

Queen elizabeth i: defeat of the spanish armada

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Elizabeth I: Improving England's International Standing: The Defeat of the Spanish Armada Elizabeth Tudor was born in 1533 to King Henry VIII and his second wife, Anne Boleyn. Her life began in the midst of controversy and continued to be troubled until her death in 1603. Elizabeth, in reality, never should have been the ruler of Great Britain at all since she had several siblings in line for the throne ahead of her. After she was crowned queen at the age of 25, she successfully reigned for 45 years. Elizabeth increased English power and influence worldwide, handled sensitive issues like religion with grace and diplomacy, and gained and retained the respect of her subjects and other political figures. The fact that she accomplished all of this as a female in a male dominated society is nothing short of miraculous. The defeat of the "Invincible Spanish Armada" in 1588 cemented Queen Elizabeth's place in history as one of the most important and greatest rulers in England's history. When Elizabeth was 3, she was declared illegitimate and lost the title of Princess after her father arrested and executed her mother for charges of treason, incest, and witchcraft. King Henry quickly remarried and his third wife, Jane Seymour, gave birth to a son, Prince Edward, who became the official heir to the throne. During Elizabeth's young life, she learned six languages, including Latin, Greek, French, and Italian. She was often thought of as very intelligent and serious as a child. Her tutor, Ascham, remarked that Elizabeth's intellect and memory distinguished her above others, men and women alike. She also inherited characteristics from both her mother and her father. King Henry was known to be unwavering and firm, while Anne Boleyn was considered to be extremely clever and resourceful. Elizabeth's intelligence and the characteristics from both of her

parents made her a brilliant political figure. After the death of Elizabeth's father, Prince Edward became the first ruler of England at the young age of 10. He died as a teenager from tuberculosis, and then the real struggle for the crown began. The first to be declared queen was Lady Jane Grey who was a descendant of Henry VIII's sister, Mary. Elizabeth took to her bed during this time and claimed to be ill because she had been asked to renounce her own claim to the throne publicly and did not want to make a commitment one way or the other. Jane was queen for nine days. Mary, daughter of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon, was actually the rightful heir to the throne. She became queen after marching into London and imprisoning Jane Grey. Mary had the popular support and Elizabeth at her side. Elizabeth was brilliant for showing her loyalty to the new queen since it placed her in a position of honor and negated rumors of her allegiance to the Protestant religion. Mary I married Prince Philip of Spain, seeking to strengthen Catholic influence in England but this union made Mary very unpopular. The Protestants were mercilessly persecuted by the queen, who came to be known as "Bloody Mary" due to the thousands of executions she ordered. Mary felt that the Protestants were heretics and a serious threat to her authority. She begged Elizabeth, a Protestant, to convert to the Roman Catholicism, but the Princess quietly remained faithful to her conscience and to her religion. Elizabeth was imprisoned for two months in the Tower of London, and many tried to have her removed from the order of succession, but she was allowed to return to the court after Mary was mistakenly rumored to be pregnant and Elizabeth no longer appeared to be a threat. Philip fought to keep Elizabeth's right to claim the throne if Mary died since

the next-closest relative was Mary, Queen of Scots. He did not want her to become Queen because she was heavily influenced by the French in her politics and they were enemies of Spain. Mary died in November of 1558, due to a large ovarian cyst which caused her stomach to swell and this cyst was what led her to believe that she was pregnant. On her deathbed at her husband's request, Mary accepted Elizabeth as heir to the throne to prevent the French from obtaining it. Queen Elizabeth had many things to deal with when she became ruler of England. Mary and previous rulers had left the country bankrupt and there was serious need for some sort of religious mediation. She cut back on royal expenses and even encouraged pirating at times to increase England's wealth. Elizabeth knew that England needed money, and didn't care where it came from. She cut inflation and greatly reduced England's debt. The Elizabethan Settlement settled the problems between the religions by proclaiming that she did not care what people believed as long as they attended the Church of England. She became the supreme governor of the church and cut down on the previous conflict between the two religions by keeping the ceremonious acts from the Catholic Church, such as communion, but removing the Pope from power so he was not able to use his influence for Catholic rebellion against the Protestants. King Philip made a grave mistake when he supported Elizabeth's ascension to the throne. Not only did Queen Elizabeth encourage the piracy of Spanish ships by men such as Sir Francis Drake, she also began helping the Spanish ruled Dutch Protestants in Holland and she also aligned with the French. Elizabeth's execution of Mary, Queen of Scots in 1587 was the final move that drove Spain's King Philip to declare war on England. Mary, in a

