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AQA
GCSE
History

ELIZABETHAN ENGLAND

c1568–1603



DYNAMIC
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1.2 Elizabethan politics

FOCUS

Elizabeth inherited a political system that was faction ridden and inefficient. Her Court, Privy Council and Parliament were all based in London, and Elizabeth never even visited vast swathes of the country she ruled. Even so, she was a formidable monarch who managed to maintain her authority for nearly 45 years, skilfully utilising people and institutions to bolster her position. In topic 1.2 you will:

- examine the role of the Royal Court, Privy Council and Parliament under Elizabeth
- assess the roles played by Elizabeth's key ministers and understand how and why England faced a political decline by the 1590s
- judge how far Elizabeth maintained control as an effective ruler.

THINK

- 1 Look at Source 1. Why do you think Elizabeth decided to go on progress so often during her reign?

SOURCE 1

Elizabeth depicted on progress in c1600. She is shown with key members of her Court. Elizabeth was famous for her royal progresses, where she would travel around with her household and stay in various country houses, hosted by members of the nobility.

FOCUS TASK A

How did Elizabeth run her government?

Create a table like this:

Feature	Explanation	How this helped Elizabeth (with examples)	What might go wrong (with examples)

As you read pages 16–25 fill out rows for the following: Royal Court, progresses, patronage, Privy Council, Parliament.



Elizabeth's problems at her accession

THINK

- 2 Although Elizabeth inherited huge debts of around £300,000, she spent £16,000 on a grand coronation. Why do you think she did this?
- 3 Add notes to your Focus Task chart about the Royal Court and her use of progresses.



SOURCE 2

An extract from the diary of Sir Julius Caesar. Elizabeth stayed at his house for one night during a progress in 1590.

The Queen visited my house in Mitcham and supped and lodged there, and dined the next day. I presented her with a gown of cloth of silver, richly embroidered; a black mantle [cloak] with pure gold; a hat of taffeta, white with several flowers; a jewel of gold set with rubies and diamonds. Her Majesty left my house after dinner with exceeding good contentment. This entertainment cost £700.

The Royal Court

The Royal Court was a mobile operation, not confined to a particular building. Run by the Lord Chamberlain, the Court was simply located wherever the Queen was. It consisted of the Queen's household, made up of about 500 nobles, advisors, officials and servants who all lived with her and competed for power and influence. They were called **COURTIERS**. In an age of **PERSONAL MONARCHY**, access to the Queen was crucial to any politician. The Court had been a centre of political power throughout the Tudor period. The economical Elizabeth, short of money, did not build any palaces herself, but did inherit and maintain a number of royal residences. Her favourite was Richmond, a comfortable residence built by her grandfather. In central London, the key residence was the sprawling Whitehall Palace that covered about twenty acres with its gardens, orchards, tennis courts and tiltyard used for tournaments. There was also St James' Palace, Hampton Court, Greenwich and Nonsuch, where she enjoyed hunting. As well as the luxurious palaces, the Tower of London and Windsor Castle served as secure places to be used in times of crisis. She disliked the Tower but adored Windsor and in fact Windsor Castle was the only residence where Elizabeth spent any money at all on alterations during her reign, having a terrace and gallery built there.

Progresses

Most summers, Elizabeth would travel with her Court on tours called **PROGRESSES**, visiting the homes of the nobility. Her journeys covered the South East, Midlands and East Anglia. Historian Christopher Haigh has called them 'major public relations exercises', which allowed Elizabeth to be seen by her subjects regularly, to build up a relationship with her people and to flatter the nobles she chose to stay with. It would have been quite a sight to behold, as the Court crawled from house to house with up to 400 wagons piled high with clothes, linen, documents and furnishings, including the Queen's own bed, which she always travelled with. Wherever she went, she was given a magnificent welcome. To her subjects, she would appear as a goddess, parading in her finery. Progresses also served more practical purposes. They allowed the thrifty Elizabeth to live in luxury at the expense of her subjects, as the nobility all desperately tried to impress through their extravagance and generosity in providing the Queen and her courtiers with sumptuous accommodation, food and entertainment. The journeys also removed the Court from the sweltering capital at times when plague was rife and the absence of the household meant that the filthy Royal palaces could be fumigated before the Queen's return.

Performance

The Court served a number of functions: as well as being a social hub, providing the Queen and her courtiers with a home and entertainment, it was a political nerve-centre. It also served to give an impression of power by displaying the Queen's magnificence to the nobility and visiting foreign guests through art and culture. There were lavish banquets, elaborate masques, musical performances, plays and tournaments that all acted as subtle PROPAGANDA, glorifying Elizabeth's image. Strict court ceremonies were followed that encouraged loyalty and obedience to Elizabeth. On feast days, the Queen dined in public with much pomp and ceremony, marching from the Chapel to Dining Hall behind her councillors who carried her SCEPTRES and sword of state. Such rituals followed strict rules and were well rehearsed and were designed to impress and magnify the mystique of monarchy. Elizabeth understood the importance of performance, playing the part to perfection.

SOURCE 3

Elizabeth in her Privy Chamber.



Patronage

In Henry VIII's time, the monarch's private apartments – the Privy Chamber – had been a crucial power hub, with the King's friends and personal attendants also being the key politicians. With a woman on the throne, the political nature of the Privy Chamber was reduced – as it was staffed by females. Elizabeth dealt with this situation by using a system of patronage. This involved showing favouritism by giving particular men important jobs. She managed this very carefully. She gave her male courtiers political roles and was equally careful to give key politicians places at Court. The jobs given were highly sought after, because they brought not only wealth but also prestige to the individual. Although it was a highly corrupt system, it was very effective. It caused intense competition and rivalries between people. This suited Elizabeth very well, because it made everybody totally loyal to her. It also ensured that the Court remained a political centre and made sure that Elizabeth remained at the heart of the whole political system.

DEBATE

- Historians have traditionally praised Elizabeth for her skill and ability as a ruler, holding her personally responsible for the achievements of her reign.
- This is perhaps misleading and historians have to an extent been deceived by the propaganda produced during Elizabeth's reign.
- Not until the 1950s and 1960s was proper consideration given to the contributions made by Elizabeth's key ministers to the period's successes.

