

Elizabeth's Court and Parliament



ROYAL COURT

It was run by the Lord Chamberlain. Made up of nobles, advisers, ladies in waiting, officials and servants. Normally around 1000 people! A place where people could show off fashion and trends. This gave them key access to the Queen - also known as PERSONAL MONARCHY. Court was wherever Elizabeth was, not a specific place/building



Progresses.

Elizabeth taking her court out around the country during the summer months. It made Elizabeth visible to the country, allowed her to escape the city in the event of diseases, and was linked to patronage as hosting her was an honour. It could create jealousy and rivalries though.

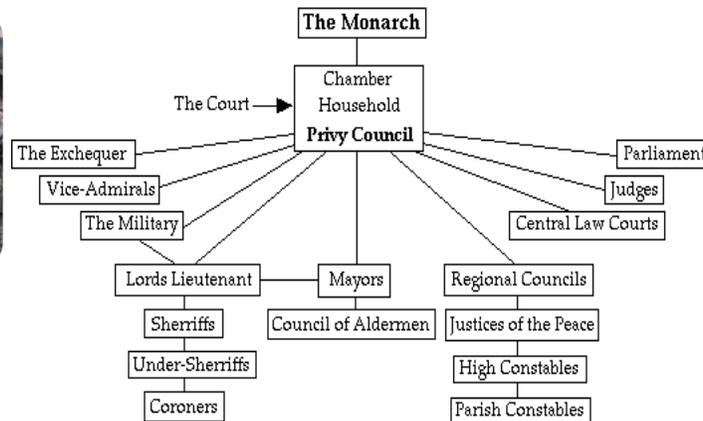


Privy Council

- Advised Elizabeth, and met 3 or 4 times a week
- Members of the nobility, gentry, and the church.
- Elizabeth could choose and remove members.
- The Privy Council consisted only of men and this was especially important during the rule of a woman due to the social beliefs that politics should be conducted by men.
- The numbers in the Privy Council decreased under the reign of Elizabeth.

Patronage

This involved showing favoritism by giving particular men important jobs. She gave her male courtiers political roles. The jobs were highly prized and they not only meant more money, but social status too. This kept everyone loyal to Elizabeth and kept her control.



Lord Lieutenants & Justices of the Peace

The Queen appointed **Lord Lieutenants**, they were in charge of a particular area of the country. They settled disputes and collected taxes.

Men in this position could have lots of power and Elizabeth relied heavily on them to keep the peace and resolve problems.

Each county had several **JPs** to ensure order was kept. They were selected from the local gentry and they made sure that laws were followed in the country. A single JP had the power of arrest, but it took two to sentence someone to death.

JPs had to swear to treat everyone equally no matter if they were rich or poor.

Elizabeth's problems

1. What to do about religion?
2. What to do about marriage or an heir?
3. How to tackle issues of poverty?
4. How to tackle foreign relations with France and Spain?
5. How to tackle people's doubts about her gender?
6. How to tackle people's doubts about her legitimacy?

Parliament under Elizabeth

- Parliament was made up of 2 parts – The House of Lords and the House of Commons.
- The house of Lords was more powerful, containing 90 peers (nobility and bishops). By the end of her reign, there were only 55 and the house was under her control.
- The Commons had 450 elected MPs who were educated gentry, lawyers and merchants.
- Only landowners and wealthy citizens could vote.
- A bill is a draft of a law. When it is passed by Parliament it becomes an Act.
- Before a bill is passed, it is read three times in Parliament.
- **Elizabeth had a royal veto, so she could reject an Act of Parliament.**

Statistics on Parliament in the Elizabethan period:

- Number of sessions: 13
- Total number of weeks in session over 45 years: 140
- Average number of weeks it met per year: 3
- Number of years it did not meet: 29
- Percentage of MPs who spoke in debates: 10 per cent
- Average percentage of MPs who voted: 47 per cent
- Total number of Acts passed: 434

Essex Rebellion 1601

Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, rebelled against Elizabeth I due to lost favour and financial ruin after failing in Ireland. He tried to seize power by gathering support in London, but his plan quickly failed, and he was executed for treason. **The rebellion showed Elizabeth's fading control but also that the public remained loyal.**

Cause: Essex, a former favourite, was humiliated after failing in Ireland and being stripped of his titles and monopolies.

Aim: He hoped to use force to remove his rival, Robert Cecil, from court and regain influence.

