. By the 1590s, she was no longer using patronage as effectively as she had in the past.

3) Instead of balancing the different groups at court, she let the Cecils become too powerful, while failing to promote many others. This led to a build-up of anger and resentment, which risked fuelling challenges to her authority — like Essex’s revolt.

4) The conflict at court in the 1590s also made Elizabeth’s government less effective. Constant competition and in-fighting between groups made it more difficult to make decisions and get things done.

Get to grips with the facts about the court factions...

Give an account of the reasons for Essex’s rebellion in 1601. [8]
**Poverty**

The growing number of people living in poverty was a major problem in Elizabethan society.

**Religious Changes meant there was Less Support for the Poor**

1. Between 1536 and 1541, Henry VIII had closed down England's monasteries and sold off most of their land (this was called the 'dissolution of the monasteries').
2. The monasteries had performed important social functions, including providing support for many poor, ill and disabled people. The dissolution of the monasteries removed a valuable source of assistance for people need.

**Population Growth led to Rising Prices**

1. In the 16th century, England's birth rate increased and the death rate fell. This led to huge population growth — during Elizabeth's reign, the English population grew from around 3 million people to at least 4 million.
2. Food production didn't keep pace with the growth in population. As a result, food prices rose and sometimes there were food shortages.
3. Prices for food and other goods rose much more quickly than wages. Standards of living fell for many workers as they struggled to afford the necessities — many were forced into poverty.
4. Because of the rapid population growth, there was growing competition for land, and so rents increased. This trend was made worse by changes in farming practices.

**Developments in Agriculture left many people Unemployed**

1. Traditional farming methods involved many farmers renting strips of land in large open fields. This was subsistence-level farming — each farmer only grew enough crops to supply himself and his family.
2. This kind of farming was very inefficient, and in the 16th century landowners began changing their farming techniques to try and make more money from their land. Instead of sharing open fields among many farmers, they enclosed these fields to create a few large farms.
3. These new, enclosed farms required fewer labourers, so farmers who rented land were evicted, leaving them unemployed and homeless.
4. Exporting wool to Europe was more profitable than selling grain, so many landowners stopped growing grain and began sheep farming. This fall in grain production contributed to rising food prices. It also meant that there was a higher risk of food shortages when there was a bad harvest.

**Comment and Analysis**

These enclosures of farm land forced many people to leave their villages and migrate to towns or cities in search of work. The government viewed these migrant workers as 'vagabonds' and feared that they would encourage riots and rebellions.

**Poverty got Worse in the 1590s**

The problem of poverty reached a crisis point towards the end of Elizabeth's reign. In the late 1580s and 1590s, England suffered several failed harvests, which led to food shortages and even higher food prices. This pushed even more people into extreme poverty — in some areas people starved to death.

**The enclosures closed the door to many farm labourers...**

*Why was poverty a growing problem in Elizabethan England? Explain your answer.* [8]

Elizabethan England, c.1568-1603
Poverty

Elizabeth's government introduced a series of Poor Laws to try and tackle the problem of poverty.

**The Government became More Involved in Poor Relief**

1) Traditionally, the main source of support for the poor was charity — rich people made donations to hospitals, monasteries and other organisations that helped the poor. However, during Elizabeth's reign the problem of poverty became so bad that these charitable donations by individuals were no longer enough.

2) People began to realise that society as a whole would have to take responsibility for helping the poor, and so the government began to take action to tackle the problem of poverty.

Comment and Analysis

The government feared that the rising poverty levels were a serious threat to law and order. As poverty levels rose, crime rates increased and there were food riots in some places. The government feared that the poor might rise up in rebellion if the problem of poverty wasn't tackled.

**People believed the Poor could be split into Three Categories**

- **The Helpless Poor**
  Those who were unable to support themselves — including young orphans and the elderly, sick or disabled.

- **The Deserving Poor**
  People who wanted to work, but weren't able to find a job in their home town or village.

- **The Undeserving Poor**
  Beggars, criminals and people who refused to work. Also migrant workers ('vagabonds') who left their homes and travelled around looking for work.

**The Poor Laws gave Help to the Helpless and Deserving Poor**

1) From the 1560s onwards, the government brought in a series of Poor Laws to deal with the growing problem of poverty.

2) Because voluntary donations were no longer sufficient to fund poor relief, in the 1560s the government passed a Poor Law which introduced a tax to raise money for the poor (known as the 'poor rate').

3) Further Poor Laws were passed in 1597 and 1601 in response to the poverty crisis of the 1590s (p.88). Under these laws, the poor rate became a national system of compulsory taxation. It was collected locally by an official called the Overseer of the Poor.

4) Poor rates were used to provide hospitals and housing for the elderly, sick and disabled. Poor children were given apprenticeships, which usually lasted at least seven years, and local authorities were expected to provide financial support or work for the deserving poor. Poor people could be sent to prison if they refused to take work.

Comment and Analysis

The Privy Council researched how local government had tackled the problem of poverty. They based the national Poor Laws on the local policies that seemed to be most effective. For example, towns like London, Norwich, Ipswich and York had been using compulsory poor rates to pay for poor relief since the mid-16th century.

**The Undeserving Poor were treated Harshly**

Under the Poor Laws of the 1590s, the undeserving poor were to be publicly whipped and then forced to return to their home parish. Repeat offenders could be sent to prison.

Comment and Analysis

The undeserving poor were treated so harshly because they were seen as a serious threat to society. Many people believed that poor criminals and vagabonds had encouraged the Northern Rebellion in 1569 (see p.96). In response to the Rebellion, the government introduced particularly harsh punishments for the undeserving poor in 1572.

**The Poor Laws helped some, but punished others...**

Include plenty of specific information in your answers. For example, don’t just write about the Poor Laws in general, give the dates of specific laws and explain the changes they brought in.