THINK

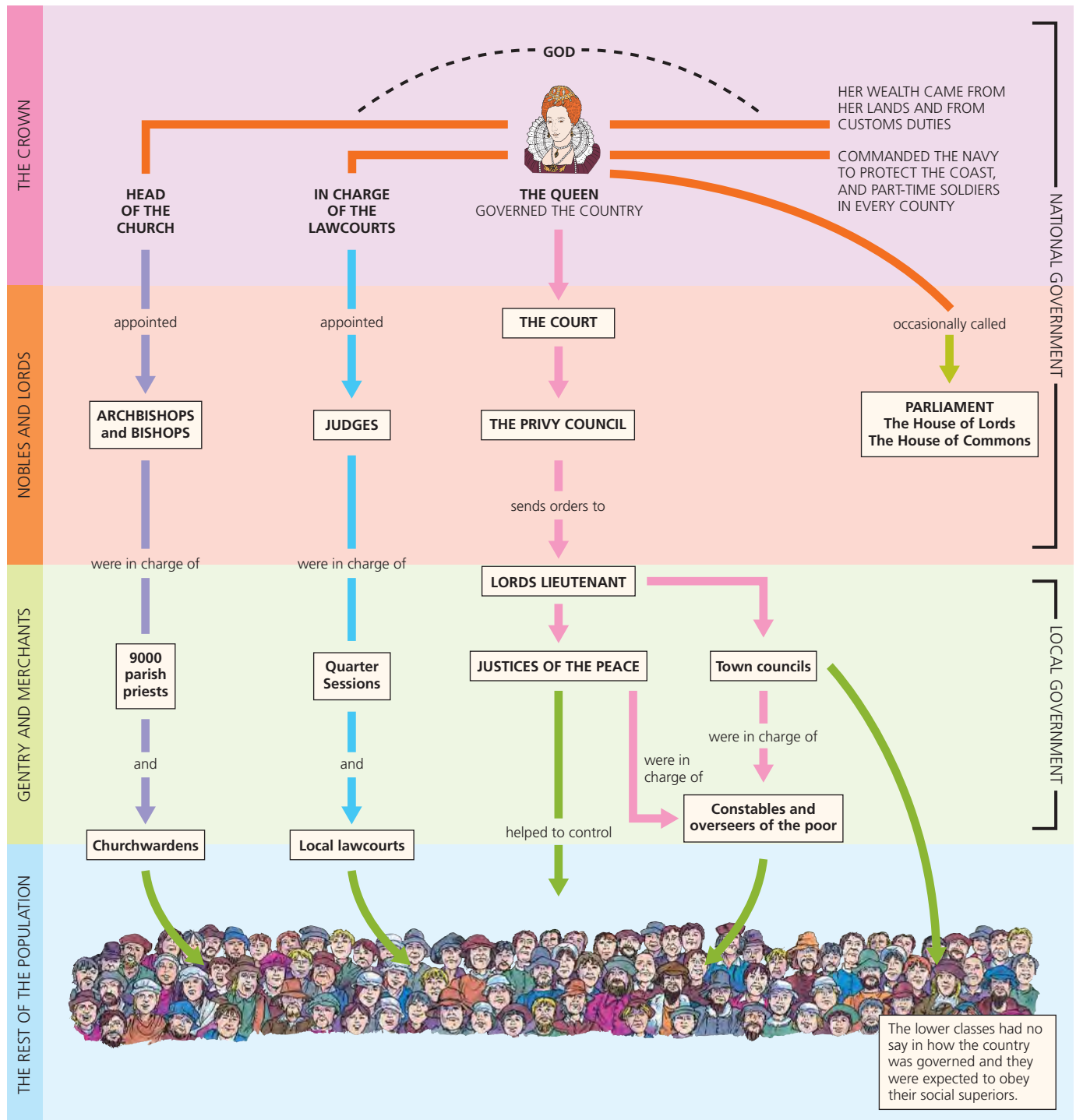
- 4 How did the role of the Privy Chamber change under Elizabeth?

The Privy Council

The Privy Council co-ordinated financial departments, law courts such as the Star Chamber, and regional bodies such as the Council of the North. It issued instructions to local officials such as Lord Lieutenants and Justices of the Peace. Members were generally from the nobility, GENTRY and the Church, but Elizabeth could choose and dismiss members of her Privy Council as she chose. Elizabeth delegated well and the workload of her Privy Council increased dramatically during her reign. The Privy Council met at Court almost daily, but Elizabeth did not always attend meetings. She came to trust her Privy Council, rarely interfering on a day-to-day basis. However, she kept accurate notes to monitor their work.

The key role of the Privy Council was to advise and direct policy but the Queen was not obliged to take their advice. In fact, Elizabeth often demonstrated her right to ignore their advice, making a strong statement about her own political independence. Ultimately it was Elizabeth who made policy decisions. Nevertheless, the Council had considerable powers. It could issue proclamations in the Queen's name, which had the force of law. It could command the arrest and imprisonment of individuals, although they rarely exercised such powers. The Council also proved skilful at guiding parliamentary business on behalf of the Queen.

The structure of government under Elizabeth



SOURCE 4

Elizabeth's comments to Cecil when she appointed him to the Privy Council in November 1558.

I have this judgement of you, that you will not be corrupted with any gift, you will be faithful to the state, and without respect of my private will, you will give me the best advice; if you know anything to be declared to me in secret, you will tell only me and I will keep it confidential.

SOURCE 5

A.G.R. Smith on Cecil.

His labour and care ... were so incessant and his study so great as, in cases of necessity, he turned neither for meat, sleep or rest, till his business was brought to some end. This industry ... caused all his friends to pity him and his very servants to admire him.

SOURCE 6

From a report by the Spanish Ambassador.

Her temper was so bad that no Councillor dared to mention business to her and when even Cecil did so, she told him that she had been strong enough to lift him out of the dirt, and she was able to cast him down again.

SOURCE 8

Robert Naunton, a member of Elizabeth's Court, reminisces in the 1630s.

She ruled much by factions and parties, which she made, upheld and weakened as her own great judgement advised.

THINK

- 5 Read Sources 4–7. Why did Elizabeth choose Cecil as her chief advisor?
- 6 How convincing is Source 5's portrayal of Cecil?
- 7 Read Source 8. Why might Elizabeth have encouraged rivalries between her councillors?
- 8 Add notes to your Focus Task table about the Privy Council.

Elizabeth's Privy Council

Three days after becoming Queen, Elizabeth said, 'I consider a multitude doth make rather disorder and confusion than good council'. What is more, Mary's Catholic Council could act as a barrier to re-establishing Protestantism. Elizabeth's first Privy Council was a clever compromise. By January 1559, she had appointed nineteen members (far more manageable and efficient than Mary's 40-member Council). Half were drawn from Mary's Council to maintain experience and avoid alienating important individuals. The other half were brand new, allowing Elizabeth to reward loyal followers and to promote men of ability. She was careful not to appoint any strong Catholics.

Over time Elizabeth increased in confidence. The nobility were gradually moved out and by the second half of her reign the Privy Council was a small, highly efficient group of educated, professional, full-time politicians, largely from the gentry. Some argue that this narrow membership became a weakness, causing resentment from powerful regional nobles and possibly encouraging rebellion.

By far the most important appointment Elizabeth made was one of her first – William Cecil. Elizabeth came to rely heavily on him. Their successful working relationship lasted until his death 40 years later. He was in continual contact with the Queen. All her correspondence passed through him. Cecil was loyal, but also knew how to manage the Queen. He threatened to resign to make her co-operate and carefully used Parliament to manipulate the Queen into taking the position he wanted. Elizabeth respected him for speaking his mind, but knew that he would carry out her wishes even if he personally disagreed. He also helped the Queen to manage the political patronage system and had his own patronage secretary – Sir Michael Hickey – who was responsible for dealing with the requests people made for various positions. Cecil had a difficult relationship with another key member of the Privy Council – the more radical and PURITAN Robert Dudley, a favourite of Elizabeth.

The key members of Elizabeth's council are shown opposite.

SOURCE 7

From a letter written by William Cecil to his son shortly before his death, summing up the nature of his relationship with Elizabeth.

I do hold, and always will, this course in such matters as I differ in opinion from Her Majesty: as long as I may be allowed to give advice I will not change my opinion, but as a servant I will obey Her Majesty's commandment, presuming that she being God's chief minister here, it shall be God's will to have her commandments obeyed.

Divide and rule

The members of the Privy Council were ambitious, but Elizabeth was careful to control them. She sometimes showed affection and rewarded her ministers, but she could show displeasure too. She excluded both Dudley and Walsingham from Court at various points, imprisoned others and even went as far as executing two members of her Council, Norfolk and Essex, for treason. Elizabeth also deliberately appointed men who were hostile towards each other. By forcing rival factions to work together on the Council, Elizabeth played a game of 'divide and rule', which meant the men would compete with each other for her affection. They would give her contrasting advice, which would then allow her to make measured decisions. Whichever course of action she pursued, she could be sure she would have some support. Nevertheless, in spite of their differences – on religion, foreign policy issues and the Queen's marriage – the group established by Elizabeth maintained a professional working relationship and ran the country effectively and efficiently for much of her reign.

PROFILE

Sir William Cecil, Lord Burghley

- Born 1520. A member of the Lincolnshire gentry.
- Moderate Protestant who had studied law at Cambridge.
- Enormously intelligent and very hard working.
- Past experience as a Member of Parliament and a member of Edward VI's Council.
- Made Secretary of State in November 1558.
- A stabiliser. Like Elizabeth, he wanted to avoid war and unite the nation through moderate policies. He was naturally conservative, and like the Queen disliked being rushed into rash decisions.
- Elizabeth admired the fact that Cecil spoke his mind if he disagreed with her or other councillors.
- Elizabeth relied heavily on Cecil, counting on his loyalty and trusting him completely.
- Given the title Lord Burghley in 1571 and made Lord Treasurer the following year.
- Regularly attended the House of Commons and, later, the House of Lords. A very skilful parliamentary manager.
- Died 1598, replaced as Elizabeth's chief minister by his son, Robert.



