

Elizabeth and her Court

Elizabeth and her Parliaments

Key Terms

Patronage – *system of employment and favours based on knowing people personally.*
 Parliament – *law making body made up of Commons and Lords*
 House of Commons – *made up of gentry chosen by nobles*
 House of Lords – *made up of nobles and Bishops*
 Government – *group of people running the country*
 Divine Right – *the monarch's power comes from God.*
 Nobles – *people of aristocratic or high birth*
 Gentry – *land owning people who generally didn't have titles.*
 Courtier – *member of the court*
 Policies – *a course of action*
 Privy Council – *small group of advisors close to the Queen*
 Privy Chamber – *Queen's personal rooms*
 Heir – *next in line to the throne*
 Rebellion – *attempt to remove the ruler/monarch*
 Proclamation – *official announcement*
 Succession – *arrangement of who takes the throne following the Queen's death*
 Foreign Policy – *dealing with other nations*
 Monopolies – *rights to import and sell certain goods*
 Quarter Session – *local court held four times a year*
 Propaganda – *spreading a one sided message widely*
 Censorship – *preventing people from saying or publishing whatever they like*

Government through patronage

- Power came from the top down through patronage – God appointed the Queen and she chose nobles to help her rule. They appointed gentry to help them locally.
- Patronage meant that friendship and favour mattered more than talent. Personal relationships mattered.

The Court

- Nobles and higher gentry favoured by the Queen – met at Whitehall (the most) Windsor, Richmond, Greenwich and others.
- Most favoured courtiers got given accommodation at court and some built houses near Whitehall.
- Mary I had been criticised for isolating herself so Elizabeth liked to be seen in public and use her court.
- Court was a spectacle, it had; dances, plays, feasts, open-air sermons, jousting tournaments, hunting expeditions.
- The Queen relied on her nobles to keep the peace and let her know the mood of the people but they relied on her for power.
- Elizabeth offered patronage to a wide range of noble families in the form of titles, jobs, grants and pensions – this was to ensure no groups joined forces against each other or her, she learnt this lesson from her father.
- Although Elizabeth was a Protestant, she gave some power to Catholic noble families to keep their loyalty.

The Privy Chamber

- Elizabeth spent most of her day here – reading, talking, playing music or cards. Ladies in waiting looked after her, they came from noble families. They kept her informed of conversations at court. Only most trusted courtiers were allowed to discuss business in her rooms.

The Privy Council

- Met almost every day but didn't always all attend. Advised on finance, trade, law, defence. Enacted her policies.
- Privy Councillors were selected directly by the Queen, she learnt from her father that she needed to ensure they didn't gain too much individual power.
- She limited it to about 19 members, 7-8 at most meetings; she appointed councillors with different view points; she used her temper; she sometimes attended meetings; she dismissed those who offended her; she encouraged flatter and rewarded them.

Secretaries of State

- **Sir Francis Walsingham (SoS 1572-90)** strong Puritan, cold and distant, servant of the state not the Queen, she once threw a slipper at him, he wanted to repress Catholics in 1580s and pressured her, had a fit and was made to continue working and died 4 days later. Elizabeth didn't grieve.
- **Sir William Cecil, Lord Burghley (SoS 1558-72 and 1590-98)** moderate Protestant, more ready to repress Catholics than Elizabeth, thoughtful and charming, well trusted by the Queen but she did rebuke him for overstepping the mark, he persuaded her to execute Mary Queen of Scots. Died of exhaustion and Elizabeth was very sad.

The rebellion of the Earl of Essex

- Robert Devereux was good friends with the Queen in the mid 1580s, he angered the Queen a number of times, once by marrying without her permission. He was on the Privy Council from 1593. Devereux clashed with William Cecil and his son Robert, culminating in a crisis when he led an expedition to put down a rebellion in Ireland in 1599 and awarded rewards without Elizabeth's permission. He lost his jobs so then he turned to James VI of Scotland to try to plot to help him as the heir. Essex arranged for a threatening production of Shakespeare about a king giving up his throne and rode through London with 300 supporters thinking he could rebel but it collapsed. He was executed in 1601.

Parliament had less power than now. In 45 years of Elizabeth's reign they met for only 35 months overall. Parliament had three elements;

1. The monarch (rarely at meetings)
 2. The House of Lords – nobles and bishops
 3. The House of Commons – gentry selected by other wealthy citizens
- The Queen ruled mostly by Proclamations, but she needed Parliament's approval for big changes to the law or to raise new taxes.

Controlling Parliament – Elizabeth kept control in various ways;

- Elizabeth set strict limits on what they could discuss – they could not bring forward their own views on her marriage, religion, the succession or foreign policy.
- MPs were not really elected; they were selected by Lords; several Privy Councillors served as MPs in both the Commons and Lords; Privy Council organised daily business in Parliament.
- The Queen could reject laws by refusing to sign them or by closing parliament but she did often compromise.