Elizabethan England, c.1568-1603
A ‘Golden Age’

Despite the very high levels of poverty, Elizabeth’s reign is often seen as a ‘Golden Age’. The growing prosperity of the elite contributed to a flourishing in architecture, the arts and education.

The Gentry became Richer during Elizabeth’s reign

1) Population growth and changes in farming practices (see p.88) were good for landowners, especially members of the gentry.
2) The enclosures meant that land was farmed more efficiently. At the same time, rents were increasing and prices of agricultural products like grain were rising, so landowners were earning a lot more money from their land.
3) As a result, the land-owning gentry became much wealthier during Elizabeth’s reign, and members of the nobility also saw their incomes increase.
4) The growth of towns and the development of national and international trade allowed some merchants to become very rich. They often used their money to buy land and become part of the gentry.

Some members of the Elite built New Houses

1) From the 1570s, many members of the gentry and nobility improved their homes or built new ones. This is sometimes called the ‘Great Rebuilding’.
2) These building projects enabled members of the elite to show off their wealth. New houses often had many large windows — glass was very expensive, so using a lot of it was a sign of prosperity. Large landscaped gardens were also a popular way to display wealth.
3) The ‘Great Rebuilding’ improved living standards for the wealthy, because the new houses were much more comfortable. The large windows made them lighter, and bigger chimneys and fireplaces meant they were better heated.

Art, Literature and Education were all highly Fashionable

1) The nobility and gentry had money to spend on elaborate decorations for their homes. Portraits, miniatures (very small portraits), tapestries and embroidery were all popular.
2) It was also fashionable to take an interest in literature — some people collected large libraries, and members of the elite supported the work of poets and playwrights. Elite support for playwrights and acting companies contributed to the flourishing of Elizabethan theatre (see p.91).
3) More people could afford to give their children an education. Some noble families employed a private tutor, while a growing number of children from the nobility and gentry went to grammar schools and on to university.

Miniatures were huge in Elizabethan England...

Write a sentence or two to explain why the gentry got richer during Elizabeth’s reign. Then make a quick spider diagram showing some things that members of the elite spent their wealth on.

Elizabethan England, c.1568-1603
Elizabethan Theatres

The theatre became incredibly popular in the second half of Elizabeth's reign.

There were No Permanent Theatres in England until the 1570s

1) At the start of Elizabeth's reign, England didn't have any permanent theatres. Instead, companies of actors travelled around, performing in village squares or the courtyards of inns.

2) The first theatres were built in London in the 1570s. They included The Theatre and The Curtain. They were usually round, open-air buildings with a raised stage that stretched out into the audience (known as an ‘apron stage’).

3) The stage usually had a roof, called the ‘heavens’. Actors could be lowered onto the stage from the heavens, or enter through a trapdoor in the stage floor. There were also several entrances at the back of the stage. Behind the stage was the ‘firing house’ where actors got dressed and waited to enter.

4) Some theatres were very large — The Globe could hold around 3000 people. Poorer audience members, called ‘groundlings’, stood in the open yard around the stage, while richer people sat under cover around the theatre’s walls.

Elizabeth’s reign was a ‘Golden Age’ for Playwrights

A huge number of plays were written in the Elizabethan era, many of which are still performed today. William Shakespeare is the best-known Elizabethan playwright. He wrote 38 plays, including comedies (e.g. Twelfth Night), tragedies (e.g. Macbeth) and histories (e.g. Henry V). Other famous Elizabethan playwrights include Christopher Marlowe and Ben Johnson.

1) Plays were performed by acting companies. They often worked on a shareholder system, where members of the company contributed to its costs and received a share of its profits. Two of the most important Elizabethan companies were The Admiral’s Men and The Lord Chamberlain’s Men (Shakespeare’s company).

2) Women weren’t allowed to perform on stage, so actors were all male — boys played the female roles. One of the most famous actors was Richard Burbage. He was a member of The Lord Chamberlain’s Men, and he played the lead in many of Shakespeare’s plays.

The theatre was Very Popular, but it faced some Opposition

1) The theatre appealed to both rich and poor. Ticket prices started at just 1 penny, so it was affordable for most people. However, different social groups sat in different parts of the theatre and didn’t usually mix.

2) Elizabeth enjoyed plays — she never attended a public theatre, but she often had plays performed at court. She supported her favourite performers and even set up an acting company, The Queen’s Men.

The theatre wasn’t popular with everyone though:
- The City of London authorities were opposed to it because they thought it was disruptive and encouraged crime.
- As a result, many theatres, including The Globe, were built just outside the City in Southwark.
- Some members of Elizabeth’s government were worried that the theatre might be used to spread pro-Catholic or anti-government messages. As theatres grew in popularity, the government introduced censorship measures to try and control what playwrights wrote.
- Many Puritans also opposed the theatre because they thought it encouraged immorality.

All the world’s a stage, especially at The Globe Theatre...

Do you find the interpretation of Elizabethan theatre in the picture above convincing? Use the picture and your knowledge of the period to explain your answer. [8]
Elizabethan Sailors

English sailors weren’t that interested in voyages of discovery at first, but once they recognised the economic opportunities on offer in the Americas and Asia, there was no stopping them.

The English were Slow to take an interest in Exploration

1) The Portuguese and Spanish were the first to explore the world beyond Europe. By the time Elizabeth became queen in 1558, both countries had established many colonies in the Americas.
2) It was only from the 1560s that English sailors began to take an interest in global exploration.

Explorers were Attracted by Economic Opportunities

Spanish trade with its American colonies was very profitable — their treasure ships returned to Europe full of silver and gold. The wealth of the region attracted English privateers (men who sailed their own vessels) who hoped to get rich by trading with Spain’s colonies and raiding Spanish settlements and ships.

