

Queen Elizabeth I

Reading comprehension

Elizabeth is often remembered as a powerful and popular monarch. She tried hard to be a different kind of queen as she wanted to be fair to all of her subjects. 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.

What was early life like for Elizabeth?

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. For a long time after her mother's death, Elizabeth was neglected by her father, but she was welcomed back into the family after Catherine Parr (Henry's sixth wife) pushed for father and daughter to be reunited.



How did Elizabeth become queen?

When her father died, his nine-year-old son and Elizabeth's brother, King Edward VI, took to the throne to rule England. After Edward's tragic death in 1553, Henry's eldest daughter, Mary I, became queen and reigned for five years until her death in 1558. Elizabeth finally became queen in 1558 when she was twenty-five years old.

What was Elizabeth like as 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 helpful ministers. It is widely reported 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. She would vet any painting of her before it was shown to anyone else.



Why was she called the 'Virgin Queen'?

Elizabeth never married and she didn't have any children, so this meant there was no direct succession to her throne. At times, Elizabeth was encouraged to find a husband, as her advisors thought a man would be good for support and provide an heir for succession. Elizabeth did not want to share her power with a husband.

What was the Golden Age?

This period of history is often called the 'Golden Age' for Great Britain. There was a lot of exciting things happening, such as a lot of discovery of new land and colonies were being set up overseas, by explorers such as Sir Francis Drake. The arts became very popular and people started to enjoy going to the theatre. This helped William Shakespeare, a world-famous playwright, become very popular.

What happened in Elizabeth's later life?

Elizabeth 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.

