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Queen Elizabeth I

By Sharon Fabian

Elizabeth Tudor grew up in a time of change in Europe. Kings and queens of European countries were constantly fighting for power and territory. The Reformation was well underway, and England had changed to a Protestant country under King Henry VIII, and then back to a Catholic one under Queen Mary I.

England had dreams of expansion too, and at the same time had to fight off neighboring countries, like Spain, that tried to take over England.

England had been ruled by King Henry VIII, Elizabeth's father, and then by the young king Edward, Elizabeth's brother, who died while still a teenager. Edward was succeeded by Lady Jane Grey who ruled for only a few days, and then by Mary, Elizabeth's older sister. When Mary died, Elizabeth became ruler of England - Queen Elizabeth I.

England needed a good ruler. It had been through some hard times under its last four monarchs. Henry VIII's reign had been a time of controversy and unrest. Edward had been only a child during his brief reign, and that time had been full of rivalries among relatives who wanted to rule in Edward's place. Lady Jane Grey never even had time to rule, and Mary's short rule had been marked by bloody conflicts between Catholics and Protestants.

During Queen Mary's rule, Elizabeth had faced some of her worst troubles. During one of the many conflicts between Catholics and Protestants, her sister Mary had imprisoned Elizabeth in the Tower of London.

Elizabeth, however, would soon become not just the new ruler, but the ruler that England needed. She was well-suited for the job of queen - well-educated, able to speak several languages, and familiar with the ways of British royalty.



In her hand-embroidered gowns decorated with brilliant gems and pearls and her starched neck ruffs, Elizabeth was the picture of royalty. She became a popular queen who loved sports, music, dancing, plays, and pageantry. The people of England loved and admired Queen Elizabeth.

Elizabeth was also popular among the royalty of Europe. Once she became queen, she received many proposals of marriage. Queen Elizabeth, however, chose to stay single.

In 1588, King Philip of Spain sent his fleet of ships to England, not to pay a royal visit, but to attack. Elizabeth sent Philip home in defeat and became even more popular with her subjects.

The conflict between Protestants and Catholics was another challenge for Queen Elizabeth. During her reign, England once again became a Protestant country.

Elizabeth faced many conflicts during her long reign, some from outside like King Philip's attack, and some from political fighting within her own country. She remained a strong ruler, however, and handled whatever problems came her way. She ruled with both power and dignity, so it is no surprise that the time of her reign, known as the Elizabethan Age, was one of the best in English history.

By the time of Elizabeth, the European Renaissance had already produced many great accomplishments. During her reign, some very famous Englishmen made their contributions to the Renaissance. William Shakespeare wrote during the Elizabethan Age, and Sir Francis Drake made the first voyage around the world during Elizabeth's reign too. All in all, the Elizabethan Age was a great time for England.

Queen Elizabeth I ruled England for 44 years. Those years have been called England's Golden Age.