- John Hawkins was the first English privateer to take part in the Atlantic slave trade. In the 1560s, he made three slave-trading voyages. On two of these trips, he bought slaves in west Africa, transported them across the Atlantic and sold them to Spanish colonies in the Americas.
- The Spanish didn’t want English sailors to trade with these Spanish colonies, so his activities fuelled growing tensions between England and Spain (see p.100).
- Hawkins’ first two voyages were very profitable, but on his last expedition he was confronted by Spanish ships in the battle of San Juan de Ulúa and most of his fleet was destroyed.

From the 1570s, English merchants also became interested in trade with Asia, and began exploring routes to the region. Some tried to find the so-called North West passage around the top of North America, while others sailed through the Mediterranean and then went overland to India. In 1599, James Lancaster sailed to India around the Cape of Good Hope (the southern tip of Africa). Following Lancaster’s success, the East India Company was set up in 1600 to trade with Asia.

Francis Drake was the Second man ever to sail Around the World

1) Francis Drake was John Hawkins’ cousin, and had travelled with Hawkins on two of his slave-trading expeditions. Between 1577 and 1580, Drake circumnavigated the world (sailed all the way around it).
2) Drake probably wasn’t trying to sail around the world. It seems that he was sent by Elizabeth to explore the coast of South America, looking for opportunities for English colonisation and trade. He may have planned to make money from his expedition by raiding Spanish colonies and treasure ships.
3) Drake explored the South American coastline, raiding many Spanish settlements as he went. In the Pacific, he captured two very valuable Spanish treasure ships. In order to get this treasure safely home, Drake had to return by a different route — the Spanish had sent ships to intercept him off the South American coast, so he couldn’t return the way he had come.
4) Instead, Drake sailed west, across the Pacific to Indonesia. He then made his way across the Indian Ocean, round the Cape of Good Hope and back to England.
5) When he returned, Drake was knighted by Elizabeth aboard his ship, the Golden Hind. This royal recognition and the vast wealth that Drake brought back from the journey encouraged more English sailors to set out on long-distance journeys.

Circumnavigation — taking the roundabout route...

‘Francis Drake’s circumnavigation of the globe made him the most successful English sailor of Elizabeth’s reign’. How far do you agree with this interpretation? Explain your answer. [8]
Elizabethan Sailors

After Drake's circumnavigation, England tried to challenge Spain's dominance as an imperial power by establishing a colony in North America. But creating a permanent settlement turned out to be pretty tricky...

Drake's Circumnavigation was a Huge Achievement

Drake's expedition was only the second successful global circumnavigation, and the first by an English sailor. He and his crew had to overcome some major challenges in order to complete the expedition.

1) Navigating across vast oceans was extremely difficult. Elizabethan sailors knew how to use the Sun and stars to work out how far north or south of the equator they were (their latitude), but they couldn't measure how far east or west they had travelled (their longitude).

2) Many of the places Drake visited had never been explored by European sailors before, so there were no detailed maps or charts to help him navigate.

3) Many sailors died of disease during long journeys — one of Drake's ships had to be abandoned after crossing the Atlantic because so many of the crew had died.

4) Bad weather could blow ships off course, or even sink them. Storms destroyed one of Drake's ships as it attempted to sail around the bottom of South America, and forced another to turn back to England.

Raleigh's attempts to Colonise Virginia were Unsuccessful

Walter Raleigh was a member of a gentry family from Devon. His family were involved with international exploration, and Raleigh first visited America in 1578. From the early 1580s, Raleigh had a powerful position at court as one of Elizabeth's favourites.

1) In 1584, Elizabeth gave Raleigh permission to explore and colonise unclaimed territories. She wanted him to establish a colony on the Atlantic coast of North America.

2) In 1585, Raleigh sent 108 settlers to establish a permanent colony on Roanoke Island, Virginia (Raleigh named his colony after Elizabeth, who was known as the 'Virgin Queen'). However, the settlers (or planters) soon ran low on supplies, and when Francis Drake visited Roanoke in 1586, most of them abandoned the colony and returned to England.

3) A second group of planters reached Roanoke in 1587. They were expecting supplies from England in 1588, but the fleet was delayed by the Spanish Armada (see p.101-102).

4) When the supply ships reached Roanoke in 1590, all the planters had disappeared. They were never found, and Roanoke became known as the 'Lost Colony'.

5) Raleigh was partly responsible for the colony's failure — his funds were too limited and the whole project was poorly planned. However, other factors like bad luck and a lack of supplies also played a part.

Raleigh's Career had Ups and Downs

1) Despite the failure of the Roanoke colony, Raleigh remained one of Elizabeth's 'favourites'.

2) However, in 1592 he was disgraced when Elizabeth found out that he had secretly married one of her ladies-in-waiting. As a punishment, Raleigh was banished from court and briefly imprisoned.

3) This wasn't the end of his career though — after his release he continued to play an important role in politics. He became a Member of Parliament and was still heavily involved with the Royal Navy.

As Raleigh learned, if you fail to plan, you plan to fail...

Make a timeline of Walter Raleigh's career. Include all the key events of his attempts to colonise Virginia and details of what happened to him after the failure of the Roanoke colony.

Elizabethan England, c.1568-1603
By 1558, England had experienced decades of dizzying religious changes. Elizabeth's religious 'settlement', passed in 1559, aimed to put a stop to these changes and bring religious stability to England.

There had been constant Religious Changes since the 1530s

When Elizabeth became queen in 1558, England had suffered 30 years of religious turmoil, with the national religion switching repeatedly between Catholicism and Protestantism.