Puritan Opposition – despite her control critics in Parliament who were Puritans did speak out;

- Puritans wanted more; for Elizabeth to marry a Protestant prince and have a Protestant successor; To allow local churches to choose their leaders; to give MPs freedom of speech.
- They also criticised her in writing; Nov 1579 John Stubbes wrote a pamphlet criticising her for considering marriage to a French Catholic. These were destroyed and Stubbes arrested; his hand was cut off in punishment and he was imprisoned. On his release in 1581 he carried on writing and became an MP in 1589 and continued to criticise the Queen in the House of Commons.

The business of Parliament – they were called more often 1580-1603 because of the Catholic threat but she faced opposition over;

Religion – Puritans demanded to do away with Bishops in 1584 and 1586. Elizabeth banned the discussion of this; three MPs did so outside of Parliament and she had them imprisoned for a month. When another Puritan encouraged her to name a Protestant heir she imprisoned him in the tower of London

Money – Elizabeth granted 'monopolies' which forced prices up so in 1601 after much criticism she cancelled some and made the 'Golden Speech' to flatter MPs.

Elizabeth and People

Local Government:

- **Lord Lieutenant,**
- Responsibility in each
- County. Queen chose

most powerful noblemen in each area for this role. He had to ensure his county could provide well trained part time soldiers in time of emergency.

Justices of the Peace

- 40 in each county. Gentry. Appointed by Queen on advice of trusted courtiers. Gave a man influence but not paid so needed to be wealthy. Enforced Poor Laws, collected taxes, set wage levels. Judged crimes at Quarter Sessions. Some JPs were lazy and turned a blind eye to Catholics not attending church or undertaxed friends of theirs. Could be dismissed by Queen but she knew she had to keep popular too.

Progress and Pageants

- Progresses in Summer – Elizabeth would leave London and tour the country, staying at houses of noblemen – called 'progresses'. Made sure she was seen by lots of people and often chatted to people she passed.
- Expected comfortable accommodation and entertainment. One Earl created artificial lakes, castles and a warship in 1591 for a visit. Few subjects attended these pageants though.
- Elizabeth saw advance plans for plays and cut anything that criticized her.
- Privy Council developed Accession Day Pageants on 17th Nov each year towns and villages celebrated the day Elizabeth took the throne with bonfires and bel-lringing.

Publications and Plays

- Not more than 60 printing presses during Elizabeth's reign. Easy to censor publications.
- Privy Council published their own books to defend policies such as executions of Catholics.
- They also spread favourable views of the Queen such as the poem *The Faerie Queene*.
- Elizabeth's final speech to Parliament in 1601 was printed and spread in 2 days.
- Plays she liked would often be printed
- Briefly shut down London theatres in 1597 when a play criticizing the queen was on – playwrights spent a short spell in prison and the theatres reopened.

Portraits and pennies

- Coins were the main way most people saw the Queen (not a flattering picture)
- 135 paintings of the Queen survive from her time but there must have been more.
- Privy Council and Elizabeth controlled her image; 1596 burnt paintings that offended her (ie where she looked old); considered giving two artists sole rights to her image but dropped it; 1596 new pattern of her face was issued to hide her age – all portraits had to conform to it.
- Most images were made by and for the wealthy – she expected all courtiers to have a miniature portrait of her at court. Portraits used symbols to get across messages.
- One courtier commissioned a painting of Elizabeth as a way back into favour after he annoyed her by retiring!

Prayers and Preaching

- The law required everyone to attend church on Sunday and use the same Prayer Book. At every service they said a prayer for the Queen which reinforced her as God's chosen ruler.
- A service of thanksgiving was held every Accession Day and the Queen picked church leaders to write special sermons and prayers for these. They thanked God for providing a strong Protestant Queen and protecting her from Catholic threats.
- All preachers had to have a Governmental Licence

Why were there so few Catholics in England by 1603?

In total Elizabeth ordered the execution of at least 200 Roman Catholics during her reign. In 1558 there were 3 million people in England and almost all were Catholic. By 1603 there was an even bigger population but only 40,000 Catholics.

EARLY YEARS: 1558-1580

Laws:

- Act of Uniformity 1559** – all worship the same way, everyone follow Book of Common Prayer in English, non-attenders fined
- Act of Supremacy 1559** – Elizabeth supreme governor of church in England, any insisting the Pope to be the head a traitor for challenging the queen's supremacy

EARLY YEARS: 1558-1580

Decline of Catholicism:

- most priests accepted Elizabeth's changes
- weekly Protestant sermons slowly altered people's beliefs = conformers
- few Elizabethans could afford non-attendance fines
- marriages/baptisms had to follow Protestant prayer book
- With few priests ordinary people didn't follow the Pope's instructions.

EARLY YEARS: 1558-1580

International Threat

- Pope excommunicated Elizabeth from the Roman Catholic church in 1570 Told English Catholics that Elizabeth was not the rightful queen so not to follow her laws.
- Little threat from Mary/Philip: Mary was Catholic and next in line to the throne if Elizabeth died without children. She was not in England until 1568 then was kept in prison. Rebellion in north put down in 1569 and plot to murder Elizabeth in 1571 put down.

