

# Why elizabeth i never married and the consequences assignment

[History](#)



History Essay- Elizabeth I- why did she never marry and what were the consequences. “ I may not be a lion, but I am a lion’s cub and I have a lions heart” ??? Elizabeth I This quote states that Elizabeth may not have been a man, but she is her father’s daughter, and she has his heart. signifying she can rule just as he or any man before her has. Elizabeth was born on the 7th of September 1533 at Greenwich Palace. She was the daughter of King Henry the VIII and his second wife, Anne Boleyn.

Her birth was much disappointed by her father as he wanted a son and heir to succeed him as he already had a daughter, Mary; to his first wife, Katherine of Aragon. He had not divorced Katherine, and changed the religion of the country in the process, to have only another daughter. Elizabeth’s early life was therefore troubled. Her mother failed to provide the King with a son and was executed on false charges of incest and adultery on 19 May 1536. Anne’s marriage to the King was declared null and void, and Elizabeth, like her half-sister, Mary, was declared illegitimate and deprived of her place in the line of succession.

Despite this, on the 15th of January 1559, Elizabeth was crowned Queen of England and began her long and successful reign. The Marriage game From the moment Elizabeth became Queen, there was one question that everyone was asking - who will the Queen marry? It was assumed that one of the first things Elizabeth would do, would be to select a husband to help her govern the realm, and more importantly, to get her pregnant. Elizabeth was the last of her dynasty, and it was thought natural that her main concern would be to provide a child to continue the rule of the Tudors.

Elizabeth was young, unlike her sister who was already into her late thirties when she became Queen, and there were high hopes that soon England would have a royal family again. Without an heir of the Queen's body, the future would be uncertain, and many feared that the rival claims of Henry VII's distant relatives would sink the country into a bitter civil war should Elizabeth die without a legitimate child to succeed her. In these early weeks of her reign, the court buzzed with suitors eager for her hand in marriage. Elizabeth was now the most sought after woman in Europe.

She received offers of marriage from the King of Spain, Prince Eric of Sweden - soon to be king, The Archduke Charles (son of the Emperor Ferdinand), the son of John Frederic Duke of Saxony, The Earl of Arran, the Earl of Arundel, and Sir William Pickering, who was so confident that he would be selected, that he demanded certain privileges be granted him while he stayed at the Court. Elizabeth politely rejected the offer made by King Philip, but allowed the other suitors to remain hopeful, while allowing her advisors to consider the advantages and disadvantages of each match.

Yet, the only person, it seemed, who did not see the urgency for marriage, was Elizabeth herself. It will never be known whether Elizabeth really intended to marry or not. Certainly she showed no great enthusiasm for marriage, and declared on a number of occasions that she personally preferred the single life. However, there is a danger to read history backwards and assume that because Elizabeth never married, it was always her intention not to. The marriage of a Queen was a complicated affair, and could be disastrous for the country, as the case of Queen Mary had shown.

Elizabeth did not want to repeat her sister's mistake by marrying a man that would not be popular with her people. Any man Elizabeth married would expect a say in the governing of the country (as Philip had expected under Mary) and neither Elizabeth or her ministers wanted to give up any power over English affairs. For this reason, it was in the best interests of the country for Elizabeth to marry a man who, although of suitable rank and status, was not a major European power, and would be content to be the Queen's companion only.

This effectively ruled out reigning monarchs, although Eric of Sweden was given serious consideration by Elizabeth's ministers. The suit of Eric, a fellow Protestant, was also popular in the country, and when it was rumoured that Elizabeth had accepted his proposal, medals were made in London with a picture of Elizabeth and Eric united on them. But Eric was far from a wealthy ruler, and marriage to him would have brought England little financial benefit, or provided her with a strong European ally. The Archduke Charles was also given serious consideration, and his suit remained a possibility for several years.

But as well as the need to consider the demands for power a potential husband would make, it was also necessary to take into consideration his religion, and religion often proved to be a serious bar to the marriage eventually occurring. The Archduke was a Catholic, and as a Catholic, his suit was not popular by the Protestant element in Elizabeth's Council. To complicate matters further, it seemed that Elizabeth had fallen deeply in love with one of her own subjects, Lord Robert Dudley, her Master of Horse.