**Henry VIII**

*Until the 1530s, England was a Catholic country, and most people were Catholics. However, in the early 1530s, Henry VIII broke away from the Roman Catholic Church. He rejected the Pope's authority and made himself head of the Church of England.*

**Edward VI**

*Edward VI was a strong supporter of Protestantism. When he became king, he tried to reform the English Church to make it more Protestant.*

**Mary I**

*Mary I was a devout Catholic. As queen, she made England Catholic again — she restored the Pope as head of the English Church and removed Edward's Protestant reforms. Protestants were harshly persecuted under Mary — more than 280 were executed, and many more fled to Protestant countries in Europe.*

Elizabeth had been raised as a Protestant. She was deeply religious and committed to Protestantism. But she was also determined to end the constant religious changes of the last 30 years by creating a stable and lasting religious settlement.

The Religious Settlement was designed for Religious Stability

**The Act of Supremacy gave Elizabeth Control over the Church**

1) Henry VIII and Edward VI had used the title Supreme Head of the Church of England. In her Act of Supremacy (passed in 1559), Elizabeth altered this title to make herself the Supreme Governor of the English Church.

2) This gave Elizabeth control of the English Church, without actually calling her its ‘Head’. This compromise satisfied those who believed a woman couldn’t lead the Church.

**The Act of Uniformity made Moderate Protestant Reforms**

The Act of Uniformity and the Royal Injunctions, both passed in 1559, imposed moderate Protestant reforms on the English Church, but they also made some concessions to English Catholics:

**Reforms**

- Going to church was compulsory — there were fines for missing a church service.
- A new Book of Common Prayer was issued, which had to be used in all churches.
- All parishes had to have a copy of the Bible in English.

**Concessions**

- The wording of the communion service (an important Christian ceremony) was kept deliberately vague, so that it could be accepted by both Protestants and Catholics.
- Churches were allowed to keep some decorations, and priests had to wear certain Catholic vestments (robes).

Comment and Analysis

The religious settlement made England a Protestant country, but allowed some elements of Catholic belief and practice to continue. This 'middle way' was designed to satisfy the majority, who held moderate religious beliefs and were willing to make some compromises for the sake of peace and stability. But it couldn't win over the more extreme Catholics or the Puritans (see p.99).

Sometimes the 'middle way' is the only way...

Divide a piece of paper into two. Jot down the key features of the Act of Supremacy on one side and the Act of Uniformity and the Royal Injunctions on the other.

Elizabethan England, c.1568-1603
Mary, Queen of Scots

Even though Elizabeth and Mary, Queen of Scots, were cousins, Elizabeth wasn’t too pleased when Mary arrived in England unexpectedly in 1568. In fact, she was so unimpressed, she put Mary in prison...

Mary, Queen of Scots, had a Strong Claim to the English Throne

1) Mary was the only child of James V of Scotland. She was related to the Tudors through her grandmother, Margaret Tudor. Margaret was Henry VIII’s sister, the wife of James IV and mother of James V (see p.82).

2) As a granddaughter of Margaret Tudor, Mary had a strong claim to the English throne. Because Mary was a Catholic, her claim was supported by many English Catholics.

3) Mary became queen of Scotland in 1542 when she was just six days old. Her mother acted as regent (she ruled on Mary’s behalf), while Mary was raised in France.

4) In 1558, when Mary was 15 years old, she married the heir to the French throne. However, her husband died suddenly in 1560, and Mary returned to Scotland.

Comment and Analysis

Mary wanted to be named as heir to the English throne, but Elizabeth was unwilling to do this. She feared that making Mary her heir would encourage Catholic plots, both at home and abroad, to overthrow her and make Mary queen.

Mary Fled to England in 1568

1) In 1565 Mary married the Scottish nobleman Lord Darnley. The marriage was not a happy one. Darnley hated Mary’s personal secretary, David Rizzio, and thought that the two were having an affair. In 1566 a group of Scottish nobles, accompanied by Darnley, stabbed Rizzio to death.

2) In 1567, Darnley was murdered. Many people believed that Mary and her close friend, the Earl of Bothwell, were behind the murder. Their suspicions seemed to be confirmed when Mary married Bothwell a few months later.

3) This marriage was unpopular with the Scottish nobles, who rebelled against Mary. They imprisoned her and forced her to abdicate (give up the throne) in favour of her one-year-old son, James. In 1568, Mary escaped from prison and raised an army. Her forces were defeated in battle and she fled south to England.

Mary was Imprisoned, but still posed a Threat

1) Mary hoped that Elizabeth would help her regain control of Scotland. Elizabeth was not willing to do this — Mary’s claim to the English throne meant that there would be a constant threat of invasion from the north if Mary regained power in Scotland.

2) Instead, Elizabeth had Mary imprisoned and set up an inquiry to investigate whether she had been involved in Darnley’s murder.

3) Elizabeth didn’t want the inquiry to find Mary guilty. A guilty verdict would lend support to the actions of the Scottish nobles, who had overthrown Mary, their legitimate queen.

4) However, Elizabeth didn’t want a not-guilty verdict either, because this would force her to release Mary. Once free, Mary might use her claim to the English throne to try and overthrow Elizabeth.

5) In the end, the inquiry didn’t reach a verdict — this enabled Elizabeth to keep Mary in captivity. Elizabeth hoped that imprisoning Mary would prevent her becoming the centre of Catholic plots, but Mary’s presence caused problems for Elizabeth throughout the next 20 years (see p.97-99).

Elizabeth really wasn’t a fan of uninvited guests...

All this stuff happened before 1568, but it’s still really important. Mary crops up again later, so you need to understand how she ended up in England and why she was a threat to Elizabeth.

Elizabethan England, c.1568-1603
The Northern Rebellion

Mary, Queen of Scots, had barely been in England five minutes when she began causing trouble for Elizabeth.

