

The elizabethan era

[Business](#), [Industries](#)



By definition, a class is a group of people with a related social standing. There are often distinct differences between the classes, denoted by characteristics such as one's wealth, education, career, and health. These principles applied for the Elizabethan Era as well. Elizabeth herself was a member of the upper class, while other fairly successful people belonged to the middle class. Peasants were the lowest ranked class, usually because they were unfortunate enough to either contract a disease that disabled them from work, or they were farmers that were stricken with poverty when a harvesting season went bad.

The "upper class" consisted mainly of nobility and wealthy landowners. Those in this class generally handled governmental affairs. They also had their children brought up with an education in music, math, and history. It wasn't rare for many of them to be literate in multiple foreign languages, as well as their own, such as Latin, English, French, and Spanish. Also, the men usually received a better education than the women. The men of nobility were taught extra skills such as horse riding, hunting, shooting, and hawking as well.

Because of this class's social statute and wealth, they were easily able to treat themselves to the best of the food available during their time, especially meaty foods. But because of the large consumption of meat with few vegetables, many eventually suffered from diseases such as scurvy, which is weakness of the bone. The dinnerware consisted of wooden plates, like those of the lower classes, but these were accompanied by other delicacies of the Elizabethan period, such as chairs, forks, and glasses. The favorite drink of

all the classes was beer, although the upper class favored wine imported from French vineyards.

One custom between the people of this class and the peasants was known as the giving of " alms" to the poor. This was were a wealthy person would contributemoneyand sometimes provide supplementary shelter to a less fortunate person. Although the upper class was a minority in Elizabethan times as it is now, it kept the thriving European kingdom alive. The second class of the Elizabethan Period was the " middle class". This class usually consisted of merchants and some landowners, although the number of peasants who rose and fell between this class and the lower class varied depending on the health of the seasonal harvest.

Those in this class lead a fairly peaceful, easygoing life, other than common household chores and visits to the local market. If possible, they would hire a servant to keep up with some of the household chores, such as the tedious task of clothes washing. They sent their children to a formal school if they could afford it. The parents were so intent for their children to learn the material that they encouraged teachers to beat them if they made mistakes or became lazy.

The middle class often could not afford some of the things taken for granted by the upper class, such as chairs instead of stools, forks, glasses, and a large selection of meats. The middle class drove the economy of Britain through its trades with other European countries. The peasants made up the lower class. These people were either ill, lazy, became laborers, or were just turned a bad hand during the harvest season. The laborers and servants

served long hours each day handling the least favorable jobs, such as field work and laundry. During bad seasons, as many as 25% could not afford food, and often the most they ever ate was bread.

In many cases they turned to thievery, otherwise they would starve. Some were lucky enough to receive " alms" from the wealthy, but many didn" t, because of their great number. The upper class pitied the peasants that were ill or that couldn" t find work, so they created a system to care for them. If there were able men that were just lazy and rather beg on the streets, a Parish, or the person in charge of the system locally, would send them to a larger city where they would be whipped and then sent back and assigned a job. If a man was ill, then they would often try to take him in and give him enough food to survive on.

Widows and their families were also treated in the same manner. In the end, when harvest was well, every class benefited, and it created especially good seasons for the poor, otherwise it was the peasants who suffered most. The classes of the Elizabethan Period established a society which became a model for many present-day cultures. Though not perfect, it still exists today, even in America to some degree. The upper class was the wealthiest and had the most power, while the middle class was mostly involved in trade, and the lower class made up the remainder who were often ill or widowed.