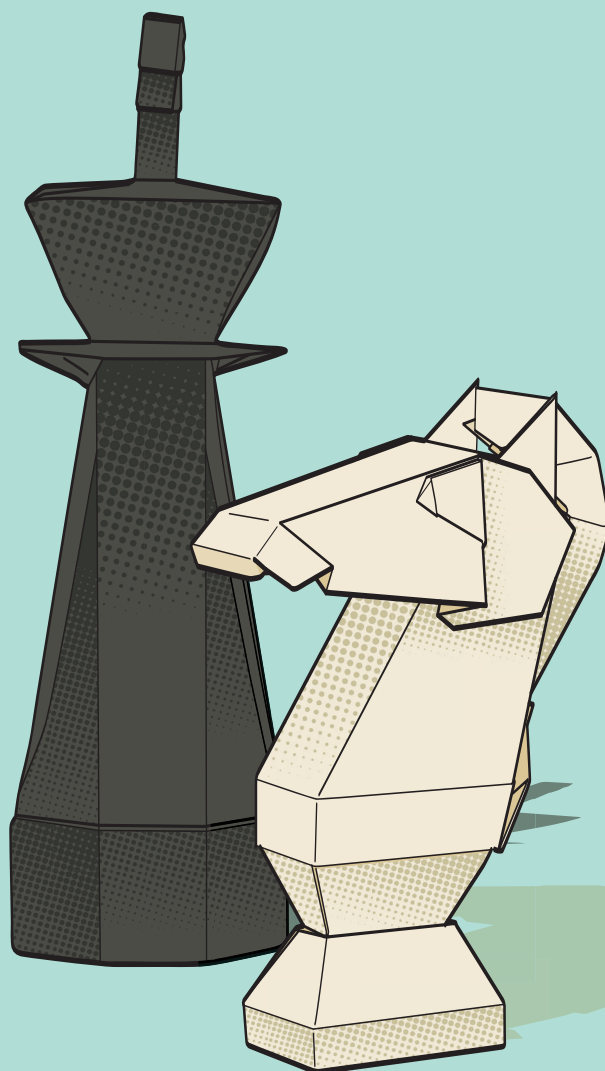


**Pearson Edexcel GCSE (9–1)**

# History

**Early Elizabethan England,  
1558–88**

**Revision Guide & Workbook + App**



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**Early Elizabethan England,  
1558–88****Revision Guide & Workbook + App****Series Consultant: Harry Smith****Author: Brian Dowse**

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### A small bit of small print

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This is the official content and this book should be used in conjunction with it. The questions in *Now try this* have been written to help you practise every topic in the book. Remember: the real exam questions may not look like this.

# Government on Elizabeth's accession

Elizabethan government had many different features and involved the court, the Privy Council, parliament, Lord Lieutenants and Justices of the Peace.

## Elizabeth's government

**The court** – made up of noblemen who acted as the monarch's advisers and friends. They advised the monarch and helped display her wealth and power. Members of the court could also be members of the Privy Council.



Elizabeth I became queen of England in 1558.

**The Privy Council** – members of the nobility who helped govern the country. They monitored parliament, Justices of the Peace and oversaw law and order and the security of the country.

**Parliament** – advised Elizabeth's government, made up of the House of Lords and the House of Commons.

The House of Lords was made up of noblemen and bishops. The House of Commons was elected, though very few people could vote. Parliament passed laws and approved taxes (**extraordinary taxation**).

**Justices of the Peace** – large landowners; appointed by government, who kept law and order locally and heard court cases.

**Lord Lieutenants** – noblemen, appointed by government, who governed English counties and raised the local **militia**.

### Key terms

**Extraordinary taxation** – extra taxes required to pay for unexpected expenses, especially war.

**Militia** – a force of ordinary people (not professional soldiers) raised in an emergency.

**Remember:** Elizabeth did not possess complete power. She could not pass laws without parliament's approval, or raise taxes without parliament's agreement.

### Now try this

- 1 Explain **two** features of Elizabethan government.
- 2 Were there any ways in which the power of Queen Elizabeth I was limited? Explain your answer.

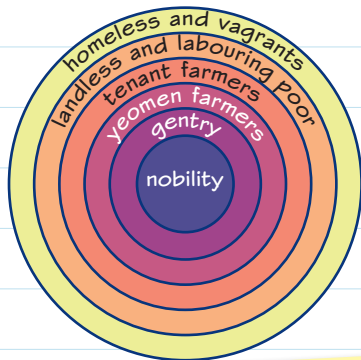
You may wish to refer to parliament when answering this question.



# Society on Elizabeth's accession

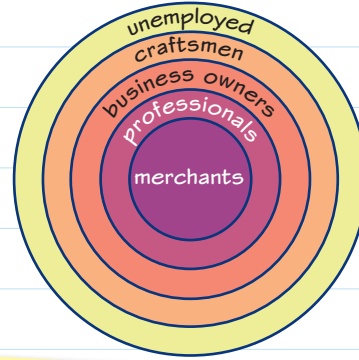
Elizabethan society was very rigid, based on inequality and a social hierarchy or structure where everyone knew their place.

## The social hierarchy of the countryside



90% of the population of Elizabethan England lived in the countryside.

## The social hierarchy of towns



10% of the population of Elizabethan England lived in towns.

### Who's who in the countryside

- ✓ **The nobility** – major landowners; often lords, dukes and earls.
- ✓ **The gentry** – owned smaller estates.
- ✓ **The yeoman farmers** – owned a small amount of land.
- ✓ **Tenant farmers** – rented land from the yeoman farmers and gentry.
- ✓ **The landless and labouring poor** – people who did not own or rent land, and had to work or labour to provide for themselves and their families.
- ✓ **Homeless and vagrants** – moved from place to place looking for work.

### Who's who in the towns

- ✓ **Merchants** – traders who were very wealthy.
- ✓ **Professionals** – lawyers, doctors and clergymen.
- ✓ **Business owners** – often highly skilled craftsmen, such as silversmiths, glovers (glove makers), carpenters or tailors.
- ✓ **Craftsmen** – skilled employees, including apprentices.
- ✓ **Unskilled labourers and the unemployed** – people who had no regular work and could not provide for themselves and their families.

## Obedience and care

Wherever you were in Elizabethan society, you owed respect and obedience to those above you and had a duty of care to those below. Landowners ran their estates according to these ideas. Ideally they would take care of their tenants, especially during times of hardship.

Households were run along similar lines to society. The husband and father was head of the household. His wife, children and any servants were expected to be obedient to him.

### Now try this

Briefly explain **two** features of Elizabethan society.