The Northern Nobles were unhappy for Several Reasons

1) Many northern nobles were still committed Catholics. They wanted to see the restoration of Catholicism in England under a Catholic monarch. The arrival of Mary, Queen of Scots, in 1568 (see p.95) gave them hope that Elizabeth could be replaced with Mary.

2) Elizabeth had confiscated large areas of land from the Earl of Northumberland and shared them between Northumberland’s main rival in the north and a southern Protestant. Northumberland was also angry that Elizabeth had claimed all the profits from copper mines discovered on his estates.

3) Elizabeth had reduced the power of the northern nobles and increased her control in the north. In part, she did this through the Council of the North, which helped to govern the region. Under Elizabeth, the Council was controlled by southern Protestants. The northern nobles deeply resented this.

4) The northern nobles blamed Elizabeth’s advisors for these policies. They believed that some privy councillors, especially William Cecil (see p.84), had become too powerful. They wanted to remove these ‘evil counsellors’ and replace them with men who would be more sympathetic to their interests.

The Northern Rebellion broke out in November 1569

1) In 1569 the Duke of Norfolk (the wealthiest landowner in England) hatched a plan to marry Mary, Queen of Scots, and have her recognised as Elizabeth’s heir. This plan was supported by Catholic nobles, including the Earls of Northumberland and Westmorland, because it meant that Elizabeth would be succeeded by a Catholic queen.

2) When the plan was uncovered, the Earls feared they would be executed for their involvement. In a desperate attempt to escape punishment, they rebelled and tried to overthrow Elizabeth.

3) In November 1569, the Earls captured Durham, where they celebrated Catholic Mass in the cathedral. They then marched south, probably making for Tutbury in Derbyshire, where Mary was imprisoned.

4) Before the rebels reached Tutbury, a large royal army forced them to retreat. Many of their troops deserted, and the two Earls fled to Scotland. Elizabeth showed the rebels little mercy. Westmorland fled abroad, but Northumberland was executed, as were at least 400 rebel troops.

The revolt was a Serious Threat to Elizabeth’s rule

1) The Northern Rebellion was the most serious rebellion of Elizabeth’s reign. It posed a major threat to Elizabeth’s rule and showed the danger that Mary, Queen of Scots, represented as a rallying point for English Catholics.

2) News of the rebellion created widespread fear among English Protestants about the threat posed by Catholics, and contributed to growing anti-Catholic feelings. These views were fuelled by memories of the harsh persecution of Protestants during the reign of Queen Mary I.

3) There was little support for the revolt among the rest of the Catholic nobility and ordinary people — when given a choice between Elizabeth and their religion, most Catholics chose to support the Queen. 1569-70 was the last time that English Catholics tried to remove Elizabeth by force.

Comment and Analysis

The Northern Rebellion sought to protect the long-standing independence of the northern nobles, but in the end it increased government control in the north of England. After the revolt, many rebels had their lands confiscated. The Council of the North was also strengthened under the leadership of the Puritan, Henry Hastings, Earl of Huntingdon.

Those northern earls were revolting...

As well as knowing what happened in Elizabethan England, you also need to know why things happened — so be sure to learn what caused events like the Northern Rebellion.

Elizabethan England, c.1568-1603
The Catholic Threat

The Catholic threat got even worse throughout the 1570s and early 1580s. As a result, Elizabeth and her government became less and less tolerant of Catholicism.

The Pope Expelled Elizabeth from the Catholic Church

1) In 1570, Elizabeth was excommunicated (expelled from the Catholic Church) by the Pope. This meant Catholics no longer had to obey the Queen and were encouraged to overthrow her.

2) Together with the Northern Rebellion (see p.96), the excommunication changed Elizabeth's attitude towards Catholics. They were now seen as potential traitors, so Elizabeth and her government became less tolerant of recusancy (refusal to go to church) by Catholics.

3) In response to the excommunication, Parliament passed the Treasons Act in 1571. Under this Act, anyone who claimed that Elizabeth wasn't England's legitimate ruler could face the death penalty.

Missionary Priests strengthened English Catholicism

1) In 1568, William Allen founded a missionary college at Douai (now in France) to train English Catholic priests. Once trained, these missionary priests would return to England and secretly minister to English Catholics. The first missionary priests reached England in 1574.

2) In 1580, the missionaries Robert Parsons and Edmund Campion (who had both trained at a missionary college in Rome) entered the country. Campion was executed for treason in December 1581.

3) In the 1560s, Elizabeth had tolerated recusancy because she believed that English Catholicism would gradually die out as the religious settlement became more firmly established.

4) However, the arrival of the missionary priests from the 1570s changed things — with the support of these highly-committed missionaries, it was now unlikely that Catholicism in England would just fade away on its own. This strengthening of Catholicism was a major threat to the religious settlement.

In response to the threat from missionary priests, Parliament passed two anti-Catholic Acts in 1581. These Acts:
- Massively increased the fines for recusancy, making them too expensive for most ordinary Catholics.
- Introduced fines and prison sentences for people who said or attended Catholic Mass.
- Made it treason (which was punishable by death) to convert to Catholicism or persuade others to convert.
-Introduced prison sentences and the death penalty for anyone who encouraged rebellion.

Catholic Plots aimed to put Mary on the English Throne

1) Between 1571 and 1585 there were several Catholic plots to assassinate Elizabeth and replace her with Mary, Queen of Scots. They included the Ridolfi Plot (1571), the Throckmorton Plot (1583) and the Babington Plot (1586, see p.98).

2) The plots involved Catholic conspirators in England and Europe. They were supported by the Pope and Catholic rulers, especially King Philip II of Spain.

3) The plots were a real threat to Elizabeth's rule and her religious settlement (p.94). Mary's strong claim to the throne (p.95) made them seem credible, and Philip II's involvement meant there was a risk they would lead to a Spanish invasion.

