

Part two: Life in Elizabethan England

Key people

Privateers

Sir Francis Drake (1540-1596)

English privateer and sailor who became the first Englishman to circumnavigate the globe in 1577. He led a fleet during the Spanish Armada.

Sir Walter Raleigh (1552-1618)

English sailor and explorer who is credited with exploring the New World and colonising North America. Became one of Elizabeth's favourites at Court.

Sir John Hawkins (1532-1595)

An English privateer and naval commander regarded as the first to involve England in the Atlantic Slave Trade.

Cultural figures

William Shakespeare (1564-1916)

Famously known as 'The Bard', Shakespeare wrote 37 plays, mostly during Elizabeth's reign. He was partly responsible for the opening of the Globe Theatre. Regarded as one of England's greatest writers.

Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593)

Poet and playwright known for *Dr Faustus*. Marlowe was rumoured to be a government spy but was killed during a bar brawl.

Elizabeth of Shrewsbury, or Bess of Hardwick (1527-1608)

Elizabeth's lady in waiting, Bess was one of England's wealthiest women. She built Hardwick Hall in 1590 which has become a symbol of Elizabethan grandeur.

Nicholas Hilliard (1547-1619)

English goldsmith best known for his miniature portraits of members of Elizabeth's court. A favourite of Elizabeth, Hilliard painted a 'booke of portraitures' for Robert Dudley.

Key terms

Able-bodied poor

Poor people in England who were physically able to work but could not find employment.

Alms

Charity provided by local parish.

Alms-house

Place that provided charity (alms).

Circumnavigate

Travel around the globe.

Enclosure farming

Farming techniques that changed strips of land for crops to open fields for sheep.

Gentry

Well-born families who owned land, but did not inherit titles so were below the rank of nobility.

Gloriana

Popular name given to Elizabeth I.

Golden Age

A time of cultural and historical importance.

Idle poor

Poor people who were regarded as lazy and criminals.

Impotent poor

The poor in England who were too old/young/sick to work.

Privateer

Pirates licensed by the government to attack and loot enemy ships.

Sumptuary Laws

Laws passed governing clothing based on standing in society.

Vagabond/Vagrant

A homeless, unemployed person who wanders from place to place and begs.

Voyages of Discovery

Journey's across the globe that brought discoveries and wealth to England.

Key events

Poverty in Elizabethan England

Causes

- Henry VIII's policies and actions e.g. Dissolution of the monasteries e.g. Henry VIII's wars led to high taxes.
- Famines even before Elizabeth became Queen.
- Population growth between 1550-1600.
- Changes in farming – enclosures meant less common land.

Views on poverty

- Believed that 'idle poor' were dishonest and lazy 'vagrants' using new methods being used to trick people.
- Considered a threat to the social order Vagrancy also blamed for spread of disease from town to town.
- Puritans in particular disapproved of vagrancy.

Success

- Government taking responsibility was established e.g. Poor Rate
- Lasted until 1834
- Prevented rebellion caused by poverty

Failure

- Did not challenge attitudes towards poverty – still focussed on punishment rather than support
- The Poor Law was not actually used much.
- Poverty continued to increase.

Elizabethan culture

- This was the time of the Renaissance or rebirth of learning
- Developments took place in art, portraiture, symbolism, miniature portraits.
- Developments of the theatre included Shakespeare. The theatre became a centre for entertainment of all classes. Plays were also used as political propaganda.
- The gentry were gaining more power and the nobility in decline as trade became more important and brought wealth to the gentry. Fortunes were made through trade and exploration. They used this wealth to build themselves grand houses and to educate themselves.
- BUT This was a time of blood sports and life expectancy was low. There was a belief in the 'Great Chain of Being' with a rigid adherence to hierarchy, poor being at the bottom. Sumptuary Laws were even based to dictate clothing based on class.

Voyages of Discovery

Francis Drake - Most famous English explorer who increased hostility with Spain through his privateering actions, sealing an estimated £480 million from Spanish ships. First Englishman to circumnavigate the globe in 1577. Helped win the Spanish Armada

John Hawkins – First Englishman involved in slave trade, he made three voyages to the Caribbean where he traded enslaved people he had captured in West Africa. Helped design new ships which helped make the English Navy superior

Walter Raleigh - Named an area of North America Virginia in honour of Elizabeth, one of earliest attempts at colonisation.

Impact of voyages of discovery:

- Increase the hostility between the Spanish and the English e.g. because of actions of English privateers.
- It brought great wealth to individuals such as merchants. The wealth and new lands gained helped build up England's reputation
- Elizabethan exploration extended England's global links, creating new trade routes and monopolies.
- Elizabethan exploration led to the development of Britain's Navy.
- The establishment of colonies under Elizabeth (e.g. in India and America) increased England's political importance

Timeline

1564

1571

1572

1574

1577

1597

1599

1601