A **feature** is an aspect of a topic. For example, obedience and care is a feature of Elizabethan society.

# Virgin Queen: legitimacy, gender and marriage

When Elizabeth became queen following the death of her older sister, Mary, she had to find a way of establishing her authority as reigning monarch.

Elizabeth was young (21 years old) and lacked experience.

Elizabeth's government needed money.

Elizabeth's **legitimacy** was in doubt as the pope had refused to recognise her mother's marriage to Henry VIII.

Elizabeth's father, Henry VIII, had divorced Catherine of Aragon and married Anne Boleyn, Elizabeth's mother. The pope refused to recognise this divorce. When Anne Boleyn was executed in 1536, Henry excluded Elizabeth from the succession, although he reversed this decision before his death.

To pass laws, Elizabeth needed the support of parliament.

## Problems facing Elizabeth when she became queen

Catholics refused to acknowledge Elizabeth's right to rule England.

Elizabeth was unmarried and it was unusual for a queen to rule in her own right, as Christian traditions suggested that women should follow men's authority. Many people disapproved of the idea of a queen regnant (a queen who actually ruled).

Elizabeth was Protestant. Her predecessor, Mary, was Catholic.

Many Catholics, especially in the north, disliked the way Henry had taken over the Church in 1534 (the Act of Supremacy) and dissolved the monasteries. They questioned Elizabeth's legitimacy, claiming that she had no right to rule. They preferred a Catholic monarch and there was a real risk of rebellion.

**Legitimacy** refers to whether a monarch is lawfully entitled to rule.

## Key issues facing Elizabeth in 1588

- It was widely expected that Elizabeth would marry. However, this would reduce Elizabeth's power, as her husband would be expected to govern the country and deal with parliament.
- Elizabeth's inexperience meant that she needed the support and advice of her Privy Council, especially her Secretary of State, Sir William Cecil.
- Elizabeth could issue royal proclamations and had prerogative powers, enabling her to govern without parliament's consent, especially in foreign policy. However, laws could only be passed with parliament's approval as Acts of Parliament.

## The problems of marriage

- ✓ If Elizabeth married a Protestant, this would anger Catholics.
- ✓ If she married a Catholic, this would upset Protestants.
- ✓ Marriage could involve England in expensive wars, damaging royal finances and requiring taxation. The Crown was already £300,000 in debt.

Yet marriage was important, as Elizabeth needed an heir. If she died without an heir the throne would be vacant and this could lead to civil war.

## Now try this

Briefly explain **two** problems Elizabeth faced when she became queen in 1558.

# Virgin Queen: character and strengths

Elizabeth was known as 'the Virgin Queen' because she remained unmarried. Many people in the 16th century felt this meant she could not rule alone. However, Elizabeth had a number of strengths as a ruling monarch.

## Elizabeth's character and strengths

Elizabeth was confident and **charismatic** – this enabled her to win over her subjects and command support in parliament.

Elizabeth was resilient – she had spent time in the Tower accused of treason and facing possible execution. She could cope with the pressures of being queen.



The Virgin Queen

Elizabeth was well educated – she spoke Latin, Greek, French and Italian.

Elizabeth had an excellent grasp of politics – she understood the interests and ambitions of her subjects, and was able to use her powers of **patronage** effectively.

Although Elizabeth was **Protestant**, the number of Protestants in England was growing, making her position as queen more secure. She could claim **divine right** with growing conviction.

## Reinventing the role

Elizabeth was able to use her strengths to reinvent herself as a different type of monarch. She liked to demonstrate that, even though she was female, she was no ordinary woman. She therefore argued that she did not need to marry and could govern England on her own.

## Elizabethan propaganda

Throughout her reign, Elizabeth was happy to portray herself as a strong, legitimate, popular monarch and a 'Virgin Queen' – married only to England and not to a prince or king. This is reflected in paintings such as the one above of her coronation, which shows a confident but feminine monarch rightfully crowned queen.

## Key terms

- **Charismatic leader** – someone who possesses great personal appeal and can use this to win people over.
- **Legitimate ruler** – someone who is legally and morally entitled to rule.
- **Divine right** – the idea that God alone appointed the monarch, meaning that to challenge the monarch was to challenge God. Successful monarchs claimed divine providence (Godly approval) of their actions, reinforcing their legitimacy. Less successful monarchs could face charges of Godly disapproval and find their legitimacy undermined.
- **Protestants** – Christians who no longer accepted the authority of the pope and many of the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. During the Reformation (which began in 1517), Protestants, under Martin Luther, seceded (broke away from) the Roman Catholic Church, and this resulted in religious wars in France and Germany.
- **Patronage** – the monarch could use the granting of lands, jobs and titles to reward her supporters. People who received these positions could use them to become wealthy.

## Now try this

Briefly describe **two** advantages Elizabeth had when she became queen in 1558.

# Challenges at home: financial weaknesses

Elizabeth faced a number of financial challenges at home when she became queen.

## Financial weaknesses in 1558

There was a need to improve the quality of money to help England's finances.

- The **Crown** was £300 000 in debt and had an annual income of only £286 667.
- Over £100 000 of Crown debts was owed to foreign moneylenders (the Antwerp Exchange), which charged a high interest rate at 14%.
- Mary Tudor had sold off Crown lands to pay for wars with France, so the Crown's income from rents was falling.
- Elizabeth needed money to remain secure on the throne, as she could use it to reward her supporters.
- Since the 1540s, the Crown had debased (devalued) the coinage, by reducing its silver and gold content, in order to make more money to fight wars against France. This resulted in **inflation**, as the value of the currency fell.

The word **Crown** refers to the government, which means the monarch and her advisers (Privy Councillors).

## How monarchs could raise money

- Rents and income from their own lands (Crown lands).
- Taxes from trade (known as customs duties).
- Special additional taxes, known as subsidies, which had to be agreed by parliament.
- Profits of justice (fines, property or lands from people convicted of crimes).
- Loans (sometimes loans were 'forced', meaning they were compulsory and never repaid).

**Inflation** is where prices rise. This happened because coins were worth less, so people charged more for what they sold.

## What could Elizabeth do to solve her financial problems in 1558?

### Raise taxes to boost the Crown's income

- 👍 The queen could convene parliament and ask for subsidies (special additional taxes).
- 👎 Additional taxes would be unpopular with ordinary people, increasing the risk of unrest.

### Improve the quality of money by increasing the gold and silver content in the coinage.

- 👍 In 1560, Thomas Gresham, the Crown's financial adviser, suggested this to William Cecil, but the Crown was slow to respond.
- 👎 Any 'new' coinage would be traded alongside older, less valuable coins. People would struggle to exchange the older coins for new ones.