Comment and Analysis

Missionary priests supported the Catholic plots to assassinate Elizabeth. They wanted England to return to Catholicism and believed this could only be achieved if Elizabeth was removed.

4) However, none of the plots succeeded. This was partly because there was little public support for a Catholic revolution (as the Northern Rebellion had shown). Also, by the 1580s Elizabeth's Principal Secretary, Francis Walsingham, had established a highly efficient spy network, which ensured that the plots were uncovered before they were carried out.

Don't lose the plot, just learn this page...

Write a couple of sentences to explain why each of the following factors was a threat to Elizabeth and her religious settlement: excommunication, missionary priests, Catholic plots.
The Catholic Threat

In 1586 Walsingham used his spy network to prove that Mary had supported the Babington Plot. His evidence persuaded Elizabeth to put Mary on trial and execute her for treason.

Persecution of Catholics Increased in the 1580s

1) In 1584 the Dutch Protestant leader, William the Silent, was assassinated by a Catholic. Combined with the arrival of missionary priests and the Catholic plots against Elizabeth, this assassination made the government even more concerned about the Catholic threat in England.

2) As a result, persecution of Catholics increased. Anti-Catholic laws were enforced more strictly than they had been earlier in Elizabeth’s reign, and in 1585 Parliament passed two new laws:
   - Mary, Queen of Scots, wouldn’t be allowed to become queen if Elizabeth was assassinated. It was hoped that this would put a stop to the plots involving Mary.
   - Missionary priests had 40 days to leave the country. Any priests who didn’t leave could be executed, as could anyone who tried to help them.

The Babington Plot led to the Execution of Mary, Queen of Scots

1) In 1586, Francis Walsingham used his spy network to gather evidence of Mary, Queen of Scots’ involvement in the Babington Plot. He intercepted and decoded Mary’s letters, including one which approved plans to assassinate the Queen and free Mary from prison.

2) Mary had been implicated in Catholic plots before, but Elizabeth had always refused to take action against her. The evidence gathered by Walsingham finally persuaded her to put Mary on trial.

3) In October 1586, Mary was found guilty of treason and sentenced to death. Despite the guilty verdict, Elizabeth was very reluctant to execute Mary. Parliament and the Privy Council believed that the execution was vital to weaken the Catholic threat and protect the religious settlement, so they put pressure on Elizabeth to sign Mary’s death warrant.

4) After hesitating for several months, Elizabeth eventually agreed to the execution. Mary was executed on 8th February 1587.

Mary’s execution Reduced the Threat from Catholics at Home...

The execution of Mary, Queen of Scots, removed the Catholic threat to Elizabeth at home. English Catholics now had no-one to rally around, and they lost hope of ever overthrowing Elizabeth and reversing the religious settlement. There were no more major Catholic plots during Elizabeth’s reign.

...but it Increased the Threat from Abroad

1) In 1587, relations with Spain were at a low point — the two countries were now at war over the Netherlands, and King Philip II had been preparing for an attack on England since 1585 (see p.100). Mary’s execution made the situation worse. Philip was now even more determined to invade.

2) There was also a danger that Mary’s son, James VI of Scotland might seek revenge for his mother’s death. There were fears that he would form an alliance with other Catholic powers in order to invade England.

The Babington Plot wasn’t very well executed...

Give an account of the ways missionary priests affected England in the 1570s and 1580s. [8]

Elizabethan England, c.1568-1603
The Puritan Threat

As if the Catholic threat wasn't bad enough, the religious settlement also faced a threat from the other end of the religious spectrum. The Puritans were committed Protestants who wanted to purify the English Church.

The Puritans wanted to make the English Church More Protestant

The Puritans were committed Protestants. For them, the religious settlement of 1559 was only a first step in purifying the Church of England — they wanted further reforms that would make the Church more Protestant.

1) They were strongly anti-Catholic and wanted to remove all traces of Catholicism from the Church.

2) They believed that preaching (explaining the word of God) was very important. They thought that all priests should be well educated so that they'd be able to preach. At the time, this was unusual — many priests lacked education and didn't preach at all.

3) The Puritans also encouraged the education of ordinary people, so that they would be able to read and understand the Bible for themselves.

4) They were very strict about godly living (obeying all of God's commandments).

Some Puritans were more radical. They wanted to get rid of the Church hierarchy of archbishops, bishops, etc. This view was a threat to Elizabeth because it called into question her authority as Supreme Governor of the Church — the head of the hierarchy.

The 'Prophesyings' taught Priests how to Preach

1) By the 1570s, the Puritans were concerned about the lack of educated priests who were able to preach. So they introduced the 'prophesyings' — a kind of training to teach priests how to preach.

2) Elizabeth thought that the 'prophesyings' would encourage more Puritan opposition to the religious settlement. In 1576, she ordered the Archbishop of Canterbury, Edmund Grindal, to put a stop to them.

3) Grindal (a moderate Puritan) thought the 'prophesyings' were good for the Church, so he refused to obey Elizabeth's order. This made Elizabeth furious. She suspended Grindal and put him under house arrest.

Archbishop Whitgift tried to Suppress Puritanism

1) In 1583 Grindal died and Elizabeth made John Whitgift Archbishop of Canterbury. With Elizabeth's support, Whitgift launched an attack on Puritan clergy — all priests had to accept the regulations of the Church of England or face suspension. Between 200 and 300 Puritan priests were suspended.

2) Whitgift's campaign made some Puritans feel that there was no hope of reforming the Church of England. Instead, they decided to break away and form a separate church.

3) These Puritan separatists were seen as a major threat to the religious settlement. The government introduced censorship laws to prevent them spreading their ideas, and in 1590 several of their leaders were arrested.

4) The threat from Puritan separatists probably wasn't as serious as Elizabeth and her government thought. There weren't many separatists and they didn't have the support of any powerful members of the elite. Most Puritans were moderates who worked within the Church of England.