Events: Essex kidnapped four privy councillors and marched into London with supporters, but most Londoners did not join his cause.

Outcome: He surrendered after a few hours, was executed for treason, and the rebellion failed.

Significance: Showed Elizabeth's authority was weakening, but also proved her remaining strength as Essex only mustered about 300 followers.

Causes of increase in poverty



- A** Cloth trade collapse
- B** Wars
- C** A rise in population
- D** Bad harvest
- E** Inflation
- F** Changes in farming

Theatre

- The first purpose built theatre in 1576. The Globe Theatre opened in 1599 where Shakespeare made his name.
- Theatre became very popular. It was exciting and a social event. Prices varied so everyone could afford to go. The rich sat in tiered galleries which had roofs. In the centre was an unroofed pit where the poor stood.
- London theatres faced opposition: some saw it as sinful, Puritans saw theatregoing as a distraction from prayer, theatres were dangerous places where there was drunkenness, crime and immoral behaviour.

Life in Elizabethan times



Poverty

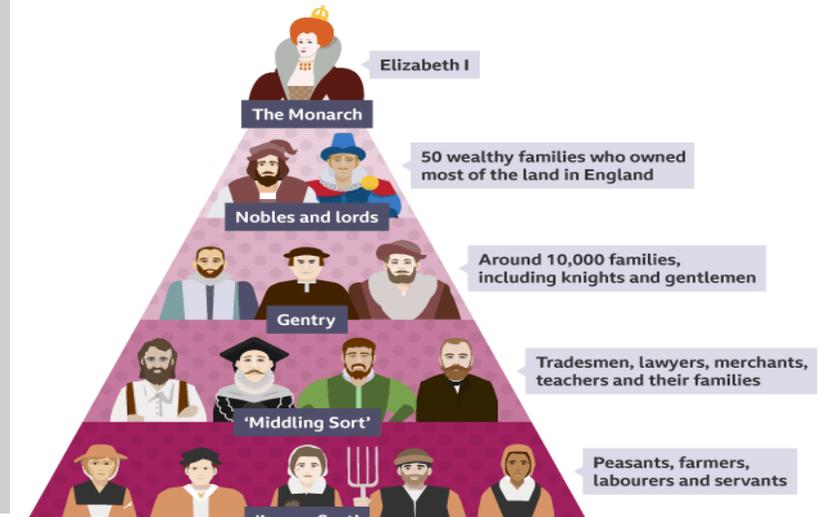
Elizabethans were worried about **vagabonds** & concerned that poor people were choosing not to work (the **idle poor**) as opposed to people who wanted to work but couldn't find it (the **deserving poor**).

The Vagabonds Act in 1572 said that if you were caught begging you'd be whipped and burned through the ear. Justices of the Peace should raise a poor rate to help pay for the elderly and sick.

The Act for Relief of the Poor in 1576 said that towns had to find work for able-bodied poor. Anyone not working was sent to a house of correction.

Poor Law 1601: First time government took responsibility for the welfare of the weakest people

- They brought in a compulsory nationwide Poor Rate system
- Everyone had to contribute and those who refused would go to jail
- Begging was banned and anyone caught was whipped and sent back to their place of birth
- Almshouses were established to look after the impotent poor



Golden Age?

Growing prosperity – leading to the rise of the new Gentry class.

Peace in England – After the chaos of the Reformation and Mary's reign, England was far more peaceful and stable.

Buildings – Many stately homes were built, such as Hardwick Hall.

Culture – Playwrights like William Shakespeare became famous through the increasing popularity of plays and the growth of theatre.

Education – Seen as increasing important and expanded during Elizabeth's reign

Exploration and Empire – English explorers enhanced England's global reputation, helped begin the English Empire, and developed trade

Military – Defeat of the powerful Spanish Armada in 1588

Poverty – Increased in the latter part of Elizabeth's reign

Disease – Life expectancy was low and many diseases that we today would survive were lethal.