## The effects of Elizabeth's policies

In spite of Elizabeth's careful management of Crown finances, there was limited reform. Parliamentary grants were raised locally, with many landowners acting as Lord Lieutenants and Justices of the Peace, pocketing some of the proceeds before the rest was sent to the Crown. This meant that ordinary people faced a heavier financial burden while the wealthy benefitted.

## What Elizabeth did

- 👍 She did not raise taxes but instead hoarded her income and cut her household expenses by half.
- 👍 Like her predecessors, she sold Crown lands, raising £120 000.

By 1574, the queen could claim that the Crown was out of debt for the first time since 1558.

## Now try this

Explain why Elizabeth faced so many financial problems at the start of her reign in 1558.



# Challenges abroad: France, Scotland and Spain

When she became queen in 1558, Elizabeth faced a number of challenges from France, Scotland and, to a lesser extent, Spain and its influence in the Netherlands.

## Challenges from abroad facing Elizabeth in 1558

**The French threat:** France was wealthier than England and had a bigger population. Elizabeth's cousin, Mary, Queen of Scots, was married to the heir to the French throne. Mary had a strong claim to the English throne and English Catholics might rally to her if the French invaded.

**Under the Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis** England had lost Calais to France. This was England's last remaining territory on the continent and there was pressure on Elizabeth to regain it. However, war with France would be expensive and dangerous.

### Challenges abroad in 1558

#### The Auld Alliance:

France's alliance with Scotland threatened England. Mary of Guise (James V's widow), who ruled Scotland on behalf of her daughter, Mary, Queen of Scots, kept French soldiers there, who could attack England. The relationship between France and Scotland was further strengthened by the marriage of Francis (the heir to the French throne) to Mary, Queen of Scots, in 1558. Francis became King Francis II of France in 1559.

#### France had ended its war with Spain.

French military resources were no longer stretched by war with Spain, making a war with England more likely. There was also the possibility that France and Spain, both Catholic countries, would unite against Protestant England. Spain also had troops in the Netherlands, not far from England.

**War was an expensive business** and the Crown was in debt. England could not afford a war with France, Scotland or Spain, as this would be ruinously expensive and deepen the government's debts.

## How Elizabeth dealt with the challenges from abroad

Elizabeth did her best to avoid upsetting Europe's most powerful countries.

- She sought to avoid war with France by signing the Peace of Troyes (1564), which recognised once and for all the French claim to Calais.
- Elizabeth was able to deal with the threat posed by Scotland by placing Mary, Queen of Scots, who fled Scotland in 1568, in custody in England.
- By imprisoning Mary and making peace with France, Elizabeth had only one significant threat by 1569: Spain.

### Now try this

Explain the challenges Elizabeth faced abroad between 1558 and 1568.

Go to pages 13 and 14 to find out more about how Elizabeth dealt with the threat posed by Mary, Queen of Scots, between 1568 and 1569.



# Religious divisions in England in 1558

Elizabeth was a Protestant queen taking over a country that was still largely Catholic.

## Why was religion important in Elizabethan England?

- Religion was central to life in England. Religious teaching and practices guided people's morals and behaviour as well as their understanding of the world. Birth, marriage and death were all marked by religious ceremonies.
- People believed that going to church, attending pilgrimages and confessing sins reduced time in purgatory where the soul was purged of sin using 'spiritual fire' before reaching heaven.
- Religious festivals (holy days), such as St Swithin's Day (15 July) and Lammas Day (2 August), marked the agricultural year and were seen as essential to a good harvest.

Protestants tended to be found in northern Europe, especially in the Netherlands, Scandinavia and Germany.

The Reformation divided the Christian Church between Catholics and Protestants from 1517.

The north of England, especially Durham, Yorkshire and Lancashire, remained largely Catholic.

### Religious divisions in England and Europe in the 16th century

Since the 1530s, many Protestants fleeing persecution in Europe had landed in England, settling in London, East Anglia and Kent. The number of English Protestants was growing.

Some Protestants became Puritans – people who wanted to purify the Christian religion by getting rid of anything not in the Bible.

## The differences between Catholicism, Protestantism and Puritanism

	Catholics ('old religion')	Protestants ('new religion')	Puritans (strict Protestants)
Beliefs	The pope is the head of the Church helped by cardinals, bishops and priests.	No pope. It may be necessary to have archbishops or bishops.	No popes, cardinals or bishops.
	Church is the intermediary (go-between) between God and people. Can forgive sins.	Personal direct relationship with God via prayer and Bible. Only God can forgive sins.	
	During Mass bread and wine become actual body and blood of Christ (transubstantiation).	The bread and wine simply represent the body and blood of Christ. There is no miracle.	
	7 sacraments (ceremonies).	2 sacraments: Baptism and Holy Communion.	
	Priests are celibate.	Priests can marry.	
Practices	Services in Latin.	Services in English.	
	Priests wear vestments.	Priests wear simple vestments.	
	Churches highly decorated.	Churches plain and simple.	Churches whitewashed with no decorations.
Support	Catholics the majority in north and west England.	Mostly south-east England (London, Kent, East Anglia).	Puritans found in London and East Anglia.

## Now try this

Briefly outline **two** ways in which the beliefs of Catholics, Protestants and Puritans differed in 1558.

# Elizabeth's religious settlement

Elizabeth's religious settlement (1559) aimed to establish a form of religion that would be acceptable to both Protestants and Catholics.

## Key features of Elizabeth's religious settlement of 1559

The Act of Uniformity dictated the appearance of churches and how religious services were to be held. It required everyone to attend church.

The Act of Supremacy:  
Elizabeth became Supreme Governor (Head) of the Church of England. All clergy and royal officials had to swear an oath of allegiance to her.

An Ecclesiastical High Commission was established to keep discipline within the Church and enforce Elizabeth's religious settlement. Disloyal clergy could be punished.

### Elizabeth's religious settlement

The Royal Injunctions:  
This was a set of instructions to the clergy that reinforced the Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity. It included instructions on how people should worship God and how religious services were to be conducted.

The Book of Common Prayer (1559) introduced a set church service to be used in all churches. The clergy had to follow the Prayer Book wording during services or be punished.

**Ecclesiastical** means anything to do with the Church.

## The aims of Elizabeth's religious settlement

Elizabeth's religious settlement was inclusive and designed to be accepted by as many of her subjects as possible. Therefore, the wording of the new Prayer Book could be understood to mean different things by Catholics and Protestants.