KEY TERMS

- Protestant** – believe in the Bible being in English, churches being simple. Priests can marry. Queen Head of Church.
- Catholic** – believe in the Bible being in Latin, churches fancy and decorated. Priests must not marry. Pope Head of Church.
- Mass** – Catholic church service
- Excommunicate** – officially thrown out of the Catholic faith
- Monarch** – King or Queen
- Rebellion** – rising up against the monarch/govt
- Supremacy** – above all others
- Treason** – betraying the country by plotting to overthrow the monarch
- Recusancy** – remaining loyal to the Pope and not attending English church services.
- Papist** – someone who still follows the Pope at the head of the Church and is Catholic at heart but might attend English Church services.
- Conformer** – Catholic who goes to Protestant church and stops being Catholic.
- Jesuit Priests** – specially trained to persuade people to become Catholic or deepen their existing faith. Directly loyal to the Pope. E.g. Robert Persons and Edmund Campion.
- Seminary Priest** – young English Catholics who trained abroad then came to England to support Catholics not to try to convert anyone.

RISING THREAT: 1580-1588

Laws:

- Act of Persuasions 1581** – raised fine for recusancy by 10,000% to £20/month (roughly the income of most landowning gentry families), extra £200/year fine for persistent recusants, £66 fine for attending a Mass, imprisonment of recusants who failed to pay fines within 3 months, death penalty for persuading a Protestant to become Catholic (treason)
- Act Against Priests 1585** – Priests under the authority of the Pope was guilty of treason just by setting foot in England. Death penalty for anyone sheltering a Roman Catholic priest, soldiers might appear at Catholic houses at any time to search after receiving information from neighbours or informants
- Recusancy Act 1587** – government allowed to take 2/3 land owned by a recusant behind on fines, even the wealthiest Catholic being driven into debt

RISING THREAT: 1580-1588

Increase of recusancy and papism:

- Only most wealthy Catholics could afford the fines from 1581 onwards, some did continue to refuse to attend church and paid the fines.
- Church papists attending Protestant services might read old Latin prayer books to themselves, use rosary beads, and some refused the Holy Communion
- Rise in recusancy from 1580 - they were loyal to the Pope and held Mass in their own homes; in 1582 four priests even broke into York prison to say mass to the Catholic prisoners - one was captured.
- some recusants planned to overthrow Elizabeth and return England to Catholic ways
- In 1585 Thomas Tresham petitioned the Queen promising loyalty of her Catholic subjects but it made no difference and he was arrested a number of times between 1581-1605 for recusancy
- Priest hunting/propaganda/punishment:**
- 1586 Margaret Clitherow, York, arrested for sheltering priests, refused to put in a plea, 'pressed' to encourage her to do so but died from the pressure
- The Pope ordered Seminary and Jesuit Priests to concentrate on wealthy Catholic gentry who could influence other Catholics – they said mass and taught Catholics.
- local Justices of Peace searched gentry houses for hiding priests
- Walsingham's spy network learnt about plans and movements of Catholic priests through a variety of informers e.g. Catholic family servants (Charles Sledd), those in debt (William Parry), those in need of pardons (George Eliot) etc.
- Edmund Campion: He published a pamphlet in Aug 1580. Was captured 1581 by George Eliot – found in a priest hole in the wall of a gentry home. Campion was loyal to the Queen but believed she was wrong about religion. He was tortured, tried and executed for treason on 1 December 1581.
- Elizabeth's government countered Catholic propaganda by publishing their own viewpoint including a pamphlet justifying torture of the Priests including the 'Bloody Question' where they were asked to choose between the Pope and Elizabeth if someone invaded England. Over 1580 – 1587 over 50 priests were executed then in 1588 alone over 20 were executed (link to Armada being launched)

RISING THREAT: 1580-1588

International Threat

- Rising threat from Mary in plots followed by her execution:*
- Pope declared killing a Elizabeth not sin in 1580, wanting Mary to take the throne. Philip of Spain supported this
- the Throckmorton plot (1583)** discovered by Walsingham and torturing reveals plans of an invasion from a powerful French Catholic to put Mary on the throne (though no proven involvement from Mary) – Throckmorton executed
- Bond of Association** passed – anyone plotting to kill Elizabeth could be hunted down and executed and anyone in whose name it was done i.e. Mary could be executed if a plot was made in her name.
- 1584 a Catholic subject of Philip II shot and killed Prince William of Orange so in 1585 Elizabeth sent aid to Protestant Dutch rebels.
- Babington plot (1586)** planning to replace Elizabeth with Mary – Walsingham cracked coded letters to discover Mary had agreed to the plot – Babington and co-conspirator executed
- Oct 1586 Mary tried, defended herself, found guilty and eventually executed – 1587. Took Elizabeth several weeks to sign her death warrant. She wasn't happy when Mary was actually killed.