Divisions – Whilst a small number of the population was very rich and there was a growing gentry class, the majority of society remained poor. There were also deep religious divisions

Violence – Society remained brutal and bloodsports very popular which reflected attitudes

Exploration

Exploration increased rapidly in Elizabeth's reign because:

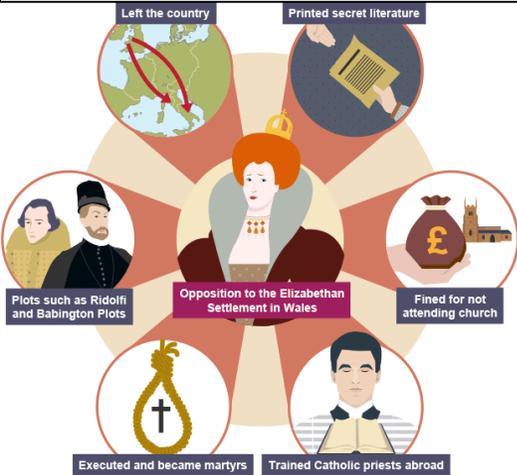
- Of a desire to compete with Spain's empire
- new knowledge & technology like the astrolabe helped navigation to become easier
- New boats had been developed, along with better maps to help exploration
- The English needed new trade routes to sell their goods – including slaves
- The wealthy Elizabethans were keen to fund missions as it made them wealthy
- The desire to set up new colonies
- Knowledge and experience of expert sailors like Drake & Hawkins.

John Hawkins was Britain's first Slave Trader and was active in the Caribbean.

Francis Drake became the first Englishman (and second ever person) to circumnavigate the globe in 1580, allowing him to establish new trade routes, raid Spanish ships like the Cacafuego, discover new lands, and bring back valuable resources. He was knighted by Elizabeth and became a court favourite, establishing himself as part of the gentry.

Walter Raleigh established England's first colony at Roanoke in the Americas in 1585 and paved the way for the first successful colony in Virginia. Developed England's knowledge of the Americas, and its native people, and brought valuable resources such as tobacco and potatoes to England for the first time

Plots against Elizabeth



Northern Rebellion 1569

CAUSE: The Earls of Northumberland & Westmorland strongly opposed the Religious Settlement. They feared that Elizabeth wanted them executed. Planned to put the Catholic MQS on the English throne

EVENT: They ordered their tenants to join their army and marched south, ransacking Durham Cathedral and holding a service of Mass there. However, they didn't gather much support. A royal army of 10,000 men was on its way to meet them to stop the rebellion.

CONSEQUENCES: The Earls escaped to Scotland but Northumberland was captured. Westmorland escaped abroad. Elizabeth had over 450 Catholics executed.

Ridolfi Plot 1571

Aims Ridolfi was an Italian banker. He carried messages between MQS and the Duke of Alva in the Netherlands, the Pope and Philip II to organise an invasion of England.

Events Alva wasn't supportive of the invasion but Ridolfi was unaware of this. Meanwhile, Walsingham's spies had intercepted the letters and had arrested the Duke of Norfolk (who was planned to marry MQS).

Consequence Norfolk was executed in 1572. Elizabeth expelled the Spanish Ambassador but luckily, this did not cause problems between England and Spain. Parliament persuaded Elizabeth to become more harsh towards Catholics

Throckmorton Plot - 1583

Aims Throckmorton had links with Catholic nobility and carried letters between MQS and the French & Spanish ambassadors. The aim was freeing MQS and killing Elizabeth, with support from Philip II and the French Duke of Guise.

Events Spies searched Throckmorton's house & found papers incriminating many Catholic nobles. Philip II never released promised funds. It was never proven whether MQS knew about it.

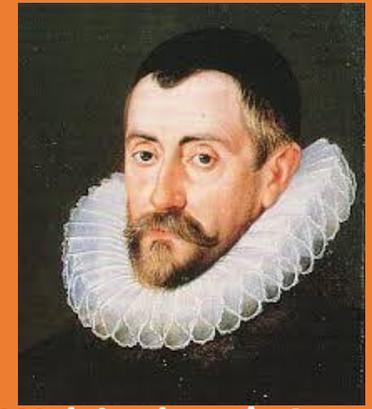
Consequence Elizabeth expelled the Spanish Ambassador. Throckmorton was tortured & killed. Fears for Elizabeth's safety rose. The Bond of Association was passed. It said that if MQS was involved in further plots, she'd be tried for treason.

Babington Plot 1586

Aims Babington had previously carried letters for MQS. The Babington Plot stemmed from a priest who was being watched by Elizabeth's government. They planned to kill Elizabeth, put MQS on the throne and restore Catholicism.

Events Babington wrote, explaining that a foreign invasion was necessary to deal with Elizabeth but these coded letters were found in beer barrels. Walsingham intercepted them all.

