

March 3, 2013



March 3, 2013 Queen Elizabeth I She led as a woman, in what was very much a man's world; she did so with courage, grace, and intelligence. Queen Elizabeth I, an amazing female monarch in Europe, solved the religious turmoil in England, defeated the Spanish Armada, and strongly supported the Renaissance. Elizabeth's father, Henry VIII, had changed the entire country's religion in order to divorce his wife, Catherine of Aragon, and marry Anne Boleyn, Elizabeth's mother. He divorced his first wife, hoping that Anne Boleyn would be able to bear him the son he needed. When Elizabeth was born on September 7, 1533 at the Greenwich Palace, her father was bitterly disappointed. She spent most of her childhood in the Greenwich Palace, where she was born. Elizabeth was not even three years old when her mother was beheaded on May 19, 1536; she was charged with incest and adultery, but most historians agree that these charges were false. Before Henry VIII died, he named his son, Edward VI, as his successor. Edward was born to him by his third wife, Jane Seymour. Edward became king at ten years old, but he was a mere figurehead and died at the tragic age of fifteen years, a result of tuberculosis and measles. He was then succeeded by Mary I, his half-sister born to King Henry by his first wife, Catherine of Aragon. Mary often suspected Elizabeth for plotting against her. Mary spent two months in the Tower of London and then was sent to Woodstock, large estate where she was kept under house arrest for eleven months. Mary was nicknamed "Bloody Mary" for all the people she had killed during her five-year reign as Queen of England. Elizabeth was twenty-five years old when she became the next ruler with the ambition to repair all the mistakes Mary had done. On January 15, 1559 Elizabeth was crowned Queen by Owen Oglethorpe, bishop of Carlisle, at Westminster Abbey. Many were

enthusiastic for the new queen, but some worried that Elizabeth was unfit to repair the religious turmoil, because they believed that a woman was unable to rule a country alone, especially after "Bloody" Mary's reign. From the very start of her sovereignty, Elizabeth took her position very seriously. She began her day very early and often ended her day very late. She imitated her father's ruling; they both believed strongly in a monarch's divine right to rule. Elizabeth also demanded unquestioning loyalty from her subjects and advisors. Elizabeth tried to do everything as a queen with a firm, but loving hand. Her main wish was to unite England and create a strong and independent nation with a strong economy. Throughout her reign, Elizabeth strived to promote both images: Good Queen Bess - the ruler that was devoted to her subjects and courted their good opinion, and Gloriana - the goddess around whom England revolved around. When Elizabeth first became Queen, she appointed many Protestant advisors, along with a few Catholic advisors, to help smooth the transition between her sister's regime and her own. She favored Protestantism and established England as one of the leading Protestant countries. Elizabeth constantly surrounded herself with highly intelligent and loyal advisors. Her court astounded people with its splendor; it was the center of England's power and wealth. She ruled for forty five years - one of the longest reigns in history at the time. Elizabeth received an excellent education; she was naturally studious and began learning Latin when she was five years old. Elizabeth added Flemish, French, Greek, Italian, Spanish, and a little Welsh soon after. She loved to learn history and was rumored to have studied it three hours a day. While Elizabeth studied architecture, geography, mathematics, and astronomy, she would train in etiquette, sewing, dancing and horseback riding. The Queen

would often express her personal, private emotions in poetry, and usually it was very good. Elizabeth's poetry was very elegant and flowery and frequently about love. Elizabeth loved plays, pageants, and dancing meanwhile; she loved jokes and had a lively sense of humor. Elizabeth was known to have an amazing memory, and would often use somebody's words against them. Immediately after Elizabeth had become crowned queen, she was offered many suitors. However, Elizabeth never married and earned the nickname "The Virgin Queen". Many historians reason that because of her father's many marriages and the way he treated his wives, Elizabeth was disgusted by marriage, and therefore she never married. Robert Dudley was one of the main candidates to marry Elizabeth; they were childhood friends and Robert Dudley was one of Elizabeth's most steadfast supporters throughout her life. She had great affection for him, but there were many problems with the marriage. Elizabeth used her eligibility as a diplomatic tool, hoping for a foreign alliance with England. When Parliament asked her at the first Parliament meeting to marry, she held up her hand and displayed her coronation ring and told them that she was already married to the kingdom of England. When Elizabeth was seventy, right before she died, she had to have her coronation ring sawed off and her forty-five year marriage to England was over. Since Elizabeth believed strongly in absolute rulership, she often conflicted with Parliament over matters such as her single state, religion, freedom of speech, and her cousin, Mary Queen of Scots. Parliament would often refuse to grant Elizabeth money if she did not consent with their requests. Elizabeth often considered Parliament as an inconvenience and hardly summoned them. She only summoned Parliament when they were needed — thirteen times in forty five years. During The Golden Age, the later

years of her reign, Elizabeth and England faced many problems the threat of Mary Queen of Scots and the Spanish Armada. Elizabeth survived many Catholic conspiracies; for example, the Babington plot involving Mary Queen of Scots. Even though Mary was found plotting against the Queen many times, Elizabeth regretted signing Mary's death warrant for the rest of her life. The relationship between Elizabeth and King Philip II of Spain was becoming strained. This was due to English piracy of Spanish ships that had recently collected vast wealth from trade in the New World. Queen Elizabeth would help finance Francis Drake's expeditions to raid these Spanish ships. Spain wanted to attack in 1587, but Elizabeth wanted to negotiate peacefully. Even though she tried to negotiate, Elizabeth and England prepared for war. The Armada was sighted off the coast on July 29, 1588. Francis Drake, leader of the English Navy, set eight of his ships on fire and sent them amongst Philip's ships. Since the English ships were smaller, faster, and more maneuverable, they lit the Spanish ships quickly. Spain lost eleven ships and over two thousand men, while England lost no ships, except the ones lit intentionally, and fifty men. The war continued despite the victorious defeat of the Armada. The English Navy was established as the most powerful fighting force. Elizabeth enjoyed the general celebrations after the Armada, but during the festivities, her dear friend and suitor, Robert Dudley, died. Although she was in mourning, the people celebrated and the arts flourished during this time. As a patron of the arts, the Queen sponsored many poets, playwrights, painters, and other writers. Most notable court painters were foreign, usually Dutch, but one English native stood out, Nicholas Hilliard, who was Elizabeth's favorite. He used to paint paintings onto lockets and other jewelry, and decorated them with delicate flowers and

plants. Music was everywhere; the literate and illiterate would both memorize songs about love, heroes, and epic battles. During the Renaissance, music reached its peak and all educated people were expected to sing complex songs. Through Elizabeth's time in power, England increased in literacy and scientific thinking and many great authors and scientists emerged during this time. Elizabeth also encouraged expansion overseas; countless explorers became known during her ruler ship. She was recognized as the leading power in Europe by many of the surrounding countries. During the early hours of March 24, 1603 Elizabeth died at the Richmond Palace and was buried in Westminster Abbey on April 28, 1603 next to her half-sister, Mary. The last act the Queen performed was to name James VI of Scotland, son of Mary Queen of Scots, the ruler of England. Since England was so stable, the succession was smooth and peaceful. At the time of Elizabeth's death, she owned two thousand gowns and several hundred necklaces; some say she wore a new gown every day. Elizabeth I was known later as an excellent and wise ruler, who was dearly loved by her people. Whether Elizabeth was loved or hated, she was one of the great people in history shape the time period, and whatever came afterward. Elizabeth eased the religious havoc, conquered the Armada, sustained the Renaissance and unified the people, who saw themselves as citizens of one nation for the first time.