SECURING PROTESTANTISM: 1588-1603

Laws:

- Act Restraining Recusants 1593** – all recusants over 16 to remain within 5 miles of home at all times and banned from holding large gatherings

SECURING PROTESTANTISM: 1588-1603

- By 1599 Thomas Tresham was actually in prison for debt because of all of the fines!
- 1588 11 Catholic laymen (not priests) were executed for aiding priests or encouraging conversion to Catholicism.
- Priests failed to take advantage of Elizabeth's ailing age:**
- they didn't concentrate their work in the north and west where recusancy was strongest – spent too much time in London and failed to build a strong base.
- they concentrated on the gentry and not the lower-class Catholics who then became Protestant
- they were 'too saintly' to overpower Elizabeth's government – they didn't engage in the political struggle
- the priests spent too long squabbling over what to do – the Seminary and Jesuits disagreed over sustaining or converting. In 1598 the Pope even sent an Archbishop to decide how to support English Catholics.

Elizabeth never made it illegal to hold Catholic beliefs but by enforcing Protestant worship at church services and financially crippling and socially isolating Catholics she did her best to crush the Catholic community.

SECURING PROTESTANTISM: 1588-1603

Defeat of the Spanish Armada:

- 1588 Philip II launched a crusade to defeat the heretic Protestant Elizabeth. Armada led by Duke of Medina Sidonia (no sailing experience) and an army of 20,000 troops led by the Duke of Parma.
- 1587 Francis Drake raid on Spanish port damaged many Armada ships and delayed.
- July 1588 launched 130 ships and failed due to bad planning, bad luck and skilful English tactics:
- Dutch ships blocked the Armada from joining with the Duke of Parma's army from the Netherlands, English Fire Ships, Spanish guns were unreliable and a ship sank, the wind was against them and only 80 ships returned to Spain.
- England formed an alliance with France and Protestant Netherlands against Spain, Phillip's 2nd two armadas were both wrecked in storms, and they were unsuccessful in supporting an Irish rebellion by the Earl of Tyrone

Daily Life in Elizabethan England

SOCIETY

Gentry – 2% of the population

- Houses** – surrounded by gardens, had glazed windows, tall decorated chimneys & tens of rooms
- Land** – they earned rent from their estates, dukes/earls//barons might own tens of thousands of acres around England, minor gentleman might have a few hundred acres, land equalled power as Justices of Peace and MPs
- Food** – got plenty from their orchards and estate farms, had rich and varied diets, ate lots of different meats (e.g. venison, swan) and fish (e.g. pike) had ceremonial feasts with servants carrying food on silver platters in procession and fine French and Italian wines → they could last for two hours, after feasts there were banquets with sugar and marzipan confections

Marriage

FAMILY

- Age** – men: late 20s, women: mid-20s → they married after saving up for their own home, gentry married younger because they didn't need to save
- Sex** – forbidden outside marriage by the church, illegitimate babies uncommon, up to 30% of brides married while pregnant (either they had sex once they knew they were marrying or got married when they got pregnant)
- Choice – gentry families influenced their children's marriages to keep/gain status and property but didn't usually arrange marriage, middling parents gave land/money/furniture to their children when they married as long as they approved but most middling & labouring children were free to marry whoever, but same-sex marriage was unknown
- Equality** – wives obeyed husbands, husbands were advised to respect wives, middling women might help run farms or workshops, violent husbands were frowned upon as were domineering wives
- Separation** – divorce very unlikely & required a private Act of Parliament, marriage breakdowns could lead to informal separation, early deaths commonly broke down families, people remarried quickly, many children had step-parents

CATEGORIES

POVERTY

Settled Poor: People living in poverty in towns in a rented room and sometimes received alms. In some places up to 30% of the population. Mostly aged under 16 – often didn't live long due to starvation and illness. Lots of women abandoned by husbands – caring for children alone who they often had to send out to work. Elderly often widowed women, often made a little money spinning yarn or washing clothes & at times of plague caring for sick & dying

Vagrant Poor: wandered with no fixed home looking for work. Often young people travelling alone or in 2s/3s. Might get seasonal work but often shunned by suspicious villagers. Local constables whipped them until they left. Often died from hunger/cold & were buried in the villages they were found near.

The Impotent Poor: Individuals/families unable to work because of age/illness – seen as deserving of help

Able Bodied Poor - Individuals/families without work but wanted to find it.

Vagabond/Vagrant: Individuals/families who chose not to work & wandered around towns avoiding it - seen as undeserving of help.