The Puritans wanted the Church to be pure and simple...

The different religious groups in Elizabethan England can be pretty confusing. You need to know what the Puritans believed, and how they were different from Catholics and moderate Protestants.
War with Spain

England and Spain tried to stay on good terms, but the growing tensions between them eventually led to war.

There were Political, Religious and Economic tensions with Spain

King Philip II of Spain had been married to Queen Mary I of England, and the two countries had been allies. Elizabeth and Philip tried to maintain good relations, but tensions between them gradually began to grow.

Political

Spain was a great imperial power. In Europe, Philip ruled Spain, the Netherlands, parts of Italy and (from 1581) Portugal. He also had a large empire in the Americas. By the 1570s, England was starting to have ambitions for an empire of its own (p.92-93). This led to growing rivalry and tension between the two countries.

Religious

Philip was a devout Catholic and disliked Elizabeth's religious settlement. He became involved in several Catholic plots against Elizabeth in the 1570s and 1580s (p.97-98), which damaged Elizabeth's trust in him.

Economic

Elizabeth encouraged privateers to trade illegally with Spanish colonies, raid Spanish ships and attack the treasure fleets carrying gold and silver from the Americas to Spain.

In the 1560s, an English fleet, commanded by John Hawkins, traded with Spanish colonies, even though Spain had banned them from doing so (p.92). This led to the Battle of San Juan de Ulloa in 1568. Francis Drake also raided many Spanish colonies in South America during his round-the-world voyage of 1577-80 (p.92-93).

England and Spain eventually went to War over the Netherlands

1) In 1581, Protestant rebels in the Netherlands declared independence from Spain. In 1584 the rebel leader, William the Silent, was assassinated, and the revolt was in danger of being defeated.

2) Elizabeth decided to help the rebels — in 1585 she signed the Treaty of Nonsuch, which promised military assistance. Religious, economic and military factors influenced her decision:

- Elizabeth wanted to protect Dutch Protestantism and prevent Philip forcing Catholicism on the Netherlands.
- English exports to Europe were vital to the English economy, and many English goods reached the European market via Dutch ports, especially Antwerp. Elizabeth needed to ensure that English merchants would have access to the Dutch ports.
- If the rebels were defeated, Philip might use the Netherlands as a base for an invasion of England.

3) Philip saw the Treaty of Nonsuch as a declaration of war on Spain. In response, he began building a huge fleet (an Armada) that he planned to use to invade England.

Drake was sent to Disrupt Spanish Preparations for the Armada

1) Elizabeth sent Drake to spy on Spanish preparations and attack their ships and supplies. In April 1587, Drake attacked the Spanish port of Cadiz. He destroyed around 30 ships and seized many tonnes of supplies.

2) This delayed the Armada by more than a year. Obtaining fresh supplies and weapons was very expensive and seriously strained Spain's finances.

3) During his raid, Drake captured planks made from seasoned wood, which were needed to make the barrels used to carry food and water.

4) As a result, the Spanish had to make their barrels from unseasoned wood, which couldn't preserve food and water very well. This caused supply problems for the Armada and affected the morale of Spanish troops and sailors. Fresh water supplies were lost and many tons of food rotted as the fleet sailed to England in 1588.

Comment and Analysis

Drake described his raid on Cadiz as 'singeing the King of Spain's beard'. He meant that he had inflicted temporary damage on King Philip's Armada, but hadn't destroyed it entirely — it would 'grow back' in time.

The Americas — a whole New World of commercial rivalry...

England's relationship with Spain was a major headache for Elizabeth throughout her reign. Make sure you understand how and why the relationship changed over time.

Elizabethan England, c.1568-1603
The Spanish Armada

The Spanish Armada was launched in 1588, but right from the start, things didn't go according to plan...

The Armada Planned to meet the Duke of Parma at Dunkirk

1) By the spring of 1588, the Spanish Armada was complete and Philip was ready to launch his 'Enterprise of England'. The Armada was a huge fleet of around 130 ships, manned by approximately 8000 sailors and carrying an estimated 18,000 soldiers.

2) Philip appointed the Duke of Medina Sidonia to lead the Armada. Philip respected the Duke's high social status and trusted him to obey instructions. However, the Duke had little military or naval experience, and he tried unsuccessfully to turn down the command.

3) The Spanish had thousands more soldiers stationed in the Netherlands under the leadership of the Duke of Parma. Philip's plan was for the Armada to meet Parma's army at Dunkirk. The combined forces would then sail across the Channel to England under the protection of the Armada's warships.

The Armada reached the English Channel in July 1588

1) The Armada set out in May 1588, but was delayed for several weeks by bad weather in the Bay of Biscay and by the attempts of an English fleet to intercept it.

2) In July the Spanish fleet was sighted off Cornwall and beacons (signal fires) were lit along the south coast to send the news to Elizabeth in London. English ships set sail from Plymouth to meet the Armada.

3) The Armada sailed up the Channel in a crescent formation. This was an effective defensive strategy, which used the large, armed galleons to protect the weaker supply and troop ships.

4) The English navy carried out a few minor raids, but was unable to inflict much damage. Only two Spanish ships were lost, and these were both destroyed by accident.

The English Attacked the Spanish at Calais and Gravelines

1) Having sailed up the Channel, Medina Sidonia anchored at Calais to wait for Parma's troops. However, Parma and his men were being blockaded by Dutch ships and weren't able to reach the coast in time.

2) In the middle of the night, the English sent eight fireships (ships loaded with flammable materials and set on fire) among the anchored Spanish ships. This caused panic among the Spanish sailors, who cut their anchor cables, broke their defensive formation and headed for the open sea.

