

Elizabeth I

Elizabeth I was **queen of England for almost 45 years**. During that time her country became very powerful. Her reign is remembered as the **Elizabethan Age**.



Early Life

Elizabeth was born in Greenwich, England, on **September 7, 1533**. Her father was **King Henry VIII**. Her mother, **Anne Boleyn**, was the second of Henry's six wives. Henry put Anne Boleyn to death when Elizabeth was only 2 years old.

Elizabeth had an older half-sister named Mary and a younger half-brother named Edward. Edward became king in 1547 and died in 1553. Mary then became queen. Henry, Edward, and Elizabeth were **Protestant**, but Mary was Roman Catholic. She made Catholicism the national religion and put Elizabeth in prison for a time.

Reign

Mary died in **1558**, and Elizabeth was **crowned queen of England**. She was 25 years old. She had received a good education and was well prepared to rule. Many men wanted to marry her, but she **stayed single**. This gave her more power, but it also put her cousin **Mary Stuart** next in line for the throne. Mary Stuart, also known as Mary Queen of Scots, was a Catholic. Elizabeth kept her in prison for many years and then had her killed in 1587.

During the first 30 years of Elizabeth's reign, England built up its **sea power**. English ships sailed across the Atlantic Ocean to the West Indies and challenged Spain for control over trade. English sea captains raided Spanish ships, and Elizabeth took a share of the treasure they seized.

King Philip II of Spain struck back in **1588**. He sent a great fleet called the Armada to attack England. The queen's ships **defeated the Armada**. That victory was a high point of Elizabeth's reign.

During the 1590s Elizabeth began to suffer from ill health. She died on **March 24, 1603**. Mary Stuart's son, **James VI** of Scotland, became king of England.



QUESTIONS

1. How long did Elizabeth I reign? How is this period called?
2. When was Elizabeth I born? And who were her parents?
3. When was she crowned Queen of England?
4. Did she get married?
5. Who was Mary Stuart?
6. What did Elizabeth build during her reign?
7. Who was her successor? When did he become king?

William Shakespeare

William Shakespeare is often praised as **the world's greatest playwright**. Even if he lived 400 years ago, his plays are still studied and enjoyed today.



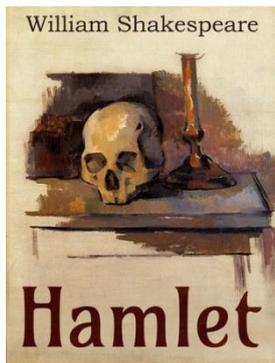
Early Life

William Shakespeare was born in **1564** in the town of **Stratford-upon-Avon**, England. His father was a **glove maker**.

Career in the Theater

By 1592 Shakespeare was working as a **writer and actor** in London. In that year a disease called the black plague devastated the city. Officials closed the theaters and other public places to stop its spread. Shakespeare then turned to writing poetry.

London's theaters reopened in 1594. By then Shakespeare had joined an acting group called **Lord Chamberlain's Men**. They often presented plays for royalty. Along with acting and writing, Shakespeare also was involved with the business side of theater. He became wealthy.



Plays

Shakespeare wrote **37 plays** in 20 years. His plays generally fall into three categories: **tragedies, comedies, and histories**. Tragedies are plays that describe the downfall of the main character. Shakespeare's most famous tragedies include *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*. Comedies are humorous plays that end happily. Shakespeare's comedies include *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *As You Like It*, and *The Taming of the Shrew*. Shakespeare's histories are dramas about some of England's powerful kings, including *Henry IV* and *Richard II*.

Later Years

Shakespeare retired from the theater in about 1610. He returned to his hometown of Stratford-upon-Avon. He died there on **April 23, 1616**.

QUESTIONS

1. What was William Shakespeare's job?
2. When and where was Shakespeare born?
3. Who was his father?
4. What happened in 1592? What were the consequences?
5. Which company did he join in 1594?
6. How many plays did he write? Which are the main categories (give one example of each)?
7. When did he retire from theatre? Where did he go then?