PROFILE

Sir Francis Walsingham

- Born 1532. From Norfolk gentry
- Attended Cambridge University and studied law.
- Fervent Puritan. Had fled into exile in Mary Tudor's reign and studied at Padua University in Italy.
- Fiercely loyal to Elizabeth.
- Entered Parliament as an MP in 1558.
- His ability at languages and foreign contacts made him useful to Elizabeth and he started working with the government in 1568. Served as AMBASSADOR in Paris in the early 1570s.
- Appointed to the Privy Council in 1573, became Secretary of State with special responsibility for foreign affairs. Knighted in 1577.
- Could be blunt. Frequently clashed with Cecil. An ally of Dudley.
- A superb organiser. Was in charge of the Elizabethan 'secret service'. He was a highly efficient 'spy master', controlling a network of informers at home and abroad, and uncovering numerous plots against Elizabeth.
- Died 1590.



PROFILE

Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester

- Born 1533. Younger son of the disgraced Duke of Northumberland who had been executed at the beginning of Bloody Mary's reign.
- Like Elizabeth, he spent some of Mary's reign locked in the Tower of London.
- A childhood friend and favourite of Elizabeth, he was good looking and there were many rumours of a romance between Dudley and Elizabeth.
- A member of the Court, he was made Master of the Horse, making him personally responsible for Elizabeth's safety.
- Highly ambitious, he became a PRIVY COUNCILLOR in 1562, proving to be a conscientious worker.
- A radical and a Puritan, he frequently argued with Cecil about the succession, religion and foreign policy.
- Given the title Earl of Leicester in 1564.
- Died 1588.



PROFILE

Sir Christopher Hatton

- Born 1540. From the Northamptonshire gentry.
- Studied law at Oxford University.
- Elizabeth was impressed by his dancing at Court and promoted him. He became a Gentleman of the Privy Chamber and the Captain of the Queen's Bodyguard.
- Loyal, kind, clever and hardworking. Helped organise Elizabeth's famous progresses.
- A moderate Protestant, he hated Puritans and sympathised with Catholics.
- Elected to parliament several times. Helped Elizabeth control the MPs and secure their support.
- Became Lord Chancellor in 1587, in charge of judges and law Courts.
- Died 1591.



THINK

- 9 Study the four profiles carefully. What were the key similarities and differences between Elizabeth's key ministers? Consider their background, religion and personality.

The role of Parliament

The monarch decided when Parliament should meet and for how long. Parliament was called if the monarch needed new laws to be passed or wanted to introduce new taxes.

Elizabeth regarded Parliament as an inconvenient necessity. Continuing in the tradition of her father, her very first Parliament in 1559 created a new Protestant church by restoring the royal supremacy over the Church of England. This undid Mary's short-lived attempt at a Catholic restoration. Since Elizabeth's father Henry VIII had secured the break from Rome in the 1530s through laws passed by Parliament, Parliament's importance had increased significantly. The idea had developed that the English monarch shared their power with Parliament in a kind of political partnership. However, it was not Parliament's role to govern, but simply to turn the policies of Elizabeth and her ministers into laws.

Elizabeth's financial problems meant that she had to rely heavily on parliamentary subsidies (taxes), which were asked for in all but two of the thirteen sessions of the reign. On almost all occasions, Elizabeth received what she asked for.

The main business enacted by each of Elizabeth's Parliaments is shown in the table below.

Date	Main business enacted by Parliament
1559	Restoration of the royal supremacy over a Protestant Church of England.
1563	Approval of taxes to fund wars against France and Scotland.
1566	Taxes agreed to pay for an army sent to France.
1571	Taxes agreed to help defeat a rebellion in the North. Laws against the Pope and TRAITORS.
1572	MPs met to discuss the Queen's safety after discovery of a Catholic plot.
1576	MPs agreed to taxes even though the country was at peace.
1581	Taxes approved to pay for an army sent to Ireland. Anti-Catholic laws also passed.
1584–85	Laws against Catholic priests passed. More taxes granted.
1586–87	MPs granted taxes for war against Spain.
1589	MPs approved taxes to pay the costs of defeating the Spanish Armada the year before.
1593	Taxes granted for war against Spain and more anti-Catholic laws passed.
1597–98	More taxes granted and laws passed regarding the poor.
1601	Taxes granted to pay for war against Spain and to pay for the army in Ireland.

FACTFILE

Parliament in the reign of Elizabeth

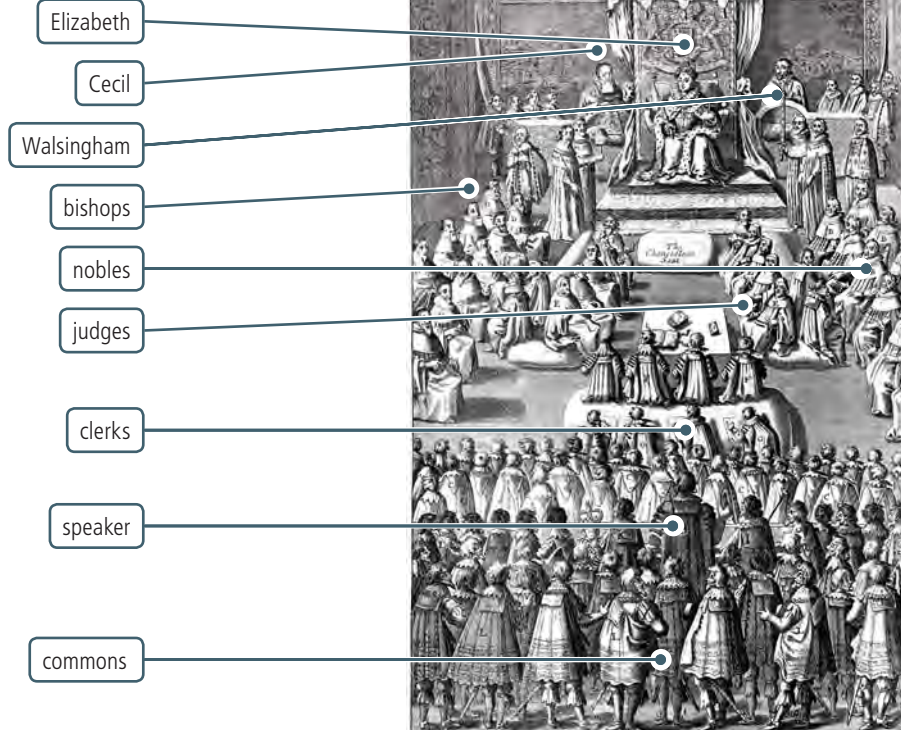
- Parliament was made up of two constituent parts: the House of Lords and the House of Commons.
- The House of Lords was the upper house and was more powerful, containing 90 PEERS. It was made up of members of the nobility and bishops. As Elizabeth created so few new lords, by the end of her reign there were just 55 members of the House of Lords and it was very much under her control.
- The House of Commons contained around 450 elected MPs. They were educated gentry, lawyers and merchants, and became more powerful during Elizabeth's reign. Two knights from each county and two BURGESSES from each borough attended.
- There were no formal political parties as exist today.
- England was not a democracy. Only landowners and wealthy citizens could vote for MPs, and these were a tiny minority of the population. In reality, MPs were usually nominated by either the crown or by a prominent nobleman rather than elected. The majority – the lower classes and all women – could not vote.
- A bill is a draft of a proposed law. For a bill to become law, it has to be passed as an Act of Parliament, meaning that both the House of Commons and the House of Lords had to approve of it.
- Before a bill was passed as an Act, a bill would be read three times in Parliament: the first reading would tell the members about the contents of the bill, the second reading would bring about debate after which it would be amended, and the third reading would be a final checking process before voting took place.
- Elizabeth possessed a royal veto, meaning she had the right to reject an Act of Parliament.
- Statistics on Parliament in the Elizabethan period:
 - Number of sessions: 13
 - Total number of weeks in session over 45 years: 140
 - Average number of weeks it met per year: 3
 - Number of years it did not meet: 29
 - Percentage of MPs who spoke in debates: 10 per cent
 - Average percentage of MPs who voted: 47 per cent
 - Total number of Acts passed: 434

THINK

- 10 Study the table of business enacted by Parliament. What are the most common reasons Parliament met?
- 11 What do the statistics in the final point of the Factfile suggest about the importance of Parliament during Elizabeth's reign?