- The Communion Sacrament referred to in the Book of Common Prayer could be interpreted as the body and blood of Jesus (transubstantiation). This would have appealed to Catholics, while Protestants could view it as an act of remembrance.
- Protestants would have approved of the ban on pilgrimages to 'fake' miracles, while Catholics would have approved of the possibility of 'real' miracles.
- Catholics would also have approved of the use of candles, crosses and vestments in church services.

## Impacts of the religious settlement

- 8000 clergy out of about 10 000 accepted the religious settlement.
- Many Marian Bishops (Catholic Bishops appointed by Mary Tudor) opposed the settlement and had to be replaced.
- The majority of ordinary people accepted Elizabeth's religious settlement and attended the church services, even though many of them held on to Catholic beliefs.

## The Royal Injunctions

These stated that all clergy were required to:

- teach the Royal Supremacy
- report those refusing to attend church to the Privy Council – absentees were fined a week's wages
- keep a copy of the Bible in English
- have a government licence to preach
- prevent pilgrimages, religious shrines and monuments to 'fake' miracles
- wear special clothes (vestments).

## Now try this

- 1 Describe **two** ways in which the Elizabethan religious settlement affected the Church.
- 2 Give **two** reasons why a Protestant would have been happy with Elizabeth's religious settlement of 1559.

# Church of England: its role in society

The Church of England played an important role in national government, and in town and village life.

**Preached the government's message** – priests needed a government's licence to preach. This ensured the clergy preached Elizabeth's religious and political message, as those who refused to do so would be denied a licence.

**Provided guidance for communities** – the parish church helped people in times of hardship and uncertainty.

**Enforced Elizabeth's religious settlement of 1559.**

**Responsible for Church Courts** – these dealt with marriage, sexual offences, slander (false insults), wills and inheritance.

## Role of the Church of England in society

Find out more about the religious settlement on page 8.

**Legitimised Elizabeth's rule** – the Church encouraged people to remain loyal to and not rebel against their monarch.

**Visitations** – bishops carried out inspections of churches and clergy, to ensure they obeyed the religious settlement. These took place every 3–4 years. Visitations also involved checking the licences of physicians, midwives and surgeons.

### Role of parish clergy in village life

- In all parishes the clergyman was a major figure in the village community and conducted church services including baptisms, weddings and funerals.
- The clergy offered spiritual and practical advice and guidance to people, especially when times were difficult (such as during a poor harvest).
- The clergy were funded by taxes or **tithes**, or by other sources of income, such as the sale of church pews. The gentry funded some parishes while others remained independent of local landowners.

A tithe was a tax worth 10% of people's income or goods produced.

### Role of parish clergy in town life

- Parish churches in towns contained a much wider collection of people, including merchants, craftsmen, labourers and vagrants. There was often a wider range of religious beliefs, too, especially in London, which contained mainstream Protestants, Puritans and Catholics.
- The role of the clergy varied both within towns and between them. In London a wide variety of parishes existed, some of which were very wealthy while others were relatively poor.
- Due to overcrowding, parish clergy in towns had a wider range of issues to deal with than was the case in rural parishes. These included poverty, vagrancy and diseases, such as smallpox and plague.

### Now try this

- 1 In what ways did the Church of England control Elizabethan society?
- 2 Explain the role played by the clergy in rural parishes between 1558 and 1588.

# The Puritan challenge

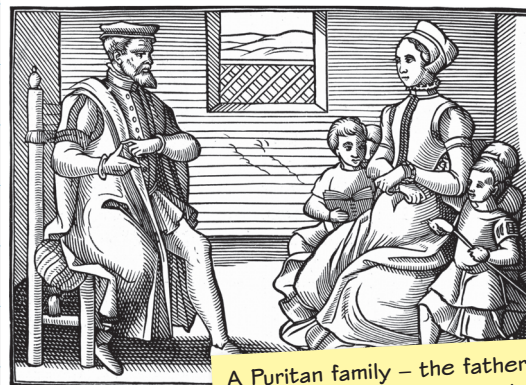
Many radical protestants, or Puritans, challenged Elizabeth's religious settlement of 1559. However, by the late 1560s most Protestant clergy were doing as the queen required.

## Who were the Puritans?

Puritans were radical Protestants who wanted to 'purify' the Christian religion by getting rid of anything that wasn't in the Bible.

- Puritans wanted to develop their own Church, which would not be controlled by the queen. There would be no bishops, and priests would not wear **vestments**.
- Puritans wanted to make the world a 'more godly' place by banning 'sinful' activities, such as gambling and cock fighting.
- Puritans wanted a simpler style of worship, whitewashed churches and no 'graven images' (worship of religious idols), including crucifixes and statues, which were seen as ungodly and too Catholic.
- A minority of Puritans believed the monarch could be overthrown in certain circumstances. This was especially the case if the monarch was Catholic.

Vestments were special clothing worn by clergy during worship.



A Puritan family – the father is teaching his wife and children.

- Many Puritans were anti-Catholic and believed the pope was the 'anti-Christ'. Other Puritans – **millenarians** – believed the world was ending and that Christians had to prepare for Jesus' return.

## The nature of the Puritan challenge

**Crucifixes:** Elizabeth, anxious not to upset her Catholic subjects, demanded that a crucifix be placed in each church.

Puritans opposed this, and, when some Puritan bishops threatened to resign, Elizabeth backed down, as she could not replace them with educated Protestant clergy of similar ability.

**Vestments:** Elizabeth wanted the clergy to wear special vestments, as described in the Royal Injunctions. Puritans resisted this, arguing that clergy should either wear no vestments or simple vestments. In 1566 the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Parker, required priests in his Book of Advertisements to attend an exhibition showing the vestments they must wear.

This resulted in the resignation of 37 Puritan priests, who refused to attend church and to wear the new vestments as required.

## The extent of the Puritan challenge

- Puritans were a vocal group within English society. Puritans, such as John Foxe, Thomas Cartwright and John Field, were openly anti-Catholic and opposed to bishops.
- While Puritans were active in London, Cambridge, Oxford and parts of East Anglia, Puritanism had less of an impact on northern England, where people remained mostly Catholic in outlook.
- The government ignored most Puritan demands for reform of the Church of England, including the Admonition to Parliament in 1572, suggesting that Puritanism's support was limited.

## Now try this

Briefly describe **two** ways in which the Puritans challenged Elizabeth's religious settlement.



# The Catholic challenge at home

The Catholic Church became increasingly hostile to Protestantism and Elizabeth's rule.

