

Knowledge Organiser: Elizabethan England, c1568-1603

(2) Elizabeth I's problems and the importance of marriage

Timeline	
1558	Elizabeth becomes queen of England, aged 25.
1559	A revolt began in northern Ireland which became a major problem for Elizabeth.
1562	Elizabeth contracts smallpox and nearly dies, drawing attention to the succession crisis.
1568	Mary Queen of Scots, Elizabeth's cousin and heir to the throne, is exiled.

Key terms	
Succeed	To take over the throne.
Exile	Being sent to live in another country that is not your own, especially for political reasons.
Pope	The head of the Catholic Church.
Prerogative	An exclusive right or privilege.
Concessions	Something granted following demands for it.
Monopolies	The exclusive right to sell a product. Elizabeth sold these monopolies to favourite courtiers as a way of keeping support.
Suitors	Possible husbands.
Subsidies	Grants of money to the Queen.



What were Elizabeth's main problems?	
Succession	Elizabeth had yet to produce an heir. In the past, there had been wars when people were not sure who would succeed the monarch. Parliament were keen for her to marry.
Mary, Queen of Scots	Without a direct heir, Mary, Queen of Scots, was next in line as Elizabeth's cousin. In 1568, Mary was exiled from Scotland to England and became a real threat to Elizabeth.
Ireland	Elizabeth considered herself Queen of Ireland but many of the Irish disagreed. When a revolt broke out in northern Ireland in 1559, she spent thousands to limit the rebellion.
Taxation	The government needed money and one of the few ways to get it was through taxes. However, at a time of great poverty, taxes would be very unpopular with the people.
Foreign policy	Elizabeth had to deal with powerful countries that wanted influence over England. France and Spain, which were both Catholic and had the support of the Pope, saw Protestant England as a target.
Religion	Elizabeth's father had broken away from the Catholic Church. However, when Mary became queen she tried to re-establish Catholicism. Elizabeth was a Protestant but allowed Catholics to follow their faith privately. However, many Catholics remained unhappy as they didn't recognise Elizabeth as queen. The growing popularity of Puritanism was also seen as a threat.

Marriage: potential suitors	
Robert Dudley	The queen's favourite advisor and they had been close friends since childhood and he had wanted to marry her. However, when his wife died in suspicious circumstances, it would have been scandalous for the Queen to marry him.
King Philip II of Spain	Philip had been married to Elizabeth's sister Mary. Spain was the most powerful country in Europe so marriage to Philip would have been useful. However, he was Catholic and the marriage to Mary had not produced an heir.
Francis, Duke of Anjou and Alencon	The French King's brother and heir to his throne. By the time marriage was proposed, Elizabeth was 46 and probably beyond having children. A childless marriage would see England falling into French control. He was Catholic and many figures in Elizabeth's court were against the marriage.

Key questions
<p><u>Why did Elizabeth have a difficult relationship with Parliament?</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Queen had the power to call, dissolve, and postpone Parliament. Elizabeth saw Parliament as a necessary evil to get its permission to raise money. The Queen usually got what she wanted from Parliament but over time, the MPs grew in confidence and tried to influence her decisions.
<p><u>How did Elizabeth control Parliament?</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> She reminded MPs of her prerogative on religion, whether to get married, who should be heir, going to war and the treatment of Mary, Queen of Scots. She imprisoned those who challenged her e.g. Peter Wentworth. Her leading Councillors were also MPs and they planned Parliamentary business in advance in order to control it. In 1601, she granted concessions to MPs on the issue of monopolies.
<p><u>Why was marriage so important and why did she never marry?</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marriage was seen as an important duty for a monarch. It was a way of cementing alliances. More importantly for Elizabeth, it was necessary to produce an heir that could succeed her on the throne. Arguments in favour: creating alliances, producing an heir. Arguments against: loss of authority, giving birth was risky for a mother, her experience of marriage had been bad (her father had her mother executed), Elizabeth was able to use the possibility of marriage to her advantage when dealing with foreign leaders and important figures in England. Historians have disagreed over why Elizabeth never married. Elizabeth said she was married to 'the kingdom of England'.

Exam questions:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Write an account of Elizabeth I's relationship with her Parliament. (8 marks) Explain what was important about Elizabeth's decision regarding her marriage. (8 marks)

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