SOURCE 9

A seventeenth-century drawing of Elizabeth I opening Parliament.



Changes

Despite Elizabeth's attitude to Parliament during her reign, MPs became more self-confident in arguing against the Queen. This may have been because they were better-educated than in the past, with over half of them having had a university education. Members of Parliament were supposed to have special privileges, allowing them freedom of speech and freedom from arrest. Some heated debates did take place. MPs made complaints about issues that were not on the government agenda, such as Elizabeth's marital status, trading MONOPOLIES and religious grievances. Puritans, in particular, repeatedly used the House of Commons to organise and voice their opposition to the Queen's policies. Some have suggested that in this way, Elizabeth lost control during her reign.

However, Elizabeth made use of her powers to limit the influence of Parliament. As with her Council, she used the force of her own personality, attending Parliament in person when necessary and using speeches to both charm and bully its members. Additionally, she had the right to appoint the Speaker, who was able to control which topics were discussed and steer the direction of the debate. Furthermore, the Queen had the right to block measures proposed by MPs through using the royal veto. Elizabeth imposed limits on MPs' right to speak freely and did not shy away from imprisoning awkward MPs, such as Peter Wentworth who was imprisoned in 1576 for arguing for freedom of speech. Of course, Elizabeth was also able to dissolve any troublesome Parliament whenever she wished.

In addition to the Queen's direct influence, members of the Privy Council sat in both the House of Commons and House of Lords, providing a way for the government to control and manipulate parliamentary affairs. In reality, MPs were carefully considered by the Council before they were selected and local officials carefully supervised the elections when they took place. As so many MPs owed their seats to the patronage of the Queen or her councillors, their behaviour and independence was severely restricted.

SOURCE 10

From *Elizabeth I* by Christopher Haigh (1988).

Elizabeth adopted a tone of condescending superiority towards her Parliaments, confident that if she explained things often enough and slowly enough, the little boys would understand. For Elizabeth, parliamentarians were little boys – sometimes unruly and usually a nuisance, and always a waste of an intelligent woman's time. Queen Elizabeth did not like Parliaments and it showed.

SOURCE 11

Part of Elizabeth's 'Golden speech', delivered to the House of Commons in November 1601.

I have reigned with your loves. I do not so much rejoice that God hath made me to be a Queen, as to be a Queen over so thankful a people. It is not my desire to live or reign longer than my life and reign shall be for your good. And though you have had many mightier and wiser princes sitting in this seat, you have never had, nor ever shall have, any that will love you better than I do.

SOURCE 12

From *Elizabeth I*, by Christopher Haigh (1988).

Elizabeth's councillors nominated MPs, planned business in advance and tried to manage proceedings. Parliament was a most useful means of applying pressure on the Queen to accept policies she disliked – such as over marriage and the succession in 1563 and 1566, over religious reform in 1571, over anti-Catholic laws in 1581 and over the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots, in 1586.

THINK

- 12 Read Source 10. Why did Elizabeth attend Parliament and make speeches there if she had such a low opinion of its members?
- 13 According to Sources 10–12, who seems to have held real power in Elizabethan England: the Queen, her councillors, or Parliament?
- 14 Add notes about Parliament to your Focus Task table.

DEBATE

- J.E. Neale argued in the 1930s and 1940s that Parliament's power grew in Elizabeth's reign.
- He suggested that MPs in the House of Commons deliberately planned confrontations with the Queen. They became more confident and independent, and Elizabeth lost control.
- Neale argued that the roots of the English Civil War in the 1640s lay in Elizabeth's reign.
- Later historians, such as G.R. Elton, disagree with Neale, emphasising co-operation rather than conflict between Elizabeth and Parliament.

SOURCE 13

From *Elizabeth I* by Christopher Haigh (1988).

In the new and bitter world of the 1590s, Elizabeth was shown to be politically bankrupt. The only answer she and those close to her could provide seemed to be 'more of the same'. Elizabeth lived up to her motto, semper eadem, always the same. She was a ruler overtaken by events.

SOURCE 14

Tudor England by John Guy (1988) explains Essex's motives for rebellion.

When Elizabeth refused to renew [Essex's] patent of sweet wines ... his credit structure collapsed. She had effectively condemned him to a life of poverty ... Yet Essex's motivation went beyond this. A faction leader who was denied access to a monarch was an untenable position ... After his disgrace, his urge to oust the Cecilian 'upstarts' ... became obsessional.

THINK

- 15 In Source 13, what does Haigh suggest about the quality of Elizabeth's government by the end of her reign?
- 16 Read Source 14. Why did Essex decide to rebel in 1601?

Years of decline

By the 1590s, Elizabeth's government was in crisis. The country had been seriously damaged by war, plague, increased poverty and repeated harvest failures. The patronage system that had worked so well started to break down, as a series of personal tragedies befell the Queen. One by one, her trusted councillors and contemporaries died: Dudley in 1588, Walsingham in 1590 and Hatton in 1591. So bereft was she when Dudley died, that she locked herself away in her room for days and Cecil had to order for the door to be broken down. Finally, in the greatest blow of all, Cecil himself died in August 1598. Elizabeth had come to rely heavily on these men. With their deaths she became increasingly angry, depressed and bad tempered, losing popularity and facing sharp criticism. People started to sense that she had reigned too long and that she stood in the way of much needed reform. Elizabeth had always had confidence in the personal devotion of her councillors and the most obvious and serious sign of Elizabeth losing her grip came in 1601, when the ageing Queen faced a rebellion organised by one of her favourites.

Essex's Rebellion 1601

Just as rivalry between different groups had existed and been encouraged at the beginning of her reign, so too did it exist at the end. This had worked well in the past, with William Cecil and Dudley balancing each other out. As Elizabeth's 'old guard' disappeared, a new generation of ambitious politicians emerged that caused unrest in the Court and Council. The two main rivals in the Privy Council were Lord Burghley's son, Robert Cecil, and Dudley's step-son, the Earl of Essex. Robert Cecil had been a sickly child but he studied hard and was appointed to the Privy Council in 1591. He took on an increasingly heavy workload as his father aged and was made Secretary of State. He came to hold much power, having been trained by his father and by Walsingham in the art of spycraft. Cecil's rise to power angered the jealous Essex and the division in the Council became unhelpful. While Cecil was a shrewd and subtle political operator, Essex was a dashing young courtier who had caught Elizabeth's eye. However, he was unpredictable, and his actions often angered the Queen. He had annoyed the Queen by secretly marrying without her permission and when she later refused to promote one of his supporters, he actually lost his temper and insulted the Queen by shouting 'her conditions are as crooked as her carcass!' and turning his back on her in anger. Elizabeth then punched Essex, who almost drew his sword but instead stormed out of the meeting. After this, he was banished from Court.

Later, Essex was given yet another chance to redeem himself, when Elizabeth asked him to defeat a rebellion in Ireland being led by the Earl of Tyrone in 1598. Again, Essex miscalculated, making peace with Tyrone against Elizabeth's orders. While Essex was away fighting, the Queen promoted Cecil. Sparked by jealousy, on his return to Court, Essex burst into the Queen's bedchamber before she was wiggled and gowned. For Elizabeth, this level of disrespect was the final straw. He was ordered before the Privy Council, and had to stand for five hours while he was interrogated. Later, charges were made which he had to listen to on his knees. He was again banned from Court and placed under house arrest. Losing all his jobs and his monopoly on sweet wines, his career was totally ruined.