## The Counter Reformation

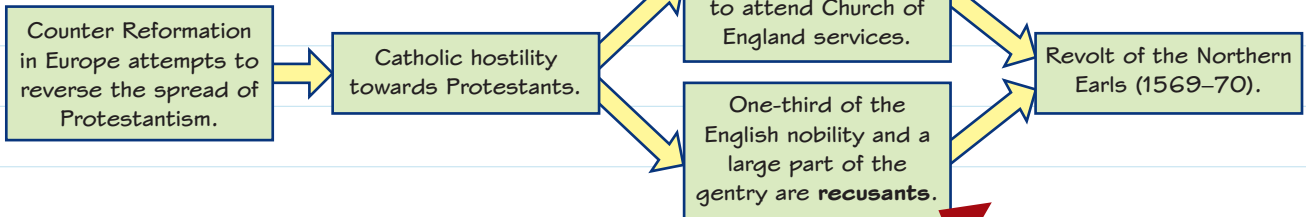
The Catholic Church's attempt to reverse the Protestant Reformation in Europe and stop its spread was known as the Counter Reformation. Protestants in Europe were charged with **heresy**. In 1566, the pope issued an instruction to English Catholics to not attend Church of England services.

**Heresy** involves denying the teachings of the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church dealt with heretics severely, with many being executed for their beliefs.

## Timeline

- **1534** Act of Supremacy: the king and not the pope is head of the Church of England.
- **1517** Start of the Reformation under Martin Luther.
- **1553–58** Catholicism is restored under Mary Tudor.
- **1545–63** Council of Trent and Counter Reformation leads to determination to reverse gains made by Protestantism in Europe and England since Reformation.
- **1559** Elizabeth's religious settlement.

## The nature of the Catholic threat at home



## The extent of the Catholic threat

- Up to one-third of the nobility (major landowners) and many gentry (smaller landowners) were recusants, especially in the north and northwest of England.
- Catholic nobility tended to be from traditional and powerful families that had prospered under Mary Tudor, such as the Nevilles and the Percys. They resented their loss of influence under Elizabeth and disliked the growing influence of her favourites, such as Sir William Cecil and Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, who they saw as Protestant upstarts.
- The nobility in the north were very influential and had always enjoyed freedom of action (independence) from the Crown, so they were well placed to incite a rebellion against Elizabeth.
- This threat was increased by the pope's instruction that Catholics were not to attend Church of England services. This gave them a powerful religious reason to rebel.

**Recusants** practised the Catholic religion in secret. Elizabeth tolerated them initially, as she did not want to turn them into religious martyrs (people prepared to die for their religion) and to avoid a Catholic rebellion.



Burning Protestant books during the Counter Reformation.

## Now try this

Explain why many Catholics opposed Elizabeth's religious settlement.

Remember this is a 'why' question, so you must give reasons.



# The Catholic challenge abroad

Many of Europe's most powerful rulers tended to be Catholic and, encouraged by the pope, represented a real threat to Queen Elizabeth's monarchy, as they could seek to remove her from the throne and replace her with a Catholic monarch.

## Extent of Catholic challenge from abroad in 1570



By 1570, Elizabeth was surrounded by potentially hostile Catholic powers that could seek to overthrow her and replace her with a Catholic monarch.

## France

When religious war began in France, in 1562, Elizabeth backed French Protestants, hoping to take back Calais in return. Yet this policy failed, as French Protestants made peace with the Catholics later that year.

Elizabeth could not afford to upset both France and Spain, as this would increase threats to her throne.

## The papacy

The Counter Reformation meant the pope was prepared to end Protestant rule in England. He disapproved of the steps that Elizabeth had taken to suppress Catholicism following the revolt of the Northern Earls.

The pope had already **excommunicated** Elizabeth in 1570. This could only encourage Catholic powers, such as France and Spain, to attack England.

**Excommunication** means being formally excluded from the Catholic Church and unable to receive its sacraments.

## Spain

- In 1566 the Dutch rebelled against Spanish occupation. Elizabeth outwardly condemned the Dutch rebels, known as the Sea Beggars, but many made their way to England. Spanish atrocities against Protestants (hundreds were put to death in the Netherlands) put Elizabeth under pressure to shelter rebels, who attacked Spanish ships in the Channel.
- Spain was further angered by England's seizure of the Genoese loan in 1568. The Italian city of Genoa lent gold to the Spanish government. Ships carrying the loan sheltered in English ports, where Elizabeth seized it, arguing it belonged to Italian bankers not Spain.
- By 1570, Spanish rule in the Netherlands was secure. The Privy Council now feared a Spanish invasion, as Spanish troops were in the Spanish Netherlands close to England (see map).
- The presence of Mary, Queen of Scots, as an alternative Catholic monarch encouraged the Spanish government to plot against Elizabeth.

For more on the Revolt of the Northern Earls, 1569–70, turn to page 18.

For more on England's political and religious rivalry with Spain, see page 23.

For more on the Counter Reformation, turn to page 11.

For more on plots against Elizabeth involving Mary, Queen of Scots, turn to pages 19–21.

## Now try this

Explain how relations between England and Spain declined between 1560 and 1570.

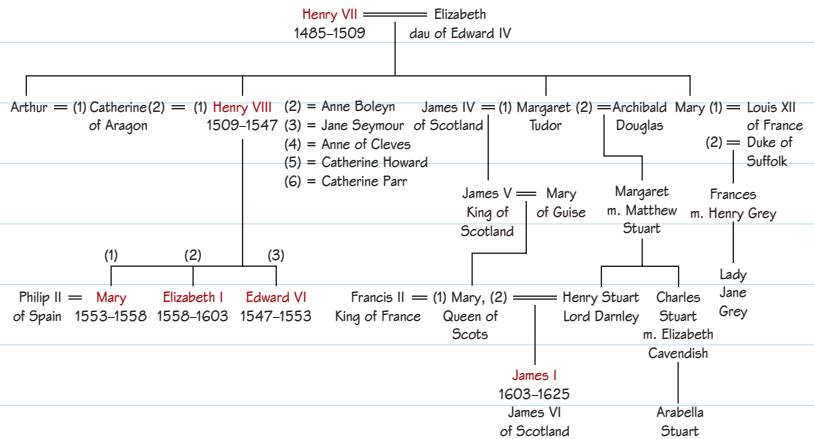
# Mary's claim to the throne and arrival in England

Mary, Queen of Scots, had a legitimate claim to the English throne and was at the centre of many plots designed to overthrow Elizabeth.