Consequence Babington was executed, and MQS arrested and put on trial. She was found guilty of direct involvement in the Plot and sentenced to execution. Elizabeth claimed she never wanted to reach this conclusion.



Walsingham's Spy network

Walsingham had spies all over Europe, watching priests, informing the government of attempted plots and foiling Catholic plans.

He had a team of code breakers, and a team of priest hunters who were searching out Jesuit priests.

He influenced major changes in laws to ensure treatment of Catholics became more harsh and used informers and double agents to infiltrate Catholic plots.

Troubles at Home and Abroad

Religion Divisions

Protestants: The monarch was Head of the Church. Most decoration was removed from the Church. Clergy wore simple robes and taught from an English Bible.

Catholics Pope was Head of the Church. Churches were highly decorated and clergy's robes were too. Services were held in Latin. Mass was important. **Puritans** Committees were elected by the congregation, Churches & robes were plain. English Bible with Communion representing Jesus spiritually.



Catholic Threat

Legitimacy: Many English and foreign Catholics viewed Elizabeth as illegitimate and supported her cousin, Mary, Queen of Scots, as the rightful monarch.

Papal authority: Pope Pius V excommunicated Elizabeth in 1570, encouraging Catholics to rebel and overthrow her.

Invasion: Catholic powers like Spain posed a military threat, culminating in the Spanish Armada invasion.

Domestic plots: The presence of Mary, Queen of Scots, and papal encouragement led to numerous Catholic plots, such as the Babington Plot, which aimed to assassinate Elizabeth and place Mary on the throne.

Challenges from Abroad

Scotland: Had been ruled by Mary, Queen of Scots (although she moved to France as she had married the heir to the French throne. There were French soldiers in Scotland so the danger of attack was always present.

France: In 1558 France was at war with England and Spain. They also wanted Mary, Queen of Scots to be Queen of England.

Spain: Was the most powerful country in Europe with a huge empire. They were devoutly Catholic. However, they had been friendly with England for most of the Tudor reign due to Mary I's marriage to Phillip II.



Trade England began competing with the Spanish in the New World and explorers like Drake frequently stole from Spanish ships (like the Cacafuego). Piracy was illegal.

Religion Catholic priests in England made Elizabeth fearful of a Catholic holy war. However, Philip had not gone to war previously so there was no reason that he would now.

Politics Philip didn't want any other country to challenge his power (he controlled the Netherlands and Portugal as well as Spain).

Netherlands Elizabeth sent money to help Dutch rebels and later in 1585 in the Treaty of Nonsuch.

Armada Results

The English navy had longer ranging guns but didn't do much damage in the first 8 days. Fire ships sent into the Spanish fleet who had dropped anchor. This caused panic amongst the Spanish and, coupled with a storm which they weren't used to and a rocky English channel, they broke formation. The Spanish fleet retreated, having lost around 50 ships and thousands of men. England's boats were more manoeuvrable and alongside great leadership from Howard & Drake (in comparison to Medina Sidonia who lacked experience) England prevented the Spanish invasion.

Mary, Queen of Scots (Mary Stuart)

Cousin of Elizabeth

Arrived in England in 1568 - gave Catholics hope that there could be a Catholic monarch.

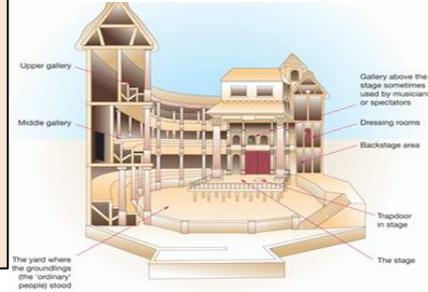
As a figurehead for Catholics, she was implicated in plots to assassinate Elizabeth and replace her with Mary (Ridolfi, Throckmorton, Babington).

Imprisoned and put under house arrest in 1568 after she fled Scotland.