Incensed by his fall, in early 1601 Essex gathered around 300 supporters, made up of a few unsuccessful courtiers and disgruntled unemployed soldiers. He began to fortify his mansion, Essex House, on The Strand. Rumours of treason and rebellion began to spread and Essex refused Elizabeth's demands for him to appear in front of the Privy Council. When four Privy Councillors went to his house to question him, he locked them up as hostages, and proceeded to march with his men to the centre of London in an effort to capture the Queen.

He underestimated Elizabeth and her government, and overestimated his own strength. The government responded decisively. Londoners were unimpressed and most of his supporters quickly deserted him when they were offered a pardon. Essex found his route blocked so he returned home, where his house was surrounded by Elizabeth's forces, giving him no choice but to surrender. The rebellion had lasted a mere twelve hours. Accused of being a traitor, Essex was executed at the Tower of London on 25 February 1601 – a swift and spectacular fall from grace for a former royal favourite, but also a sure sign of Elizabeth's fading powers.

FOCUS TASK B

Elizabeth's advice

You have been compiling a table showing how Elizabeth ran her government.

- 1 Where would you put Elizabeth on a scale of 1–5 if 1 was 'totally in control' and 5 was 'only a figurehead'? Write a paragraph to explain your reasons using examples from your table.
- 2 Now use your findings to write an instruction manual for Elizabeth's successor, giving practical advice about how to run the government effectively as a monarch in England, and using real examples from her reign.

Make sure you cover:

- The role of the monarch
- The importance of the Royal Court
- The work of the Privy Council
- The importance of individuals
- The role of Parliament
- Whether Elizabeth made any mistakes that her successors should avoid

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

- 1 Explain what was important about the Privy Council in Elizabeth's reign.
- 2 Write an account of the ways in which a system of political patronage helped Elizabeth to govern England.
- 3 Write an account of the ways in which the Earl of Essex affected Elizabethan England.

TOPIC SUMMARY

Elizabethan politics

- Elizabeth was inexperienced when she became Queen, but she quickly became an expert politician.
- The Royal Court was a political centre with a corrupt patronage system and where different groups competed for power and influence.
- The Royal Court was also a social and cultural centre, designed to impress visitors with its magnificence and ceremony.
- The Queen famously went on progress most summers as public relations exercises.
- Elizabeth relied on a small group of trusted advisors who sat on a committee called the Privy Council.
- Elizabeth disliked Parliament, which was mainly called in order to grant taxes.
- Parliament grew in confidence and independence, at times being quite outspoken in its criticism of Elizabeth's government.
- Elizabeth's key advisors died, leaving her isolated and bitter towards the end of her life.
- A rebellion was mounted by one of her former favourites towards the end of her reign.

PROFILE

Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex



- Born in 1565, the son of Elizabeth's cousin, Lettice Knollys, and step-son of her old favourite, Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester.
- Studied at Cambridge University.
- Young, eloquent and good-looking, he was a favourite with Elizabeth and popular with the people.
- He was also ambitious, arrogant and short-tempered.
- A military hero, he was an experienced soldier who fought in the Netherlands, France and Spain.
- Knowledgeable about foreign affairs, he joined the Privy Council in 1593.
- Married Walsingham's daughter.
- Disrespectful to Elizabeth on a number of occasions. They repeatedly had heated arguments although she always forgave him.
- Hated the Cecils.
- Eventually, he led a rebellion and was executed for treason in 1601.

TIP

Make sure you can identify various people who helped Elizabeth to run her government and explain the contribution that they made.

KEYWORDS

Make sure you know what these words mean and are able to use them confidently in your own writing. See the glossary on page 94 for definitions.

- Ambassador
- Courtiers
- Gentry
- Monopolies
- Patronage
- Peers
- Privy Councillors
- Progresses
- Propaganda
- Puritan
- Traitor

1.3 The succession crisis

THINK

- 1 How do you think a female monarch could make her gender an advantage rather than a disadvantage in a male-dominated society?

SOURCE 1

Elizabeth I shown dancing with her favourite, Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leicester.



SOURCE 2

David Starkey in *Elizabeth* (Episode 2, 2000, Channel 4).

It is 1559. England has a newly crowned Queen. Elizabeth has overcome extraordinary obstacles to gain the crown, but her struggle isn't over. There's one thing about her that will lead to scandal, that will compromise her power, threaten her security and demand terrible personal sacrifice: that she is a woman.

FOCUS

As a woman, Elizabeth faced considerable prejudice when she came to the throne. She was repeatedly pressurised to marry, but never did so and did not produce an heir, meaning that when she died, so too did the Tudor dynasty. In topic 1.3 you will:

- explore the problems facing female rulers in the sixteenth century
- consider the strengths and weaknesses of Elizabeth's various suitors and judge why she decided to remain unmarried
- examine the succession crisis Elizabeth faced during her reign and understand how this was resolved.

FOCUS TASK A

The succession crisis

As you read pages 26–30 make notes under the following headings:

- **Attitudes:** how did Elizabeth's contemporaries view women and female rulers
- **Pressures:** how and why Elizabeth's ministers and Parliament pressurised her to marry when younger
- **Suitors:** the pros and cons of her various suitors
- **Heirs:** the potential successors to the throne on Elizabeth's death

Problems facing female rulers

Such was the prejudice against female rulers that Elizabeth's father had gone to enormous trouble to prevent a female succeeding to the throne. In his attempts to have a male heir he had broken from Rome and married six times. Despite his efforts Elizabeth's sister Mary had been the first Queen Regnant of England, proving that it could be done, but Mary's reign did not inspire confidence in the arrangement. Mary had taken a husband within a year of her accession, which had put England's political independence at risk. Mary died enormously unpopular after just a brief reign. Although people welcomed the accession of a beautiful young woman and a Protestant, it was more out of relief that Mary's regime had ended than out of joy that Elizabeth's had begun.

A man's world

In such a man's world, few really thought that Elizabeth was up to the task of government. Women, it was feared, were weak and not suited intellectually or temperamentally to reign. Monarchs were thought to need traditionally masculine characteristics: physical strength, assertiveness and decisiveness. Queens were meant to be merely the wives of kings. They were supposed to be kind, religious and maternal. They were not supposed to rule. It was feared that chaos could be the result. A weak monarch and powerful nobles had led to the Wars of the Roses that had torn England apart just a century before. With a female monarch, the careful balance of groups at Court might be upset and many doubted the ability of a woman to control her male subjects. Moreover, a monarch had a duty to keep their country safe and to further its interests abroad, but Elizabeth could not be expected to lead her army into battle as a king might do.

However, there were examples of women ruling effectively at this time. Isabella of Castile had ruled Spain with distinction, and Marie de Guise had ruled Scotland with an iron fist as REGENT for her daughter. As Elizabeth got older, she came to see her gender not as a disadvantage but as a useful political weapon. It allowed her to charm and manipulate, to avoid situations she disliked and decisions she did not want to make. It also helped her create a powerful CULT of personality.

Elizabeth's pride was hurt by one piece of writing in particular. In the year of her accession, the Scottish Protestant John Knox wrote a book attacking female rulers, entitled *The First Blast of the Monstrous Trumpet Against Women*. Although Knox had been motivated to write by Bloody Mary and Marie de Guise, the timing was awful. Elizabeth succeeded in the same year as the book's release. She found the work insulting, and identified Knox as a political enemy rather than, as he could have been, a religious ally.

SOURCE 3

From *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* by John Knox (1558).