## Mary's claim to the throne

Mary, Queen of Scots, was Henry VII's great-granddaughter and Elizabeth's second cousin. She was descended from Margaret Tudor, Henry VIII's sister, who was Catholic and had a legitimate claim to the English throne. Mary was married to the French king, Francis II, and inherited the Scottish crown when she was only six days old. While Mary was in France, her mother, Mary of Guise, ruled Scotland.

## The House of Tudor



## Why was Mary important?

- Mary was Catholic, which meant that many Catholics, including members of the nobility, would be prepared to support her claim to the throne.
- Mary's claim was strengthened by the fact there were no concerns about her legitimacy. Elizabeth's legitimacy was questioned by Catholics, however, as her mother Anne Boleyn's marriage to Henry VIII was seen by many Catholics as invalid. This undermined Elizabeth's claim to the throne.
- Mary, therefore, would always be at the centre of Catholic plots and conspiracies against Elizabeth. These involved both English plotters and foreign powers.

For more information, see pages 15-17.

## Mary leaves Scotland

On the death of Francis II in 1560, Mary returned to Scotland and married Henry Stuart (Lord Darnley), producing an heir, James. Darnley was subsequently murdered (possibly with Mary's involvement) and this time Mary married the Earl of Bothwell.

Many Scots assumed that Mary had murdered Darnley and, in 1568, they rebelled against her, imprisoned her and forced her to abdicate (give up her throne) in favour of her son, James. Mary escaped and raised an army, but this was defeated at Langside near Glasgow. Mary subsequently fled to England, seeking her cousin Elizabeth's help against the Scottish rebels.

## Mary's imprisonment in England, 1568

Mary was held in England in comfort but under guard while Elizabeth decided what to do with her. The Scottish rebels demanded that Mary be handed over and tried for the murder of Darnley.

Mary's arrival in England created a problem for Elizabeth. By remaining in England she could encourage rebellion, as many members of the Catholic nobility believed they could overthrow Elizabeth and place Mary on the throne. However, to take action against Mary, as an anointed monarch, would also reduce Elizabeth's own status, power and authority.

Turn to pages 16-17 for more on plots against Elizabeth involving Mary, Queen of Scots.

## Now try this

Briefly explain why Mary, Queen of Scots, was imprisoned in England in 1568.

# Mary vs Elizabeth

Relations between the two monarchs remained tense, as Elizabeth became increasingly concerned about the presence of Mary, Queen of Scots, in England between 1568 and 1569, and the threat she posed to her throne.

## Elizabeth's options with Mary, Queen of Scots, in 1568–69

Option	Possible problems
1 Help Mary to regain her throne	Helping Mary regain her throne would anger the Scottish nobility and leave Elizabeth facing a Catholic monarch on her northern border. The Auld Alliance with France could then be revived to threaten her.
2 Hand Mary over to the Scottish lords	Mary was the widow of the French king, Francis II. Her trial, imprisonment and execution by Scottish noblemen with Elizabeth's permission could provoke France, driving them into alliance with Spain, which could lead both countries into war with England.
3 Allow Mary to go abroad	Allowing Mary to go abroad could see her return to France. This could provoke a French plot that aimed to remove Elizabeth from the English throne and replace her with Mary.
4 Keep Mary in England	Keeping Mary in England was probably the best option for Elizabeth. However, it carried the risk that Catholic plotters might try to overthrow Elizabeth and replace her with Mary.

## The Casket Letters Affair

- A meeting was set up at York to hear the case against Mary between October 1568 and January 1569.
- The Scottish lords brought love letters with them, supposedly written by Mary to the Earl of Bothwell, that showed she had plotted to murder Lord Darnley.
- Mary said that she could not be tried because she was an anointed monarch, and would not offer a plea unless Elizabeth guaranteed a verdict of innocence.
- The conference did not reach any conclusions. Mary, therefore, remained captive in England.

By not handing over Mary, Elizabeth ensured:

- 👍 the Scottish nobility would not imprison or execute Mary
- 👍 the French would be satisfied
- 👍 her subjects did not punish an anointed monarch.

The conference did not reach any conclusions. Mary, therefore, stayed in England, in captivity. But she remained a threat to Elizabeth, because any plots against her, especially those involving Catholics, would seek to replace Elizabeth with Mary.

## Why did Elizabeth not make Mary her heir?

One further possibility was that Elizabeth would acknowledge Mary as her heir. However, to do so would upset English Protestants, including those on her Privy Council. Without the support of these Privy Councillors, Elizabeth – already distrusted by many Catholics – would have few supporters left. Moreover, the prospect of a Catholic heir would, in the event of Elizabeth's death, result in civil war.

## Now try this

Explain why Mary, Queen of Scots, posed a threat to Elizabeth's position as queen.

# The Revolt of the Northern Earls

The Revolt of the Northern Earls (1569–70) was a key turning point in Elizabeth's reign.

## Why did the Northern Earls rebel?

- The earls and their followers wanted to make England Catholic again. They especially resented the appointment of James Pilkington, a Protestant, as Bishop of Durham in 1561.
- The earls had lost much of their influence at court under Elizabeth. They resented the 'new men', such as William Cecil, John Forster and Robert Dudley.
- Elizabeth's refusal to name an heir, or to marry and have a child, created uncertainty. The earls feared civil war and loss of power and wealth under a future Protestant monarch.



## The marriage plan

- Mary would marry the Duke of Norfolk, depose (remove) Elizabeth and become queen herself. She told the Spanish Ambassador in 1569 that she "shall be Queen of England in three months" and that "mass shall be said all over the country".
- Robert Dudley told Elizabeth of the plot, leading to Norfolk's arrest and imprisonment in the Tower.

## Progress of the revolt

- Northumberland and Westmorland, with their wives' support, continued with the revolt. They took control of Durham Cathedral, celebrating mass there, as well as in other northern churches, and began to move south.
- Elizabeth moved Mary to Coventry, to stop her escaping to join the rebels.
- Though the rebels captured Hartlepool, support from Spain never arrived.

## Why did the revolt fail?

- Support from Spain never arrived.
- Many northern landowners, especially those in Lancashire and Cheshire, remained loyal to Elizabeth.
- Many landowners did not want to risk losing wealth gained from the dissolution of the monasteries under Henry VIII by backing a failed revolt.

## The revolt's significance

- It showed Mary, Queen of Scots, could not be trusted – and she remained in prison.
- The pope excommunicated Elizabeth and called on loyal Catholics to depose her. This encouraged further Catholic plots against her.
- The loyalty of England's Catholics was now in doubt, forcing the government to take harsh steps against them.
- Elizabeth's control over the north of England was strengthened.

## Now try this

- 1 Why did the Northern Revolt threaten Elizabeth's position as monarch in 1569–70?
- 2 Did the defeat of the revolt in 1570 strengthen or weaken Elizabeth's grip on power?