They had been friends since childhood, and he was one of the few men Elizabeth believed valued her for herself, and not for the fact that she was now Queen. Her marriage to a fellow protestant Englishman would certainly have avoided the problem of foreigners controlling the realm through marriage to the Queen, and avoided a clash over religion, but marriage to a subject also gave rise to serious problems. Competition for power amongst the English nobility was fierce, and if Elizabeth married one noble, his rivals in power would be offended, and possibly withdraw their allegiance from her, and even plunge the country into civil war.

Also the match would not be one of equality, and would not provide England with a much needed foreign ally. There were also other considerations that made Dudley particularly unsuitable. To begin with he was already married, having married a young girl called Amy Robsart when he was about seventeen, and secondly he was the son of the much hated Duke of Northumberland who had been executed for treason in the reign of the Queen's sister, and the grandson of Edmund Dudley, who had likewise met a traitors death earlier in the century.

Robert Dudley himself had been imprisoned in the Tower for his involvement in his father's scheme to place Lady Jane Grey on the throne, and was regarded with suspicion by his fellow Englishman. Elizabeth's attachment to him, however, seemed unrelenting, and it was feared by many that he would seek an annulment from his wife, and marry the Queen. Whether Elizabeth seriously intended marrying him or not, is another of the many mysteries of

her reign, but the sudden death of Dudley's wife in the September of 1560, put to an end any real hope of marrying him that she may have entertained.

The only other serious contender for Elizabeth's hand was Francis, Duke of Alencon, and later Duke of Anjou. He was the son of Catherine de Medici, Queen Mother of France, and a brother to the French King. His courtship did not gain serious consideration until the 1570's, as he was considerably younger than Elizabeth herself, and the negotiations were entirely based on the mutual need of England and France to make an ally of each other.

The traditional European alliance system whereby England was united with Spain was rapidly deteriorating, and England needed the support of France if she was to protect herself against Spain. The negotiation were temporarily discontinued following the Bartholomew massacre, in which an estimated six thousand French protestants were killed but were soon continued when the need for an ally was pressing again. Consequences Once again, politics and religion was making it difficult for the Queen to marry. Elizabeth was in a difficult situation.

If she married, then she risked her popularity and support for her regime, but she was now in her late forties, and if she did not marry Alencon, then this could be her last chance at marriage, and having a child to succeed her to the throne. The ultimate decision as to whether she married or not, lay with Elizabeth herself, but without the solid backing of the country, marriage would not have been wise. No one knows if marriage was what Elizabeth really wanted, and perhaps Elizabeth did not really know herself.

The Alencon courtship had caused lot of problems within the court and country, and on top of that, Elizabeth learnt that Dudley had married her cousin, Lettice Devereux, Countess of Essex. Elizabeth still felt a sense of betrayal at his marriage and this may have been a factor in her apparent desire to marry Alencon. But after ten years, the Alencon match was finally laid to rest. Elizabeth's fears of marriage once again began to surface and the political problems the marriage would cause, made it seem impractical.

For over twenty years, Elizabeth had been courted by the most eligible men in Europe. The " marriage game" had come to be an important part of foreign relations, and a valuable asset to the country. When it seemed that England was losing friends, or in times when England needed friends, all Elizabeth had to do was suggest marriage to the respective countries, and regardless of whether she intended to marry or not, the prospect of marriage to the English Queen was too big a bait to resist, and Elizabeth could be assured of their support for the foreseeable future.

But now that Elizabeth was approaching fifty years of age, and could no longer realistically expect to bear a child, she could no longer use her marriage as a diplomatic weapon. The Alencon courtship was her last political courtship. It was certain now that Elizabeth would never marry. Her statesmen must have been relieved that the often gruelling negotiations for her hand were over, but the dangers the lack of an heir posed could not be ignored, and must have weighed heavily on the minds of her more far-sighted advisors.

The consequences of not getting married, was that Elizabeth never could produce an heir and therefore there was no named successor. Her council urged her to make a decision and name an heir, but she refused to. This seemed to be another ploy which Elizabeth was protecting herself and her country, if she did not name a successor, then no one knew who was going to rule England once her reign was over. This meant that there could be no schemes or plots to take the throne from the Queen, which she must have learnt from seeing her brother, Edward and sister Mary during their reign.

On a more negative note, it worried the council as if the Queen died suddenly, they could not name the successor to her throne and this might make them lose their place in the palace or Elizabeth's distant relative may plunge the country into war for the throne. In conclusion, why Elizabeth I never married has no simple answer, many factors such as religion, politics and personal choice have been debated and debated, but it is hard to know for sure. I believe each of those factors played an important role in why she never took a husband or named a successor.