To promote a woman to bear rule, superiority, dominion, or empire above any realm, nation, or city, is repugnant to nature, an insult to God, a thing most contrary to his revealed will and approved ordinance, and finally, it is the subversion of good order, of all equity and justice... God, by the order of his creation, deprived women of authority and dominion... For who can deny but it is repugnant to nature, that the blind shall be appointed to lead those who can see? That the weak, the sick, and impotent persons shall nourish and keep the whole and strong? And finally, that the foolish, mad, and frenetic shall govern the discreet, and give counsel to such as be sober of mind? And such be all women, compared unto man, in bearing of authority. For their sight is but blindness; their strength, weakness; their counsel, foolishness; and their judgment, frenzy.

The marriage question

Elizabeth was 25 years old when she succeeded. By Tudor standards this was old to still be unmarried. She had not married because of her awkward position during her father's and siblings' reigns. Everybody assumed that marriage would be high on Elizabeth's list of priorities when she became Queen. They expected a suitable wedding to be quickly arranged. To add to the urgency, she was the last of Henry VIII's children. If she died without an heir, the Tudor dynasty would die too.

But Elizabeth hesitated and for years she kept people at home and abroad guessing as to whom she would choose and whether she would marry at all. Her Privy Council became annoyed, repeatedly pressing her to marry to solve the issue of the succession. Her Parliaments, encouraged by the Council, also tried to pressure her to marry. She gave vague answers and then famously lost her temper with her third Parliament in 1566 for daring to raise the issue. After this, Parliament was not allowed to discuss her marriage ever again.

SOURCE 4

Thomas Becon, a Norfolk clergyman, in 1554.

Thou hast set to rule over us a woman, whom nature hath formed to be in subjection to man... Ah, Lord, to take away the empire from a man and give it to a woman seemeth to be an evident token of thine anger towards us Englishmen.

SOURCE 5

Part of a speech Elizabeth made at Tilbury during the Spanish Armada.

I know I have the body of a weak, feeble woman; but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England, too.

SOURCE 6

William Cecil, speaking in 1566.

Pray God would send our mistress a husband, and by time a son, that we may hope our posterity shall have a masculine succession.

SOURCE 7

Elizabeth's response to Parliament pressurising her to marry in 1566.

I will never be by violence constrained to do anything. It is monstrous that the feet should direct the head! They are too feeble minded to discuss the issue.

SOURCE 8

L.J. Taylor-Smith (1984).

Elizabeth came to value and adopt the masculine qualities of dominance, aggression and fearlessness, which made it impossible for her to assume the subservient role expected of a wife.

THINK

- 2 Why did the Council and Parliament pressurise Elizabeth to marry?
- 3 How convincing do you find Source 8 about Elizabeth's decision not to marry?
- 4 Make notes under headings 1 and 2 of the Focus Task about attitudes and marriage pressure.

Marriage pros and cons

Having a husband would limit my personal freedom.

I would have to share my power with my husband.

Most of the suitable candidates for my hand are Catholic, but I am Protestant.

A foreign marriage would make a powerful alliance.

A foreign marriage might make enemies of other countries who feel rejected.

My sister Mary's marriage had caused rebellion.

Taking an English husband will unbalance the different groups at Court and cause problems.

I need to provide an heir to the throne to carry on the Tudor line.

My father's marriages worked out badly. He killed two of his wives, including my own mother.

THINK

- 5 Study the marriage pros and cons above. Why did Elizabeth choose not to marry if she had so many options available?

SOURCE 9

Elizabeth's reaction to Robert Dudley's attempt to give orders to her servants.

I will have here but one mistress and no master!

Foreign suitors

Elizabeth received two early proposals: from Prince Eric of Sweden and from King Philip of Spain. She negotiated with the Swedes for years, but turned down Philip immediately. He was the widower of Elizabeth's sister Mary. He was keen to regain his title of King of England. He was Catholic, but his family were England's traditional allies against France. However, Elizabeth knew how badly he had treated her sister during their brief marriage. Nor did she forget that Mary's choice of Spanish husband had been so unpopular with the English people that it had caused rebellion. Their marriage had proved disastrous, providing no children and involving England in costly foreign wars that led to the loss of Calais, England's last French possession. She never seriously considered him, and he was insulted by the rejection.

Other foreign candidates included the son of the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles of Austria. He was also Catholic, but negotiations dragged on until 1567, when they eventually failed because Charles seemed unwilling to live in England.

English suitors

Elizabeth was also not short of English suitors. Early in her reign, both the Earl of Arundel and Sir William Pickering hoped to marry Elizabeth. By far the most serious contender was her childhood friend and favourite, Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leicester. The two were close friends. Many historians agree that Elizabeth genuinely loved him. Within two years of her becoming Queen there was strong belief at Court that Elizabeth had decided to marry him.

He desperately wanted to marry her but unfortunately was already married. When his wife, Amy, died in mysterious circumstances – her lifeless body was found at the foot of a staircase – all hopes of a marriage between Dudley and the Queen, ironically, were dashed. An inquest was held. Amy's death was ruled accidental, but it all seemed a little too convenient for the love-struck Queen and ambitious courtier. The rumours that Amy Dudley had possibly been murdered – either by Dudley or on Elizabeth's orders – meant a marriage between the two would have been scandalous. It was out of the question. Dudley waited for years for the Queen to change her mind, and only got married – much to her fury – in 1578, to her cousin, the Countess of Essex.

The last suitor

As Elizabeth aged, the endless rounds of marriage negotiations continued. By the late 1570s, attention focused on the Duke of Alençon, a younger brother of the King of France. Although over twenty years younger than Elizabeth, physically deformed and a Catholic, he seemed a serious prospect and the two appeared to be genuinely fond of each other. Elizabeth affectionately called him her 'frog'. The Privy Council were bitterly divided on the match: Cecil was in favour but Walsingham and Dudley were opposed. However, after the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre in 1572, when thousands of Protestants were murdered, the French were very unpopular in England. Propaganda pamphlets were published against the Queen marrying Alençon. So, despite considerable opposition from the Council, the Queen called off the negotiations, and wrote a poem 'On Monsieur's Departure' which seems to show genuine regret at his loss.

Despite considering so many suitors, it is unclear whether Elizabeth ever truly wanted to marry any of them. It could be that she simply played out the negotiations as a diplomatic game. Whether she remained single by deliberate design or by historical accident is still debated.

Alençon was the last suitor seriously considered by Elizabeth, and by the time Elizabeth entered her 50s her cult status as the 'Virgin Queen' who was married to England became firmly established.

Possible heirs

In October 1562, Elizabeth contracted SMALLPOX. The doctors told Cecil that the Queen would not survive. Though her face was left permanently scarred, Elizabeth recovered. Had she died, there would have been a serious crisis. There was a three-way split in the Privy Council about what to do in the event of the Queen's death and later, once she had recovered, Parliament urged Elizabeth to marry or nominate an heir. She would do neither, claiming that she would marry only when the time was right and that to nominate a 'second person' would place her in danger.

The problem was not a shortage, but a surplus, of potential heirs. There were two main claims – the Stuart claim and the Suffolk claim. Various pamphlets were written promoting the different possibilities. Henry VIII's will had confused matters. It had stated that should his three children die without heirs, the throne would pass to the descendants of his younger sister, Mary, the Duchess of Suffolk. Her granddaughter, Lady Jane Grey, had already been executed for attempting to seize the throne in 1553, but there were still two younger girls, Lady Catherine and Lady Mary. Both were Protestants and both were seen as potential heirs to Elizabeth.

However, technically, Elizabeth's other cousin, Mary, Queen of Scots, had a stronger claim to the English throne than the Greys, as she was descended from Henry VIII's older sister, who had married into the Scottish Royal Family. However, Mary, Queen of Scots was a controversial claimant, having been brought up in France and being a devout Catholic. At one point, Elizabeth considered having her favourite Dudley marry the Queen of Scots as a way of bringing her under

English influence. Mary, however, saw Dudley as socially inferior and the plans came to nothing. Instead, much to the anger of Elizabeth, Mary strengthened her already convincing claim to the English throne by marrying her cousin, Lord Darnley, and uniting two Stuart claims for any children they might have.

