

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 or Golden Age**.

Early Life

Elizabeth was born in Greenwich, England, on **7th September 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 on the 15th January 1559**. She was 25 years old. She had received a good education and was well prepared to rule. The English people liked Elizabeth. Many people in the 16th century believed that a woman wasn't fit to rule, but Elizabeth was quick to prove them wrong.

Many men wanted to marry her, but she **stayed single**. Indeed, she said "I am already bound unto a husband which is the Kingdom of England". 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,



Figure 1. Elizabeth I
(<https://www.worldhistory.org/img/r/p/500x600/12284.jpg?v=1649702769>)

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**. Elizabeth sent explorers around the world. 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 Spanish Armada to attack England. On this occasion, the Queen gave a famous speech to inspire her army: "My loving people! I know I have the body of a weak woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king. I will live or die amongst you all, but I know we shall have a famous victory!". 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 **24th March 1603**. Mary Stuart's son, James VI of Scotland, became king **James I of England**.

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**.

William probably studied Latin, Greek and history, and left school when he was 14 or 15. Three years later he married Anne Hathaway. They had a daughter called Susanna and twins named Judith and Hamnet. Sometime before 1590 he left Stratford and went to London, the capital city of England.

Career in the Theater

By 1592 Shakespeare was working as a **writer and actor** in London. In 1593, a disease called the **black plague** devastated the city and killed thousands of people. Officials closed the theaters and other public places to stop its spread. During this time, Shakespeare started writing poems instead of plays. His short poems are called sonnets.

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.

Shakespeare helped build a new theatre called **The Globe**. It opened in **1599**. It was round and had space for 3,000 people. At The Globe some people stood in front of the stage and others had seats. The audience shouted, clapped, boomed and laughed while they watched plays. Musicians created special noises to make the plays more

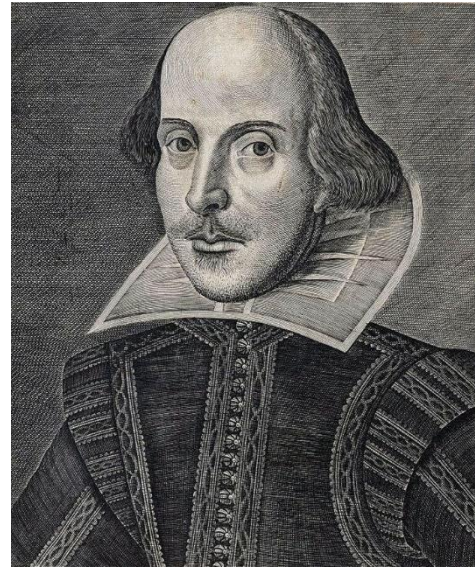


Figure 2. William Shakespeare
(https://www.wein.plus/uploads/editor/images/513318/59c2370ee39c0_q80.jpg)

exciting and they had a cannon to make big bangs! **No women acted in Shakespeare's time:** men and boys played all the parts.

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 **23rd April 1616**.

QUESTIONS – ELIZABETH I

- 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?**

QUESTIONS - WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

- 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?**