

The Spanish Armada, 1588

The defeat of the Spanish Armada was one of Britain's most successful sea battles. But why did Spain and England go to war, and what really happened?



What was the problem between the Spanish and the English?

The Spanish went to war against Britain for two reasons: religion and power. Before Elizabeth became queen, Philip II, King of Spain, was married to Queen Mary I. Like Philip, Mary was a strong Catholic. When she died, Elizabeth became queen. Like her father, Henry VIII,

Elizabeth was a Protestant, and England became a Protestant country again.

In the sixteenth century, Spain was the richest country in the world. The Spanish sailed to the Americas and bought back lots of gold. English explorers, like Sir Francis Drake, often attacked Spanish ships and towns in South America, and brought their gold back to England. Philip

wanted this to stop. He wanted Britain to become part of the Spanish empire, and to become a Catholic country again.

The battle

The Spanish Armada was made up of 130 ships, led by Medina Sidonia. The English only had 66

ships. They were led by Francis Drake. The Armada left Spain in June 1588. English ships tried to fight them back to Spanish waters but storms made this impossible. The Armada sailed up the English Channel and fought with the British ships at Plymouth. They chased the British ships up the Channel, and only two Spanish ships were lost. Things looked bad for the British. Then the

“ I have the body of a weak woman but I have the heart and stomach of a man. ”

Elizabeth went to Tilbury to encourage the British army

Armada docked at Calais in France. There, the English used fireships to break up the lines of the Armada and strong winds

blew the Armada into the North Sea.

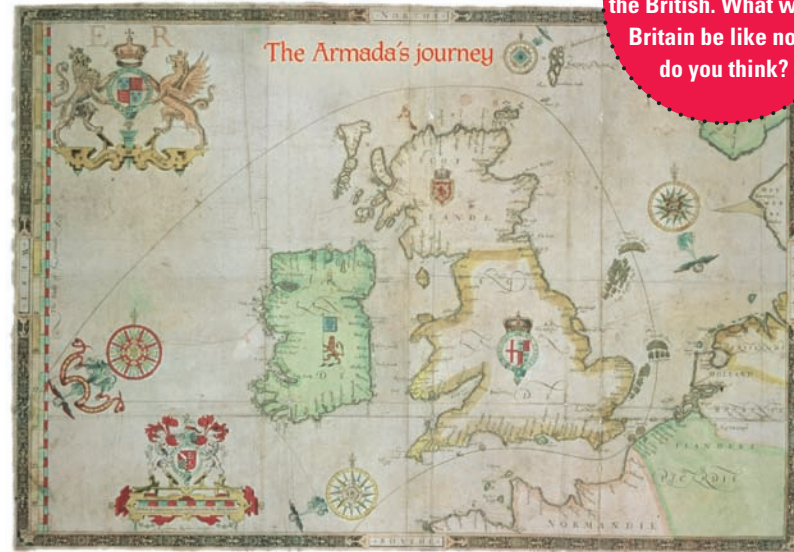
The Armada had to sail up the east coast of England, chased by the English. They sailed

around Scotland and Ireland through very bad storms. Many of their ships were lost.

After the Armada

There were lots of parties and celebrations in England after the defeat of the Armada. Many Protestants believed that God had saved the British.

Imagine that the Spanish Armada had defeated the British. What would Britain be like now, do you think?



What do these words mean? You can use a dictionary.
defeat battle power empire encourage dock

Elizabethan* England:

A Golden Age?

* Elizabeth I was queen from 1558 – 1603. We call this time 'Elizabethan'.



The reign of Elizabeth I is often called a 'Golden Age'. England was changing. Explorers like Walter Raleigh travelled around the world to find new countries and brought back fine things. At Elizabeth's court, people wore beautiful clothes, ate lots of good food and had expensive parties. Elizabeth loved art and music, and there were many Elizabethan artists, musicians and writers. But what was life like for ordinary people?

Town and country

During Elizabeth's reign, the number of people in England grew quickly. There wasn't always enough food for everyone, and a lot of people didn't have jobs. Elizabeth did more than any other king or queen to help the poor. For the first time, people with jobs had to pay taxes to help the poor.

There were fewer jobs in the country and on the farms, and so many people came to the cities to find a better life. In the late 1500s, London was the

biggest city in Europe. It was exciting, full of life but very dirty. People lived very closely together and there was lots of illness, like the plague. This killed thousands of people during Elizabeth's reign. There weren't many doctors and only the rich had the money to pay for them.

Free time

The Elizabethans liked to enjoy themselves! In cities, like London, there were playhouses where people could watch plays by writers of the time, such as Shakespeare. These



were popular with everyone – rich and poor. People played games for money and went to the 'alehouses', which were like pubs. Music and dancing were also popular in both town and country.

School and work

Only boys from rich families went to school. Their sisters sometimes had lessons at home. Children from poor families never went to school and used to help their parents. Girls fetched water, built fires and looked after their younger

brothers and sisters. Boys collected firewood, and, in the country, looked after animals.

Did you know?

Elizabeth spent a lot of time travelling around England, and staying with her noblemen. Some houses were built in the shape of an 'E' to welcome her!

Discuss in pairs. What was good about life in Elizabethan England? What problems were there, do you think?

What do these words mean? You can use a dictionary.

reign tax/es plague nobleman

Explorers in the 16th Century



The sixteenth century was a time of great exploration. Many European countries, including England, wanted to discover new lands. Gold from the 'New World' made Spain and England rich. However, they destroyed old civilisations, brought with them new European illnesses and started the slave trade.

The conquistadors

The Spanish 'conquistadors' travelled to the Americas in the early 1500s, with strong armies. In South America, they fought the local people – the Aztecs in Mexico, and the Incas in Peru. They took gold back to Spain, and formed Spanish colonies throughout South America and the Caribbean.

What do these words mean? You can use a dictionary.

exploration civilisation slave / slave trade colony pirate tobacco



Sir Francis Drake

FRANCIS DRAKE: great explorer or dangerous pirate?

Francis Drake first went to sea at a young age. In 1567, he brought African slaves to the Americas. This was one of the first British slave journeys. His ships were attacked by the Spanish who became his life-long enemies. The Spanish king hated Drake and saw him as a pirate.

A few years later, Drake travelled to the West Indies. He attacked Spanish towns, and brought lots of Spanish gold and silver back to England. Pleased with his success, Queen Elizabeth sent him to attack Spanish colonies on the Pacific coast. During this journey, he became the first man to travel all the way round the world. A few months after this, Elizabeth gave him the title of 'Sir' Francis Drake. In 1596, he became ill on one of his journeys, and died.

WALTER RALEIGH: adventurer, writer and favourite of the Queen!

It is said that the first time Walter Raleigh met Elizabeth, he put his cloak over a puddle for her to walk across! In 1585, he sailed to North America and started the first English colony in the US. Raleigh brought back tobacco from his travels, and smoking became very popular with the queen and her court. He became 'Sir' Walter Raleigh in 1587.

When Elizabeth died, James VI of Scotland became king. He didn't like Raleigh, and kept him in the Tower of London for many years. In 1616, the king allowed Raleigh to travel to South America. He hoped to find 'El Dorado' – the 'golden city'. The journey was unsuccessful. Raleigh was executed in 1618.

Imagine you are a 16th century explorer. Which countries would you like to be the first to discover? Why?



Walter Raleigh