Think about Catholics and Spain.



# The Ridolfi plot

The Ridolfi plot was one of a number of Catholic plots against Elizabeth after 1570.

## Background to the plot

The failure of the revolt of the Northern Earls and the Papal Bull of 1570 meant that Elizabeth and her Privy Council treated Catholics with suspicion.

The Earl of Huntingdon, a committed Protestant, led the Council of the North. He implemented laws against Catholics in the north of England. This angered many Catholics, who were now prepared, with the pope's backing, to plot against Elizabeth.

**The Ridolfi plot  
(1571)**

## The progress of the Ridolfi plot

- 1 Roberto Ridolfi was an Italian banker who lived in England and worked as a spy for the pope.
- 2 In 1571, Ridolfi plotted to murder Elizabeth, start a Spanish invasion and put Mary, Queen of Scots, on the English throne. Mary would then marry the Duke of Norfolk.
- 3 In March 1571, Ridolfi travelled to the Netherlands (which, at that point, was Spanish controlled) to discuss the plot with the pope, Philip II and the Duke of Alba. Ridolfi had a letter signed by the Duke of Norfolk in which Norfolk declared himself a Catholic and pledged to lead the rebellion with Philip II's support.
- 4 Philip II instructed the Duke of Alba to prepare 10 000 troops to send across the English Channel in support of the revolt.
- 5 Sir William Cecil discovered the plot and, by autumn 1571, was able to prove that Norfolk was guilty of high treason (plotting against Elizabeth). Ridolfi remained abroad and never returned to England.
- 6 When parliament reconvened in May 1572, it demanded the execution of both Norfolk and Mary, Queen of Scots. Elizabeth signed Norfolk's death warrant leading to his execution in June 1572. Yet Elizabeth was reluctant to punish Mary, and even refused to remove her from the succession.

Elizabeth had to proceed cautiously. Executing Mary would further anger English Catholics and possibly unite France and Spain (Europe's two big Catholic monarchies) against her.

It reinforced the threat from Spain, as Philip II would support any plots against Elizabeth.

It confirmed that English Catholics and Mary, Queen of Scots, remained a threat to Elizabeth.

## The significance of the Ridolfi plot

The threat from Spain meant that England needed to improve relations with France, as England could not fight both countries at once.

The government now began to monitor Catholics more closely and treat them more severely. Two laws passed in 1581 meant that families could be fined for sheltering priests and charged with treason if they converted people to Catholicism.

## Now try this

Briefly explain why the Ridolfi plot was a threat to Elizabeth I.



# The Throckmorton and Babington plots

The Throckmorton and Babington plots were organised by Catholics against Elizabeth.

## The Throckmorton plot, 1583

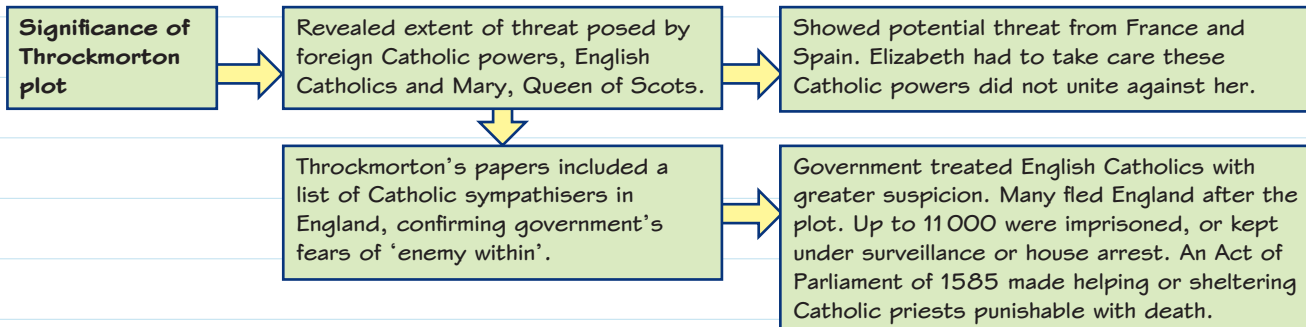
The French Duke of Guise, a cousin of Mary, Queen of Scots, plotted to invade England and overthrow Elizabeth, free Mary and make England Catholic again.

- Philip II offered to help pay for the revolt and the pope approved of the conspiracy.
- Francis Throckmorton, a young Englishman, would pass letters between the plotters and Mary, Queen of Scots.

## The failure of the Throckmorton plot

- Sir Francis Walsingham, Elizabeth's Secretary of State, discovered the plot in May 1583.
- In November 1583, Walsingham's spies found papers at Throckmorton's house that revealed his part in the conspiracy.
- Throckmorton was arrested and tortured. He confessed to his involvement and was executed in May 1584.

## Why was the Throckmorton plot significant?



## The Babington plot (1586) and the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots

- 1 The Duke of Guise would invade England, murder Elizabeth and put Mary, Queen of Scots, on the throne. Philip II and the pope supported the plot.
- 2 Anthony Babington, a Catholic, wrote to Mary in July 1586 about the conspiracy.
- 3 Sir Francis Walsingham intercepted and read Babington's letters to Mary, which clearly demonstrated her awareness of, support for and involvement in the conspiracy.
- 4 Babington and the plotters were sentenced to death and hanged, drawn and quartered.
- 5 In October 1586, Mary was sentenced to death for her part in the plot. Elizabeth delayed, but signed Mary's death warrant in February 1587. Mary was beheaded shortly afterwards.

## Why was the Babington plot significant?

- Elizabeth's situation was more precarious than with previous plots.
- By 1585, England and Spain were virtually at war.
- Elizabeth's government became determined to crush the Catholic threat.
- The persecution of Catholics intensified. In 1585, 11 000 Catholics were imprisoned or placed under house arrest. Thirty-one priests were executed across the country in 1586.
- The plot led to the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots, ending any hope of replacing Elizabeth with a Catholic heir.



The execution of the Babington plotters. The gallows were erected 'mighty high', to be visible to all to deter further plots.

## Now try this

Briefly explain why the Babington and Throckmorton plots threatened Elizabeth I.

# Walsingham's spies

Sir Francis Walsingham, Elizabeth's Secretary of State, developed a network of spies and informers to uncover plots against Elizabeth.

## Why was Sir Francis Walsingham important?

Walsingham's actions provided intelligence that defeated plots, such as the Throckmorton plot and Babington plot.



