

Queen Elizabeth I

Reading comprehension

Elizabeth is often remembered as successfully reigning over the Golden Age in England. She was widely acknowledged to have been a powerful, but fair monarch. She is also remembered for being a different kind of queen. She was only the second queen in English history to rule in her own right, so she had to prove a lot of naysayers wrong throughout her reign.

Early life

Elizabeth Tudor was born on 7th September 1533. Her father was Henry VIII and her mother was his second wife, Anne Boleyn. Her mother was cruelly executed when she was only two years old. Henry VIII accused her mother of adultery and plotting to kill him, so she was ordered to be executed.

Life in the Royal Family

Due to losing her mother so young, Elizabeth had a tough upbringing. After her mother's death, her father neglected her and Elizabeth was removed from the line of succession (which means her birth right to inherit the throne). Unfortunately for Elizabeth, Henry was desperate for a male heir to succeed him onto the throne. Elizabeth was welcomed back into the family after Catherine Parr, Henry's sixth wife, pushed for father and daughter to be reunited. From this point, Elizabeth received a good education and mended her relationship with her father.



Becoming queen

When her father died, his nine-year-old son, King Edward VI, took to the throne to rule England. After Edward's tragic and untimely death in 1553, Henry's eldest daughter, Mary I, became queen and reigned for five years until her death in 1558. Elizabeth finally ascended the throne and became Queen Elizabeth I in 1558 when she was twenty-five years old. Her coronation took place on 15th January 1559 and it was an incredibly impressive and ornate celebration. Elizabeth walked among the ordinary people and gladly received flowers from them.

The fair queen

Elizabeth tried hard to be a more tolerant ruler than Mary – her desire was to make England a fairer place for everyone. She was a very intelligent woman, who surrounded herself with ministers who had a similar attitude to her, and would help her to rule fairly.



Elizabeth did have some doubters early on in her reign, as some people thought women were not suited to ruling a country. She proved them wrong by showing how she could be a ruthless leader like her father.

Known for her vanity

It is widely accepted in history that Elizabeth was a very vain woman, especially during her time as queen. She wore a big red wig, fine robes, expensive jewels and thick make up to make sure she always looked her best. Whenever somebody painted her portrait she would vet it to make sure it showed her in the most positive light possible. Her downfall was she had a very sweet tooth, so her teeth ended up black and rotten!

The childless queen

Elizabeth never married and she didn't have any children, so this meant there was no direct succession to her throne. When she died there were no more kings or queens from the Tudor family. During her reign, Elizabeth was encouraged to find a husband, as her advisors thought a man would be good for support and provide an heir for succession. In 1566, Parliament tried to force Elizabeth into marriage by refusing to give her any more money until she agreed to marry. Elizabeth refused to back down, saying, "I am already bound unto a husband, which is the Kingdom of England". She knew that marriage would mean sharing her power with her husband, and she was not willing to become less powerful. Many men did propose to Elizabeth, but she never accepted any proposal. She is remembered as the 'Virgin Queen'.

The Golden Age

This period of history is often called the 'Golden Age' for Great Britain. Many ground-breaking things happened, for example discovery of new lands and colonies being set up overseas, by explorers such as Sir Francis Drake. The arts were becoming increasingly popular and people started to enjoy going to the theatre for the first time. This helped William Shakespeare, a now world-famous playwright, become very popular. Queen Elizabeth attended the first performance of Shakespeare's 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'.

Later life

Elizabeth's health dipped in the early 1600s. She died on 24th March 1603. She had sat on the throne for 44 years and was a very popular queen. She was to be the last Tudor monarch due to the fact she had never had any children. James VI of Scotland, who was Mary Queen of Scots' son, was named King James I of England.