Although neither of the Grey sisters were particularly inspiring candidates, in 1561 Elizabeth appeared to be warming to the idea of making Catherine Grey her official heir. When the Queen discovered that Catherine had secretly married the Earl of Hertford without her permission and fallen pregnant, she was furious. Elizabeth had her cousin imprisoned in the Tower of London for the rest of her life and Catherine possibly starved herself to death in despair. Catherine and Hertford had two sons, both born in prison, but they were declared illegitimate and barred from the succession. Catherine's younger sister, Mary, also married without Elizabeth's permission and she too was placed under house arrest, dying childless a little over a decade later.

SOURCE 10

Bishop Jewel reflecting on the worries about the succession in 1562.

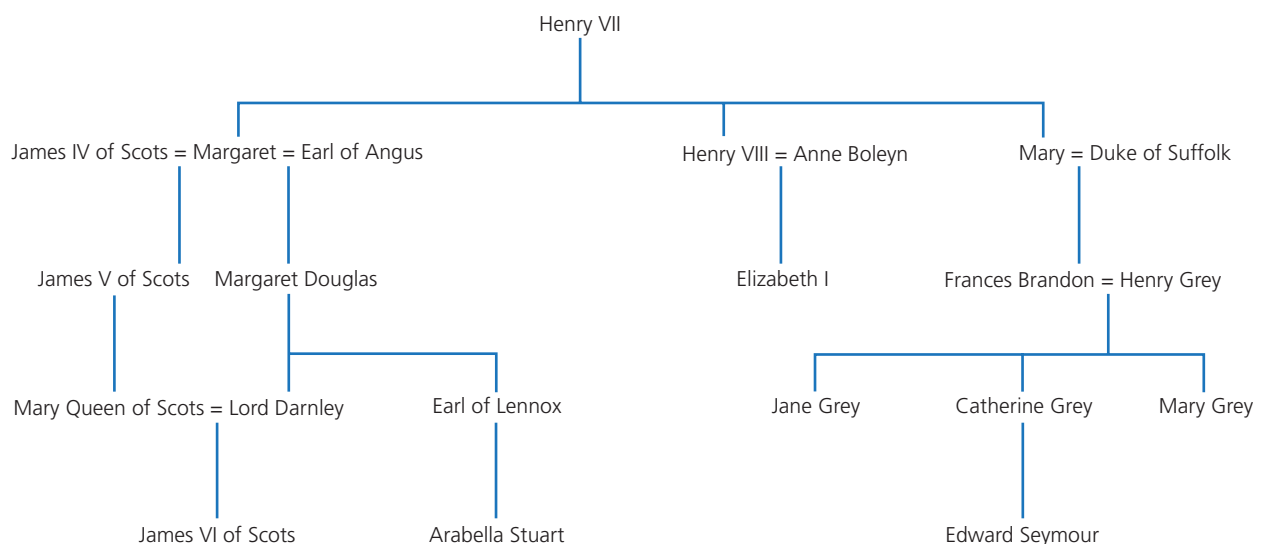
Oh, how wretched are we, who cannot tell under what sovereign we are to live.

THINK

- 6 Why was there so much concern about the succession in the 1560s?
- 7 Study Figure 11 and the text. Who had the best claim to be Elizabeth's heir?

FIGURE 11

Simplified family tree showing Elizabeth's possible successors.



1.3 The succession crisis

SOURCE 12

From *The Virgin Queen* by Christopher Hibbert (1990).

The Councillors gathered round her bed to ask if she agreed that her cousin, James VI of Scotland, Mary's son, should succeed her. Cecil and the Council had already made all the necessary arrangements; but the Queen, allowing the negotiations to go ahead while pretending not to know of them, had refused to commit herself till now. She found difficulty talking, and asked for something to rinse her throat. But the Councillors said she had no need to speak: she had merely to indicate with her hand if she accepted him. The question was asked and she gave what was taken to be a sign of consent.

THINK

- 8 Read Source 12. Did Elizabeth choose her successor?

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

INTERPRETATION A

'Marriage and motherhood would deprive her temporarily – perhaps permanently – of the authority and power to rule. To share power she would hate. To renounce it she would find intolerable.'

J. Hurstfield, *Elizabeth and the Unity of England*, 1960

- 1 How convincing is Interpretation A about Elizabeth's reasons not to marry?
- 2 Write an account of Elizabeth's handling of the 'marriage question'.

TIP

Make sure you can identify several people whom Elizabeth could have married and explain why she chose to remain single.

KEYWORDS

Make sure you know what these words mean and are able to use them confidently in your own writing. See the glossary on page 94 for definitions.

- Cult
- Queen Regnant
- Regent
- Suitor

Resolution

By the end of Elizabeth's reign, the succession crisis had resolved itself, almost by accident, as most of the eligible contenders had died. The obvious heir was the Scottish King, James VI, the only child of Mary, Queen of Scots. James had a doubly strong claim, as both his mother and his father were grandchildren of Elizabeth's aunt, Margaret Tudor. Although some suggested James' cousin, Arabella Stuart, as an alternative, by the 1590s James' superior claim was recognised by the Cecils and it was accepted that James would succeed. Although Elizabeth refused to officially name James as her heir, even she sent teasing letters hinting that he might succeed her. Crucially, as the end of Elizabeth's life drew near, Robert Cecil began a secret correspondence with James from May 1601 onwards to prepare for life after Elizabeth. The issue of the succession had dominated her whole reign and caused considerable worry, but when Elizabeth died in March 1603, Cecil had arranged for an easy transition. A messenger left London, reaching Edinburgh three days later, to tell the King of Scots that he was now also the King of England. The Tudor dynasty gave way to the Stuarts smoothly and calmly, with the whole of the island of Great Britain, for the very first time in history, sharing a single monarch.

FOCUS TASK B

Explaining Elizabeth's decisions

You have been making notes about the succession crisis.

- 1 Use your notes to answer one of these questions:
 - Why do you think Elizabeth decided not to marry?
 - Why do you think Elizabeth refused to name her successor?Make sure you can support your opinion with evidence from the table you created.
- 2 Imagine you are Elizabeth and the year is 1602. You are aware that your life is coming to an end. Write a letter to a friend, in the strictest confidence, looking back on the succession crisis that you have faced during your reign.
 - Explain the succession crisis from your point of view.
 - Include your judgement on whether you made the right decision not to marry and have children.
 - Explain why others might disagree with you.

TOPIC SUMMARY

The succession crisis

- In the sixteenth century there was prejudice against female monarchs, who were thought incapable of ruling effectively.
- Elizabeth almost died of smallpox early in her reign without an obvious heir.
- Elizabeth was put under constant pressure to marry by Parliament and the Privy Council.
- Elizabeth had many potential suitors, both at home and abroad.
- Elizabeth decided not to marry, keeping her independence.
- The fact that the Queen was unmarried led to a succession crisis, as she had no children.
- Elizabeth refused to choose a successor from her numerous relatives.
- When Elizabeth died, the Tudor dynasty came to an end.
- Elizabeth's Council planned for the succession of her Scottish cousin, beginning the rule of the Stuarts in England.

REVIEW of Chapter 1

Elizabeth and her Government

In your exam you will be set FOUR questions on the British depth study.

Question 1 will be on interpretations. You need to use your knowledge to explain how convincing an interpretation is. The interpretation could be a picture or a written source. For example:

INTERPRETATION A

From Elizabeth I by W. MacCaffrey (1993)

Elizabeth's experience was very limited. Her life had been led almost exclusively in the seclusion of country houses, with only an occasional short visit to the Court.

1. How convincing is Interpretation A about Elizabeth's early life?

Explain your answer using Interpretation A and your contextual knowledge. (8 marks)

For this question, you need to describe what the source tells you and then use your own detailed knowledge to support and contradict what the source suggests about Elizabeth's early life.