Middling Sort

- Houses** – became more comfortable during Elizabeth's reign → could have two floors, big chimneys allowing smoke to escape, fireplaces downstairs, windows made of glass, 5-10 rooms
-rooms: hall (living/dining room & kitchen with wooden chairs/stools benches & pewter mugs/bowls/platters), parlour (living & sleeping room for man and wife, possibly with feather mattress, & oak chests for linen), chambers (2nd floor bedroom for children and servants, or for storing farm equipment/smoking meat), service rooms (extension/separate building which could have a kitchen/brew-house/bake-house/dairy)
- Food** – could afford to eat well, didn't have ceremony, served their own food, servants ate with them, reared basic meat (e.g. pork), made bread from wheat flour with some bran left in, best wheat for used for cakes & pastries for guests, had a variety of fruit and veg from their gardens & orchards, drank beer and mead but couldn't afford fine wine
- Work** – independent traders/craftsmen in towns, husbandmen (small farmer rented 5-50 acres) & yeomen (bigger farmer, owned more than 50 acres and employed labourers) in the countryside, could work as churchwardens or overseers of the poor

SOCIETY

Labouring Poor – about ½ the population

- Houses** – small & badly built, no upper floor, no chimney, small windows with no glass, often only 2 rooms with bare floors, had a hall (with a table/bench/wooden bowls/platters/spoons), had a chamber (might have a wooden bed with straw mattress), could own up to 2 acres of land but most just had a garden plot → Act of 1589 tried to give new cottages at least 4 acres
- Food** – main food was bread made from cheap rye or barley, ate thick vegetable soup ('pottage') with veg from the garden, sometimes had eggs/cheese/fish/bacon/beer, poor harvest meant expensive bread and starvation (e.g. wet summer of 1594 ruined grain making it too expensive so some labourers starved to death)
- Work** - most worked on yeoman/husbandmen farms, worked from first light 'til dusk, most only employed part of the year & struggled to pay rent/buy fuel/eat at other times

SOCIETY

Families

FAMILY

- Size** – usually only nobility/gentry had large families, many children were born but many also died due to bad hygiene & medicine → about ¼ of children died at younger than 10
- Young children** – some gentry had 'wet nurses', most women looked after their own children, parents had strong emotional bonds with children even though many died young, parents were concerned when children were ill, sad when they died, and proud when they achieved
- Older children** – parents with enough money sent children of 7+ to school, poor parents put them to work at home/on the farm/gathering wood/scaring birds/minding babies/helping with harvest, boys age 12 or 13 left home for apprenticeships or to work as farm servants, girls left to be servants for other families → up to 1/3 of families had young servants, young people lived with another family gaining skills for adult life until their early 20s
- Parenting** – children were expected to obey parents but were not always respectful, arguments between father and son were common, physical punishment was more common than now & beatings in grammar schools was common, cruelty towards children seems to have been no more widespread than today.
- Wider family** – most households were just parents and children, some big gentry houses had wider family, elderly parents/orphaned children might move in to be cared for, wider families rarely lived in the same village, most young teens left to work, people married and settled in different places, most people's relatives were in nearby villages, few people moved abroad, the gentry had interest in wider family, middling families had some close connections with wider family, wider family mattered more in northern England where communities were scattered, wills focused on immediate family, neighbours mattered more than distant family → these they went to church with/played football with/went to the alehouse with/borrowed money from

CAUSES

POVERTY

LONG TERM - Wars: Expensive wars were being fought for which the government demanded high taxes. War affected trade especially the woollen industry where people lost jobs. **The Dissolution of the monasteries:** Henry VIII closed all the monasteries to sell them to fund expensive wars. Therefore, less support for the poor, who would have previously gone to the monasteries to seek help. **Birth rate and death rate:** Apart from Plague, there were fewer epidemic diseases during the period so the death rate decreased. At the same time the birth rate was increasing which overall led to... **Population growth:** Population of England grew from approx. 3 million to 4 million. Population growth meant more people which meant more competition for jobs and employers could lower wages = unemployment and starvation.

SHORT TERM - Enclosure: Changes to agriculture. To improve productivity and provide more food; common land and field systems were enclosed with stone walls etc. Some landlords also hoped through enclosure to increase rents and reduce workers. This caused unemployment in the rural population, as well as hunger and deprivation. Villagers could no longer access common land to graze animals and to collect berries and firewood.

Bad harvests: Between 1594 and 1597 there were four bad harvests. The demand for food outstripped supply. As there was so little food available, those that had food to sell could demand high prices.

Poor Laws:

POVERTY

1572 Act for Punishment of Vagabonds and Relief of the Poor

All vagabonds above age 14 whipped & burned through right ear to create a hole as big as a penny. Imprisonment the punishment for a 2nd offence. Persistent offenders over 18 could be hanged. Children of convicted beggars put in domestic service.

1589 addition: fines for sheltering vagrants in homes

1601 Poor Law Act

Justices of the Peace to appoint 4 overseers of the poor in each parish responsible for the poor alongside churchwardens. Overseers of the poor to collect a 'poor rate' from the parish households. Begging forbidden – vagrants whipped & sent back to their birth parish.

Almshouses to protect impotent poor. Work provided for able-bodied poor. Anyone refusing to work placed in gaol (jail) or house of correction to do hard labour.

York, 1588: Actions

POVERTY

Wealth of York's gentry and middling sort to pay a 'poor-rate' based on wealth. 'viewers' to be appointed to list and categorise the poor in the city according to need. Those aged, lame, impotent and 'pas their work' to be given at least three halfpence a day to prevent begging. Able-bodied poor to be given wool and hemp and paid a small wage to spin at home. Rogues, vagabonds, 'strange' beggars from outside the city who will not work to be put to work in houses of correction or banished from the city.