3) The Spanish ships regrouped at Gravelines, but the weather made it impossible for them to return to their defensive position at Calais. The English moved in, and the following battle lasted for many hours. Five Spanish ships were sunk, and the rest of the fleet was forced to sail away from the French coast and into the North Sea.

4) An English fleet followed the Spanish as far north as Scotland to make sure they did not regroup and return to collect Parma's army.

So much for King Philip's cunning plan...

Have another read of the last two pages, then cover them up and jot down a timeline of the Spanish Armada. Include all the key events from the Treaty of Nonsuch to the Battle of Gravelines.
The Spanish Armada

The English navy had defeated the Armada, and the Spanish ships now faced a dangerous journey home.

**The Armada’s Journey back to Spain was a Disaster**

1) Medina Sidonia decided to call off the attack on England and return to Spain by sailing round Scotland and Ireland. The Spanish sailors were unfamiliar with this very dangerous route, and they encountered several powerful Atlantic storms.

2) Many ships sank or were wrecked on the Scottish and Irish coasts, where the local inhabitants showed the survivors little mercy. Those ships that completed the journey ran short of supplies, and many men died of starvation and disease. In all, less than half the fleet and fewer than 10,000 men made it back to Spain.

**Several Factors contributed to the Defeat of the Armada**

**English Strengths**

- The English had improved their ship building, giving them several technological advantages. Spain relied on large ships which were heavy and difficult to handle, whereas the English built long, narrow ships which were faster and easier to handle. English cannons could also be reloaded much more quickly than Spanish ones.

- English tactics were more effective. Spanish ships aimed to come alongside their opponents, board their vessels and overcome the enemy in hand-to-hand fighting. The Spanish couldn’t use this tactic against the English, who used their greater mobility to stay out of range. Instead of boarding the Spanish ships, the English fired broadsides (massive barrages of cannonballs) which could sink them.

**Spanish Weaknesses**

- Most of Spain’s men lacked experience of naval warfare, whereas the English fleet was manned by experienced sailors.

- The Spanish plan to meet the Duke of Parma at Dunkirk was seriously flawed. Spain didn’t control a deep water port where the Armada could anchor safely, so the ships were extremely vulnerable to an attack while they waited for Parma’s troops to escape the Dutch blockade.

**Luck**

- The death of Spain’s leading admiral, Santa Cruz, in February 1588, led to the appointment of the inexperienced Duke of Medina Sidonia to lead the Armada.

- The weather made it impossible for the Spanish fleet to return to the Channel after the battle of Gravelines, forcing it to travel into the dangerous waters off the Scottish and Irish coasts.

**England’s Victory Removed the threat of a Spanish Invasion**

1) Philip sent two further Armadas in the 1590s, but they were both unsuccessful. Although war with Spain continued for 15 years, the Armada of 1588 was the last serious Spanish threat to Elizabeth’s throne.

2) The victory of 1588 contributed to England’s development as a strong naval power to rival Spain. English ships went on many voyages of discovery and established valuable trade routes, especially with India and the Far East (see p.92). By the end of Elizabeth’s reign, the navy was also playing an important role in attempts to set up an English colony in North America (see p.93).

3) The English victory boosted Elizabeth’s popularity and strengthened the Protestant cause — it was seen as a sign that God favoured Protestantism.

**The defeat of the Armada — a great English victory...**

Why did England defeat the Spanish Armada in 1588? Explain your answer. [8]

Elizabethan England, c.1568-1603
Revision Summary

That's the Elizabethans all done and dusted — time to test your knowledge with a quick revision summary.

- Try these questions and tick off each one when you get it right.
- When you've done all the questions for a topic and are completely happy with it, tick off the topic.

Elizabeth's Court and Parliament (p.82-87)

1) Describe Queen Elizabeth I's character.
2) Explain what the term 'patronage' means.
3) What was the role of the Privy Council?
4) Name three of Elizabeth's key ministers.
5) What were Parliament's main functions?
6) Give three ways in which Elizabeth and her Privy Council managed Parliament.
7) Why was Elizabeth under pressure to find a husband?
8) How did Elizabeth's Privy Council change towards the end of her reign?
9) Who was Robert Devereux? Briefly describe his rebellion against Elizabeth.

Life in Elizabethan Times (p.88-93)

10) Why did the problem of poverty get worse in the 1590s?
11) What were the three categories of poor people in Elizabethan England?
12) Describe how the Poor Laws of 1597 and 1601 treated the deserving and undeserving poor.
13) Give four ways in which members of the Elizabethan elite spent their growing wealth.
14) Describe the layout of Elizabethan theatres.
15) Name three Elizabethan acting companies.
16) Why were some people opposed to the theatre?
17) Who was John Hawkins?
18) What did Francis Drake do between 1577 and 1580? Why was this a major achievement?
19) Who organised the attempted colonisation of Virginia in the 1580s?
20) Why is Roanoke known as the 'Lost Colony'?

Troubles at Home and Abroad (p.94-102)

21) Name the two Acts of the Elizabethan religious settlement.
22) Why did Mary, Queen of Scots, have a strong claim to the English throne?
23) Give three reasons for the 1569 Northern Rebellion.
24) How did Elizabeth's government respond to the threat posed by missionary priests?
25) Name three Catholic plots against Elizabeth.
26) Why was Elizabeth reluctant to execute Mary, Queen of Scots?
27) Explain how radical Puritans wanted to change the Church.
28) Who was John Whitgift? What was his role in dealing with the Puritan threat?
29) Why did England and Spain go to war in 1585?
30) Explain what the phrase 'the singeing of the King of Spain's beard' means.
31) Who led the Spanish Armada?
32) How did the English attack the Armada at Calais?
33) Write down four reasons why the English navy defeated the Spanish Armada.

Elizabethan England, c.1568-1603