Executed in 1587 after the Babington Plot



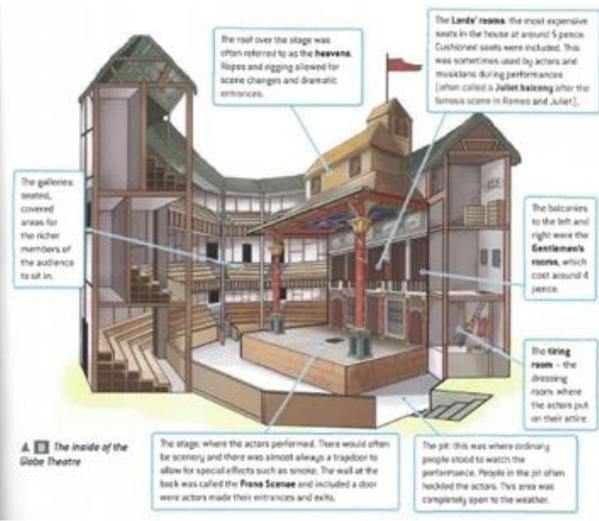
Historic Environment – The Globe Theatre



Features of theatres

- Open air and circular – seating reflected hierarchy of society
- Penny a ticket for poorer – Lords Room over 6 pence
- Lack of set design – costumes key – trapdoor in stage for entrance/exit
- Flag signalled type of play
- **Key individuals – Marlowe and Shakespeare/Burbage family**

-Built by the Burbage brothers and shared with four actors of Lord Chamberlain's Men
-Opened in 1599 at Bankside in Southwark, London
-First play performed probably Julius Caesar
-Big enough to accommodate up to 3,000 spectators
-Circular in shape (polygon) and 3 storeys high.
-Many of Shakespeare's plays performed here
-Burnt down in 1613 but rebuilt in 1614. Closed in 1642 under Puritan rule.
-Pit where poor stood (penny a ticket). Balconies had 'Gentlemen's rooms' (4 pennies per ticket) and Lord's rooms at the top (6 pennies)
-Tiring room at back of stage – where actors changed – costumes very important
-Frons Scenae was back of the stage – where actors would appear from.



Changes shown by The Globe:

Cultural developments/increase in education: New genres of plays (tragedy, histories etc), more education – printing press, increase in playwrights, new merchant classes, Enlightenment era.

Increase in wealth/rise of the Gentry: Patronage for companies, show off status, increase reputation e.g. Earl of Leicester's Men, merchant class growth in cities.

Religious divisions: Puritans disliked theatre – drinking, gambling, areas of crime, sinful.

Increase in support for Elizabeth: Elizabeth fan of plays, Master of Revels, plays favoured Tudors

Government censorship/control: Privy Council reviewed plays, censorship used (Archbishop of Canterbury 1599), plays reinforce Great Chain of Being.

Increase in patronage: Nobility/Gentry show off cultural understanding by sponsoring companies e.g. Admiral's Men.

Development of theatre in Elizabethan England

- Previously travelling shows, biblical stories
- Actors set up companies in Elizabeth's reign post-1572 to avoid being classed as 'vagabonds'
- Purpose built theatres emerge – Red Lion first, 'the Theatre' second. A lot outside London city walls – areas of crime/disrepute
- Nobility sponsored theatre companies (patronage)
- Master of Revels controlled what plays allowed to be shown

OPPOSITION TO THEATRE

- Areas around theatres were prone to criminality
- Puritans disliked the theatre – felt it was sinful
- Used as propaganda tool by the government/queen
- Poor behaviour of 'the groundlings' e.g. throwing food
- Women were not allowed to perform
- Early opposition from parliament e.g. 1572 law.
- Spread diseases like the Plague
- Could inspire rebellion (e.g. Essex 1601)

SUPPORT FOR THEATRE

- Way for all classes to have fun/entertainment
- Showed cultural understanding for nobility/Gentry
- Political messages passed on for the government – used for propaganda
- Prevented threat of rebellion by poor classes – accessible for all classes
- Plays reinforced the Great Chain of Being (e.g. hierarchy and orderliness)
- Actors/owners/writers achieved wealth and fame

Why did the theatre increase in popularity?

1. Entertainment (Not just plays – gambling, food, taverns)
2. More theatres (Around London – 1595 15,000 visiting per week)
3. Recognisable characters/themes (e.g. merchants/the Plague)
4. Distraction (From poverty/social issues)
5. Queen Elizabeth (Fan of theatre – private performances at her palaces)
6. Patronage (Nobility/gentry sponsor theatre companies)
7. Government approval (Master of Revels/propaganda use)
8. Actors/writers (Richard Tarlton, Shakespeare, Burbage)
9. Golden Age (age of discovery, Renaissance themes, exploration, increase in education)