The Elizabethan Theatre

Development

- Groups of actors travelled around and performed secular plays in market-places and inn-yards.
- In London, actors staged afternoon plays at inns.
- In 1576 John Brayne and James Burbage paid for a new building in Shoreditch, outside the city walls, which would be used just for performing plays. It was the only one of its kind so they simply called it 'The Theatre'.
- A 2nd theatre was opened in London in 1577; The Curtain. In the 1580s/90s, more new theatres opened outside the city on the south bank of the River Thames. In 1587, the Rose Theatre opened near existing bear-baiting and bull-baiting arenas. The Swan theatre opened eight years later.
- From the 1580s, afternoon plays at the new theatres on London's Bankside attracted thousands of Londoners and visitors.
- Elizabethans of all social groups loved the comedies, tragedies and histories written by Shakespeare and other playwrights.
- 'Groundlings' (those in the audience who stood at the very lowest level of the theatre), paid only a penny to attend. Two pennies bought a seat in the covered galleries.
- One historian described Elizabethan theatre as 'an innovation in mass entertainment as radical as television in the 1960s'.

Arguments Against

The Puritans:

- Theatres originated in ancient times so the Puritans associated them with paganism .
- Theatre also reminded them of the old miracle plays, which represented scenes from the Bible, and were considered a Catholic tradition.
- They were concerned that theatres and other attractions on Bankside led young people into sinful behaviour, especially sex outside marriage.
- Several Puritan preachers wrote pamphlets attacking the theatres.

The London Authorities:

- City authorities often tried to restrict plays at inns because they were too rowdy.
- The authorities of London wrote many letters to the Privy Council asking for the closure of the theatres.
- The mayor and alderman of London argued that the theatres drew servants and apprentices away from their work.
- They were concerned that large theatre crowds created disorder in the suburbs of Bankside and Shoreditch.
- They argued that theatres attracted the wrong sort of people including rogues, thieves and prostitutes.

Other Problems and Restrictions:

- At times of plague, the large crowds of people at the theatres contributed to the spread of disease.
- Only acting companies with noble patrons were able to operate freely:
- Some Elizabethans complained that 'jigs' after performances were too vulgar.
- Casual sex encounters were common after a play
- Cut-purses and pick-pockets mingled among the crowds. Fights sometimes broke out in the yard. Audiences were noisy.
- Groups of travelling actors faced an increasing threat of being arrested as vagabonds.
- Miracle plays which reconstructed scenes from the Bible were banned by Elizabeth's Privy Council during the 1560s and 70s because they saw them as a Catholic tradition.

Alehouse

- Most common part of popular culture for the middling sort and labouring poor.
- At the centre of village life
- Number of alehouses in towns was increasing after 1580.
- For beer, good company and a sing-song with neighbours.
- Sometimes a place of drunkenness, gambling and prostitution.

Sports: bear-baiting, badger-baiting, 'throwing at cocks', wrestling, boxing, 'cudgling', football (played by large numbers of young men who kicked a ball around the countryside or streets, with few rules and many injuries.)

Parish Feasts

- Sometimes known as 'parish ales'.
- Celebrated the saint of the local parish church
- Often lasted several days.
- Often a procession followed by eating, drinking and dancing in the churchyard.
- Sometimes plays performed by travelling players or morris dancers and hobby-horses.
- Rough sports, bull-baiting and cock-fighting.
- Villagers brewed large quantities of ale.

Calendar Customs

- Several calendar events through the year including Christmas, May Day and Harvest Home.
- Involved sports and Parish Feasts.
- Often lots of drinking, feasting and merriment.
- Sometimes plays were
- May Day involved dancing round maypoles
- The main opportunities for middling and labouring people to have fun.

Other Entertainment

- As well as theatres, Bankside had other attractions.
- People took small boats across the river to have mid-day meals at inns.
- They would watch bear- or bull-baiting in one of two arenas.
- In the theatre yard, people sold nuts, fruit, shellfish and beer.
- Richer people took their own, expensive food.
- Eating, drinking, swearing, flirting and cheering were all part of Elizabethan theatre.
- After the plays on Bankside, audiences could stay on to enjoy a 'jig'.
- These featured songs, dancing and jokes – most theatre-goers enjoyed the rude and slapstick comedy.
- In the evening, young men headed for Bankside's alehouses, bowling alleys and gambling dens.

The Globe

- built 1599 on Bankside, London
- burnt down 14 years later during a performance of *Henry VIII* → a stage cannon set fire to the thatched roof
- quickly rebuilt with a tiled roof
- closed by England's Puritan administration in 1642
- demolished in 1644
- replica built on Bankside in 1997, using a drawing of a different Elizabethan theatre, The Swan, by Johannes de Witt, from 1595

Support for the Theatres

- The Queen loved to watch plays and protected London's new theatres.
- Some of her leading courtiers sponsored a theatre company to win her favour.
- Elizabeth's Privy Council generally ignored protests against theatre from the London authorities and Puritans.
- The new theatres were built deliberately beyond the city walls, outside the area controlled by London's mayor and alderman.
- Only during the plagues of 1581-82, 1592-93 and 1603 did the Privy Council order the playhouses to close.