brilliant political move, declared that Philip would be King after her death if she became the Queen after Elizabeth. Catholic Philip believed that he must restore the Catholic faith to Protestant England, by force if necessary. He also knew that if England was under Spanish rule, he could control the English Channel and his ships would have easy passage from Spain to the Netherlands, with no threat of piracy. Not only that, but Spanish troops stationed in England and the Netherlands could be easily supported if under Spanish rule. Philip's attack on England began as early as 1584, but his first choice as Commander died and the second was quite reluctant to assume the position. The second, Medina Sidonia, was an accomplished soldier on land but knew nothing of a naval engagement. By 1588, King Philip's Spanish Armada was ready to sail. The fleet numbered 130 ships and carried almost 30, 500 soldiers. It took four years to organize the Armada, but it was not as well-equipped as it seemed. Many ships carried items that were not needed for battle such as priests, olive oil, servants, and wine. Also, most of the Spanish vessels were not war ships at all; they were converted merchant ships that were broad, heavy, and difficult to maneuver which caused them hardship when attempting to engage in naval warfare. The Spanish did not consider any of these things as problems. They did not intend to engage the English in a sea battle, but simply wanted to carry troops to a designated landing point and unload them for a land battle. Naval warfare was still relatively new during this time, but the English had very advanced strategies concerning confrontations at sea. Even though Spain had more resources and money than England, the English fleet had a more effective navy, with better commanders, better ships, better sailors, and much better plans for

maritime warfare (Boot, 1). When the Armada began its journey, it ran into a storm immediately and lost five ships. As the ships traveled up the English Channel, another 3 ships were lost. As the Armada reached Calais, the English Commander and former pirate, Sir Francis Drake armed empty ships with gunpowder and explosives and sent them toward the Armada. The Spanish were forced to break formation and lost more vessels as they were hit by the "fire ships" from England. By breaking formation, each Spanish ship had to fend for itself. The English Channel became blocked and the only route the Spanish could use to return to Spain was to pass by Scotland, sail by the west side of England, and then pass west of Ireland. The ships that were not destroyed by fire landed in Catholic Ireland expecting help, but were instead attacked by the Irish as invaders. In reality, weather and bad planning were the primary reasons the Armada was defeated. The English were better skilled for naval warfare and the storms caused serious damage to the Spanish ships. King Philip was so sure that the Armada could not be defeated that he did not make any sort of plans in case of defeat, or even retreat, which caused the Spanish to lose even more soldiers and ships when they attempted to land in Ireland. The Armada battle did not make England the greatest power in Europe, but the defeat of the Spanish did have some very important consequences for England and Europe as a whole. The defeat greatly aided the Protestants in the ongoing battle with Spain and the Catholics. Since Philip himself said that "God-willing" the Armada would defeat the English, people all through Europe began to wonder if God was truly on the side of the Catholics. The English were also able to continue assisting the Dutch and the French resistance, who may not have been able

to continue fighting Philip's very professional and well-equipped military. The most important impact was the morale boost that was much needed by the Protestants and by the Catholic resistance as a whole. The monarchy was always in the midst of some sort of upheaval, and Elizabeth's victory gave the people confidence that their government and their queen were capable and that they were finally safe. The battle also enabled sailors and commanders to make better decisions regarding naval warfare, and taught them how to maneuver and navigate ships in the open water if a threat emerged. By using tactics employed by the English in this battle, other countries, such as the Dutch were able to build successful navies that were actually better than the English and the Spanish navy. The results of the defeat of the Armada affected more countries than England. England may not have been the richest nation, but it appeared to be governed by the most intelligent and capable person of that time and she gained the respect of leaders of other countries that may have otherwise not taken her seriously. The defeat of the so-called "Invincible Armada" showed the world that Queen Elizabeth was a force to be reckoned with and a ruler who could make decisive intelligent decisions just as well, if not better than a male ruler.