Walsingham, Elizabeth's spymaster

His intelligence unmasked the activities of Mary, Queen of Scots. This put pressure on Elizabeth to execute her and led to Mary's execution in early 1587.

His actions also deterred further plots against Elizabeth.

### Walsingham's spy network

- ✓ Walsingham had a network of spies and informants in every town.
- ✓ Some of Walsingham's agents were paid and trained by the government.
- ✓ Others were paid informants. These were often people who knew or were likely to know potential plotters against the queen. They were sometimes Catholic priests, such as John Hart, who turned informant in return for a Royal Pardon.
- ✓ Walsingham also used spies abroad. He had agents in France, Germany, Spain, Italy and North Africa.

### Walsingham's use of ciphers

Walsingham used ciphers (codes) for all correspondence. This meant that letters would be written in code and translated out of code once received.

Walsingham also had the means of decoding (deciphering) the codes of those who plotted against Elizabeth. He hired specialists, such as Thomas Phelippes, to help him do this.

For more on Walsingham's role in uncovering the Throckmorton and Babington plots against Elizabeth I, turn to page 17.

### Walsingham's use of torture and execution

- ✓ Some priests were tortured, to deter others and force them to give up information. Under Walsingham, 130 priests and 60 of their supporters were put to death.
- ✓ The threat of execution and torture was often more effective, as it would provide Walsingham with informants he could use against any plotters.
- ✓ Walsingham only used torture and execution in the most serious cases, as he did not want ordinary people to sympathise with plotters.

### Agents provocateurs

Walsingham employed 'agents provocateurs' to encourage those who were seen as a threat to Elizabeth to plot against her. This justified their arrest and execution. For example, Walsingham used Gilbert Gifford to open communications between Mary and the Babington plotters. This encouraged Mary to involve herself in the plot, so leading to her execution.

For more on the reasons for the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots, turn to page 19.

## Now try this

Why was the government able to defeat Catholic plots between 1570 and 1586?

# The execution of Mary, Queen of Scots

Elizabeth I eventually signed Mary's death warrant in February 1587. Mary, Queen of Scots, was executed for a number of different reasons.

## Why was Mary, Queen of Scots, executed?

- Mary had been involved in a series of plots against Elizabeth, such as the revolt of the Northern Earls, the Ridolfi plot, the Throckmorton plot and the Babington plot.
- Walsingham's spies had unearthed evidence that Mary was involved with the plotters. This led to her trial and conviction under the Act for Preservation of the Queen's Safety.
- The Spanish threat was very real by 1587, with rumours of invasion. The fact that Philip II had been involved in previous plots involving Mary, such as the Ridolfi plot, heightened the threat that Mary posed and the reasons for getting rid of her.
- Mary remained a rallying point for disgruntled Catholics who saw her as a legitimate queen.
- The pope excommunicated Elizabeth in 1570, making Mary an alternative Catholic monarch who could take the throne by foreign invasion.

Mary was an anointed monarch, so executing her set a dangerous precedent. Elizabeth, in the wrong circumstances, could meet a similar fate. So the execution made Elizabeth and her heirs more vulnerable in the future.

The execution further angered Spain and gave Philip II further reason to attack England, as Mary left her claim to the throne to Philip on her death.

## Why was the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots, significant?

The execution made the succession even more uncertain, increasing the chances of a civil war on Elizabeth's death.

The execution removed an important threat to Elizabeth, as Mary had been the focus of many Catholic plots to depose Elizabeth.



The execution of Mary, Queen of Scots, on 8 February 1587 at Fotheringhay Castle.

## Now try this

Explain **two** reasons why Mary, Queen of Scots, was executed in 1587.



# Spain: political and religious rivalry

By the 1580s, relations between England and Spain had reached the point of war.

## Religious rivalry

Under Mary Tudor, Spain and England were allies. As a Protestant country under Elizabeth I, England's relationship with Spain soured:

- Philip II, backed by the pope, saw Protestantism as a threat to the authority of the Catholic Church.
- Many English Protestants saw Spain and Catholicism as a threat.
- Philip II of Spain became involved in Catholic plots against Elizabeth.

## Spanish policy in the Netherlands

- The Netherlands had been Spanish since the 1400s, but many Dutch became Protestant.
- A brutal Spanish campaign under the Duke of Alba aimed to restore Catholicism there.
- Spanish Catholics executed many Dutch Protestants following the Council of Troubles (the 'Council of Blood') in 1568.
- Spain's campaign in the Netherlands angered many in Elizabeth's government, who now saw Spain as hostile – a direct threat to English Protestantism and to England itself.

## The Spanish Fury and the Pacification of Ghent

By 1576, the Spanish government in the Netherlands found the war there unaffordable. A lack of funds meant Spanish troops went unpaid. This resulted in the **Spanish Fury**, when Spanish troops looted Antwerp. After the looting, all 17 Dutch provinces (Catholic and Protestant) joined an alliance against the Spanish, drawn up in a document called the **Pacification of Ghent**. It called for all Spanish troops to be expelled from the Netherlands.

## The English response to the Spanish

Elizabeth's government decided to secretly help Dutch Protestants resist the Spanish.

- It allowed Dutch rebel ships (the Sea Beggars) safe passage in English ports.
- It provided financial support to others fighting the Spanish, including volunteers led by John Casimir, a foreign mercenary.
- English privateers, such as Sir Francis Drake, were encouraged to attack Spanish shipping and colonies in Latin America.

Elizabeth even proposed marriage to the French heir, the Duke of Alençon, so he might be persuaded to fight Spain in the Netherlands.

## Restoring Spanish influence

By late 1584:

- Spanish control of the Netherlands had been restored under the Duke of Parma
- England's allies, the Duke of Alençon and William of Orange, were dead
- The Treaty of Joinville (1584) united Catholic France and Spain against the Netherlands and England
- Dutch Catholics were ready to make peace with Spain, strengthening Philip II's position there.

## England and Spain close to war

By 1587, England and Spain were close to war.

- Philip II blamed English support of the Dutch rebels for making the situation worse.
- Philip II blamed English **privateers** for attacks on Spanish shipping.
- Elizabeth's government blamed Spain for a series of plots against Elizabeth.

**Privateers** were sailors on privately owned warships who attacked Spanish shipping. Because the ships were privately owned, Elizabeth could deny responsibility for their actions.

## Now try this

- 1 Explain **two** reasons why relations between England and Spain deteriorated between 1566 and 1587.
- 2 How far was Elizabeth's government to blame for the declining relations between England and Spain?

Focus on religious and other reasons, such as the war in the Netherlands and English privateers.

Consider what Elizabeth's government did to make relations worse, for example.