Popular Culture in Elizabethan England

ART

- Wonderful artwork produced in England between 1580 and 1603.
- Most painted by foreign artists.
- The Queen and her courtiers paid for portraits of themselves, but generally showed little interest in painting.
- Few ordinary people had any connection with the elite art
- Most English artists were mediocre painters.
- One genius, Nicholas Hilliard, learned techniques at French court and his miniatures are exquisite

MUSIC

- Music was important to the Queen and to many Elizabethans.
- Thomas Tallis and William Byrd composed beautiful church music for the Queen's chapel.
- From the 1580s, there were important developments in secular music.
- Madrigals became popular and the musician John Dowland wrote some wonderful 'ayres' – songs accompanied by a lute.
- Tallis, Byrd and Dowland took English music to new heights.
- Few ordinary people had any connection with the elite music

Opinions on Popular Culture

Queen Elizabeth – enjoyed traditional festivities and especially Christmas. Had music and dancing at court, as well as plays, jester and hobby-horses.

The Privy Council – support traditional festivities that didn't get too unruly. In 1589, supported the people in Oxfordshire when they wanted to keep the tradition of maypoles going.

The Church – generally no problem with festivities. Some bishops didn't approve of some of the traditional festivities, and some banned morris dancing and maypoles, but most did not attack calendar customs.

Puritan Ministers – thought the festivities were impure and that everyone should be more careful to obey the bible. Campaigned to improve the people's behaviour including producing pamphlets explaining 'the wicked nature of popular culture'. Gained support of some of the local gentry who were Justices of the Peace, as well as constables and churchwardens from the middling sort

LITERATURE

- After 1580, education grew, the printing press developed and some talented writers emerged.
- This led to some remarkable developments in English literature.
- Poets such as Philip Sydney and Edmund Spenser transformed English poetry.
- Prose writers such as Richard Hackluyt and William Camden produced fascinating travel books and biographies.
- Few ordinary people had any connection with the elite literature
- The dramatists, especially William Shakespeare, contributed most to the flowering of culture in Elizabethan England.
- It was Shakespeare's plays which gave the period a golden glow.
- Shakespeare's plays were not only enjoyed by the gentry, but also by many of the middling sort and labouring people of Elizabethan London.

Witchcraft in Elizabethan England

Witchcraft Trials

- Law was passed in 1563 introduced death by hanging for using witchcraft to kill someone.
- Witches who harmed people or property were imprisoned.
- Relatively few prosecutions in the years immediately after this law was passed.
- Only surviving legal records of witchcraft trials from south east England and Cheshire.
- In the 1970s historians examined the records and discovered the number of witchcraft trials shot up dramatically in the later years of Elizabeth's reign.
- 109 cases in the 1570s, 166 in the 1580s and 128 in the 1590s. T
- Same decades saw a huge rise in the population and big increases in poverty for many labouring people, and poor harvests created tensions in many communities.
- Few witch-hunts led by the Government or the Church in England.
- Prosecutions for witchcraft often started with complaints from neighbours.
- A quarrel followed by a misfortune led to suspicions of witchcraft
- Neighbours might have similar suspicions and they would make a complaint to the local magistrate.
- Some of the accused women may have practised magic and could have believed that they had the power to harm.

Adventurers in Elizabethan England

CASE STUDY - Walter Raleigh:

(Roanoke: England's attempt at an American colony)

- One of the most famous Elizabethan adventurers.
- Considered by the Victorians to have laid the foundations for the British Empire
- granted a royal charter authorising him to establish England's first colony in North America - 'Virginia' after the 'Virgin Queen'.
- Didn't go on the voyage himself as Elizabeth said she didn't want to be without him – it was led by his cousin Richard Grenville and the military commander Ralph Lane in 1585
- On the voyage were scientist Thomas Hariot and artist John White who recorded the landscape, plants, animals and people they encountered in North America.
- The journey across the Atlantic was difficult due to storms and the fleet was separated for a time.
- Landing at Roanoke was hard because of the sandbanks east of the island, the ships got stuck here and they lost most of their supplies including seeds they had brought to plant so they would be dependant on the natives to survive.
- Ralph Lane became Governor and set about building a small wooden fort but the plan to settle all 600 quickly changed to keeping 107 of the colonists whilst Grenville returned to England with the rest for more supplies.
- Wingina the Algonquian Chief who ruled Roanoke was wary of the English and although he supplied them at first with corn; as his tribe began to run out of food in 1585-6 he plotted to attack the colony. By this point everyone was nearing starvation.
- Though the colonists avoided attack by killing the tribe chief, tensions rose and eventually the group were rescued by Francis Drake in June 1586
- In 1588 Harriot and White produced a detailed account of the new world entitled '*Brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia*' and this did help pave the way for the first successful American colony at Jamestown, Virginia in 1607.
- Raleigh planned an expedition to Guiana in South America in the early 1590s to find gold at the fabled 'El Dorado' and set out in 1595 but did not discover any gold instead publishing '*Discovery of the Large, Rich and Beautiful Empire of Guiana*' which inspired Britain's continued empire building in the 17thC and 18thC.