Question 2 will ask you to explain the significance or importance of something. It is testing your knowledge and understanding. You are not writing everything you know about a topic but selecting what is relevant and organising it to answer the question. For example:

2. Explain what was important about the succession issue in Elizabethan England. (8 marks)

To answer this question there are many things you could cover but you need to focus on the ones that show the importance of the issue not on incidental details.

Question 3 asks you to write an account. It is still not 'everything you know'. You are selecting from your knowledge those things that are most relevant to answer the question. For example:

3. Write an account of the ways in which the Earl of Essex affected Elizabethan England. (8 marks)

For this question you need to cover a range of events with enough detail to show you understand the different effects the Earl of Essex had at different times. You need to write your answer in the form of a coherent narrative.

Question 4 is on the historic environment – an actual place. You will have studied, in depth, a site chosen by the exam board. You have to use your knowledge of the site, and your wider knowledge of Elizabethan England to write an essay that evaluates a statement.

Because you have studied in depth there will be so much you could say about the site that you have to be selective. This is why the statement in the question is so helpful. It provides focus. Make sure you use the statement to develop a clear, coherent and relevant argument from the start, and carry it through the whole essay supporting your argument.

Consider how what you read in the source is convincing in the view it gives of Elizabeth's early life. Think about:

- How were Elizabeth's experiences limited before she was Queen?
- Where did Elizabeth live before she became Queen?
- Why did Elizabeth spend very little time at Court?

Then, consider how the source is not convincing. Does it exaggerate how limited Elizabeth's experiences really were? Think about:

- What education had Elizabeth received?
- How was Elizabeth influenced by her relatives?
- What did Elizabeth learn from her imprisonment during Mary's reign?

Look back at topic 1.1 in order to see how you could expand on these points.

Which of the following do you think you should spend most time on?

- What succession means and why knowing who Elizabeth's heir was felt so important at the time
- Attitudes towards female rulers and how this had affected Elizabeth's attitude to marriage
- Elizabeth's various suitors
- Elizabeth's potential heirs
- The attitude of the Privy Council and Parliament
- Elizabeth's death and how an heir was chosen.

Look back at topic 1.3 in order to see how you could expand on your chosen points.

You could include:

- Essex's personality
- Essex's relationship with Elizabeth and his rivalry with Cecil
- Essex's role in Ireland
- Essex's rebellion in 1601

Look back at topic 1.2 in order to see if you can write a paragraph on one or more of these points.

ASSESSMENT FOCUS

Elizabethan England c1568–1603

How the British Depth Studies will be assessed

The British Depth Studies will be examined in Paper 2. All four British Depth Studies will be on the same paper so make sure you pick the right one! The questions could be on any part of the content so you should aim to revise it all.

There will be four questions which will test three of the assessment objectives:

- AO1 – knowledge and understanding
- AO2 – explanation and analysis
- AO4 – interpretations

When you are revising it is sometimes a good idea to attempt an exam question before you re-read the relevant section in the textbook. You don't need to write the answer in full *before* you re-read the text. You could just plan an answer, or draw up a spider diagram or list of ideas. The important thing is to try very hard to remember what you can before you check what you have done. Once you have re-read the relevant section of the textbook then you should try to write a full answer.

Question	Type	Marks				Total marks
		AO1	AO2	AO3	AO4	
1	How convincing...? How far do you agree?				8	8
2	Explain	4	4			8
3	Write an account	4	4			8
4	Essay linked to historical site	8	8		4	16

The exam questions

Question 1

Question 1 will focus on interpretations. You will be given one visual or written interpretation of some aspect of the specification content, for example about a named individual, a battle or a development. You will be asked to comment on how convincing the interpretation is. For example:

INTERPRETATION A

From a book by Christopher Haigh (1988)

Elizabeth adopted a tone of condescending superiority towards her Parliaments, confident that if she explained things often enough and slowly enough, the little boys would understand. For Elizabeth, parliamentarians were little boys – sometimes unruly and usually a nuisance, and always a waste of an intelligent woman's time. Queen Elizabeth did not like Parliaments and it showed.

This answer addresses some really important points, covering things that make the interpretation convincing and less convincing.

The answer is effective but there is room for improvement. It chooses some good examples to demonstrate how the source is convincing. However, it does not give any examples to support its comments on how the source is unconvincing.

1. How convincing is Interpretation A about Elizabeth's relationship with Parliament? Explain your answer using Interpretation A and your contextual knowledge. (8 marks)

On the one hand, this interpretation is convincing about Elizabeth's feelings of 'superiority' and her negative attitude towards Parliament. For instance, they pressured her to marry so often that she eventually lost her temper and forbade them from discussing the marriage issue again. She also limited their freedom of speech on religious matters and imprisoned Puritan MPs such as Peter Wentworth when they went too far. She aimed to influence their decisions, often attending Parliament in person in order to bully and charm them into doing what she wanted. However, the interpretation underplays how much Elizabeth actually relied on Parliament to run the country and it exaggerates how powerful Elizabeth really was.

OVER TO YOU

Write two more sentences about whether Elizabeth had to rely heavily on Parliament and whether she lost control over it during her reign.

Question 2

Question 2 will ask you to explain some feature, development or change. It might be about:

- a change you have studied
- the causes or consequences of an event
- the importance of some key features or characteristics of a period.

For example:

2. Explain what was important about Mary, Queen of Scots during the Elizabethan period. (8 marks)

There is more to this than knowledge. You should aim to select the knowledge that is relevant to the question, write in clear language and include plenty of relevant detail to support your answer. The focus of the question is on the importance of Mary, so the points you make and the knowledge that you use to support those points should focus on her impact on England and on Elizabeth. Why was she such a worry to Elizabeth that in the end Mary was executed?

Mary, Queen of Scots made her cousin Elizabeth feel insecure and she caused instability. After fleeing Scotland in disgrace, Mary sought refuge in England. However, Elizabeth saw her as a dangerous rival and kept her imprisoned in remote locations for nineteen years. A number of plots centred around Mary because she was a Catholic. The Catholics saw Mary as an alternative monarch to Elizabeth. The Northern Rebellion involved a plan to free Mary from captivity and marry her to the leading English nobleman, the Duke of Norfolk. Later, the Ridolfi Plot and Throckmorton Plot also planned to free Mary and to overthrow Elizabeth.

Eventually, Mary was put on trial and found guilty of treason for her involvement in the Babington Plot. She had written coded letters, supporting a conspiracy to have Elizabeth assassinated and herself placed on the throne. The letters had been intercepted by Elizabeth's spymaster, Sir Francis Walsingham. The proof of Mary's guilt led to her execution in February 1587.

Her execution was very important, as it angered Catholics across Europe, particularly King Philip II of Spain. Mary was considered a Catholic martyr and Elizabeth was accused of regicide. Indeed, Elizabeth herself went into a deep depression due to the guilt she felt over Mary's death and she had her secretary imprisoned for his part in dispatching the death warrant.

Question 3

Question 3 asks you to write a narrative account of some change or development from the period. For example:

3. Write an account of the ways in which conflict with Spain affected Elizabethan England. (8 marks)

The big difference between Questions 2 and 3 is that in Question 3 you are trying to write an orderly account of the changes that happened, and the effects on Elizabethan England over time, as a result of the issue mentioned in the question. This is still not 'everything you know' about a topic. You still need to select knowledge carefully that shows you understand England's conflict with Spain and its effects on England.

This answer seems like a good one, because it covers a number of consequences of Mary's presence in Elizabethan England. It details Mary's involvement in various Catholic plots against Elizabeth, her eventual execution, and the impact this had on Elizabeth's security and reputation.

However, to do really well you should refer to wider political and religious events during Elizabeth's reign and how they connect to the story of Mary, Queen of Scots. For example:

- Why did Elizabeth's decision to remain unmarried make Mary more of a threat?
- Why did Catholics not like Elizabeth or her religious settlement?
- What impact did Elizabeth's excommunication by the Pope have on events?
- How is Mary's execution linked to the Spanish Armada?

OVER TO YOU

Choose one of these points and write another paragraph.