Negatives:

- Several voyages were failures, including Raleigh's American colony.
- Ralph Fitch was prevented from sailing into China by officials, despite a letter from the queen
- James Lancaster's first voyage to the East Indies was a disaster which saw only 25 men survive for the return to England
- The explorers' plundering of Spanish ships gained them a poor reputation with the Spanish king
- Humphrey Gilbert, who was vain, ruthless and greedy, failed to establish a colony in Newfoundland, which was barren and cold, and later drowned when his ship sank

CASTE STUDY: Ursula Kemp

- Ursula Kemp's skeleton was found buried outside the boundaries of a churchyard with iron rivets hammered into her knees and elbows to stop her from using witchcraft to rise from the grave.
- Ursula was an Elizabethan 'cunning woman' - a healer and a midwife who treated illnesses in St Osyth, Essex.
- She was accused on witchcraft by people in the village when a baby died after Ursula had an argument with its mother.
- The mother reported Ursula as a witch to the Justice of the Peace after her own lameness also returned and her older son fell ill. They had previously fought over late payment of fees for treatments.
- Ursula Kemp was tried for witchcraft, found guilty, and hanged.

Historians' Interpretations

- Historians have produced several theories regarding the increase in trials
- Some think it was sexism and repression of women which led to accusations and note that magistrates trying the witches were all men
- Critics say this doesn't make sense as accusers were often women and some of the accused were men
- Some think it was because of the suffering and hardship caused by poverty, high population and poor harvests which meant people were less willing to help out neighbours and tensions led to suspicions
- Some think the rise in Protestantism caused the rise since counties like Essex which had many Puritan ministers also had high rates of witchcraft trials
- Puritans strove for godly communities and caused suspicion among people

Elizabethan Beliefs about Magic and Witchcraft

- Magic was an important part of Elizabethan culture, and had existed since the Middle Ages.
- Most Elizabethans believed in magic, and people known as 'cunning folk' or 'wise women' were thought to have special magical powers which they had inherited.
- Elizabethans would often use these people for medical reasons.
- Ursula Kemp, for example, was known to be particularly good at curing arthritis.
- Magic was also used to find out the sex of an unborn child, or recover stolen goods.
- It was not seen as an alternative religion, and was tolerated by the Church at the beginning of Elizabeth's reign.
- Witchcraft, however, involved a special kind of magic used to harm people or their property.
- In Elizabethan England, it was a popular belief that witches used small animals known as 'imps' or 'familiars' to commit evil acts.
- Ursula Kemp was alleged to have had 4 familiars: 2 cats, a toad called Pygin, and a lamb called Tiffin.
- In Europe, witches were often accused of getting their power from the devil.
- They thought they met at 'sabbats' (gatherings of witches) to feast, dance and have sex with the devil.
- However, English witches were rarely accused of making pacts with the devil.

Missions, motives, achievements – an overview:

- Adventurers from throughout the Elizabethan era travelled across the world
- Francis Drake plundered ships in the Caribbean, James Lancaster led the first expedition of the East India Company, and Ralph Fitch ventured to the court of the Mughal Emperor in India.
- Maps produced by John Dee on his travels helped later voyagers extend British trade
- The voyagers brought home riches and goods for Queen and country
- Francis Drake brought home Spanish treasure plundered in South America, as well as cloves, ginger and pimento.
- The East India Company, granted a monopoly on trade by the queen, became the biggest trading company the world had even known, bringing back tons of spices from East India e.g. cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, cloves, pepper.
- Francis Drake claimed the coast of California for the queen – 'New Albion' – along with several islands
- One explorer travelling with Ralph Fitch, William Leedes, remained in India as a jeweler for the emperor
- The voyagers were driven by desires to increase the queen's and the country's wealth, extend trade, explore new parts of the world, create an empire to rival those of Spain and Portugal, and to colonize.
- John Dee used the phrase 'British Empire' to describe his vision to the queen

Ralph Fitch – contact with India

- 1583 voyage to India – commissioned by the Turkish company to find out more about trade with India and SE Asia and if possible China.
- Fitch had letters from the Queen to the Mughal and Chinese Emperors to persuade them to trade with the English.
- The journey took over a year and they were temporarily arrested and held as spies in Portugal along the way!
- By 1585 Fitch and his friends had arrived at Emperor Akbar's newly built palace near Agra and saw great wealth & luxury
- Fitch travelled all around India to Hooghly, Bengal, and was the first Englishman to visit Burma. His companion John Newberry set off home but was never heard of again!
- Fitch eventually arrived home in April 1591 – 8 years after he set off! He was the first Englishman to explore the possibilities of direct trade with South East Asia and he published fascinating descriptions of all he had encountered