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## Queen Elizabeth Versus Spanish Armada

16th century England was once dominated by tyrannical rulers, and its subjects longed for a just ruler to guide their country in a positive direction. Unfortunately, it seemed as though England could not escape these oppressive monarchs. King Henry VIII was one such ruler. He is most famous for the way he bent the rules of Parliament to accommodate his six marriages. Since Henry's first wife, Catherine of Aragon, could not produce a male heir, he attempted to annul their marriage. However, the Catholic Church refused to grant him the annulment. These circumstances drove him to separate from Catholicism and found the Church of England, a Protestant Church that would allow for his annulment. Additionally, Henry led England into war, as he tirelessly and repeatedly attempted to conquer Scotland. These wars were so costly he consequently died with both personal and national debt. He infamously beheaded English subjects for their differing religious views, which instilled fear among the people. After his thirty-six year reign of terror, he had executed nearly fifty-seven thousand people. Succeeding Henry was his long awaited son, Edward. Due to the fact that most of his reign took place during his childhood, he was an ineffectual leader. After fourteen years on the throne, King Edward VI died and was succeeded by his sister Mary, also known as Queen Mary I or Bloody Mary. Mary reversed her father's anti-Catholic policies and notoriously persecuted hundreds of Protestants at the stake. Luckily for England, after only five short years as queen, she passed away. After years of an insecure monarchy, Queen Elizabeth I stabilized the country by re-establishing England's Church, clearing previous debt, and supporting rebellion against Spain.

Queen Elizabeth re-established the Church of England by adjusting it to appeal to both Catholics and Protestants, with whom she both identified. The genocide of Protestants during Queen Mary I's reign had damaged the reputation of Catholicism, resulting in an increase of Protestants after her death. While Elizabeth publically submitted to Catholicism during her sister's reign, she nevertheless empathized with Protestantism more so than Catholicism. Unlike anyone else in the 16th century, Elizabeth believed in tolerating and accepting the beliefs of others and that Catholicism and Protestantism shared many of the same virtues. She believed that if Catholics were loyal to her majesty and slightly discreet in their worship, they should be left unharmed. Her tolerance worked in her favor, as Catholicism began to die out and Protestantism rose to the forefront of the Church.

The year of 1559 brought about notable changes to England's religious system. The Elizabethian Religious Settlement took place in February, 1559. The House of Commons and House of Lords, two groups that act as representatives of England's subjects, made this settlement possible. The first act proposed came from House of Commons. It established Queen Elizabeth as the Supreme Head of the church. The presented settlement was widely rejected by the House of Lords because men did not believe a woman could be the head of the church. In April, 1559, after the two groups reconvened, the Act of Supremacy was passed. It put an end to papal supremacy, yet appointed Elizabeth as Supreme Governor, instead of Supreme Head, of the church. The title alteration proved to be popular when the act passed easily - the two Houses believed it was acceptable for Elizabeth to be named "governor" but not "head". Subsequently, the Act of Uniformity was passed. It restored the 1552 version of the English Prayer Book, a literature filled with traditional English prayers, while still holding true some familiar religious practices, as well as allowing for two interpretations of communion, one

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Catholic and one Protestant.

Queen Elizabeth's reformed Church of England helped stabilize the country because it settled religious debate and adversity between the people. Prior to Elizabeth's rise to the throne, the subjects of England were confused and angry with their country's religious fluctuation and uncertainty. Thanks to Elizabeth, the country's religion became definite. Moreover, she put an end to religious execution, which had previously terrorized England for years on end. Overall, her religious reformation brought an unprecedented peace among the people and reconstructed England's previous religious system, which had been built on her father's own selfish actions.

Throughout her reign, Queen Elizabeth attempted to revive the once bankrupt country back to prosperity, and by the end of her reign England was rid of its large debt. At the time, England's rising population was becoming detrimental to the economy. The nation also suffered greatly from inflation, the general increase in prices and fall in the purchasing value of money. This was caused by significant government spending under her father's rule, bad harvests, and the debasement of the coinage. Luckily, Queen Elizabeth would soon fix these problems. She did this by exploiting traditional sources and stabilizing England's currency. She granted monopoly rights to produce or import particular products and sold these to merchants. In order to stabilize the currency, she withdrew the nation's previous debased coins to ensure that only sound coins were in circulation. These methods greatly increased England's income.

Lastly, Elizabeth created a form of poor relief that effectively eliminated most of England's homeless. She passed the Poor Relief Act in 1601. This act distinguished the differences between the impotent poor, those were unable to work because of age or disability, and the able-bodied poor, those who were unable to find work. Her act ensured the the impotent poor were to be cared for in a poorhouse and the able-bodied were to work in a House of Industry with materials necessary for work included. It also warranted that vagrants, wanderers with no permanent home or employment, were to be sent to a House of Correction or even prison. The Poor Relief Act of 1601 helped minimize the homeless population and allowed them to earn more money for England's economy.

Queen Elizabeth was originally handed a nation drowning in debt; however, by exploiting traditional sources, stabilizing England's currency, and instituting the Poor Relief Act, she was able to carry England out of its debt. This improved the overall wellbeing of England because at the end of her era, the economy began to flourish, which induced even more population increase. The new economic stability of the Elizabethian Era also increased opportunities for enterprising merchants. Imports of luxury goods grew rapidly and many London businesses responded to the opening of new trade routes in the East Indies and the Middle East. The improved economy helped stabilize the country by providing new opportunities for workers, assigned jobs to the poor, and almost completely eradicated the homeless population.

Queen Elizabeth's support during the Anglo-Spanish war enabled England to defeat the Spanish Armada, one of the nation's most prized victories. At the beginning of this war, England was a moderately sized country with little wealth and many enemies. Contrary to this, Spain was arguably one of the most powerful countries in the world and had extreme wealth. The odds were never in England's favor. However, Queen Elizabeth always seemed confident that the country would, indeed, succeed. During the emergence of war, Queen Elizabeth's propaganda brought hope to the people. Unlike most, hers consisted of two-faced buttons and pins with writing and an engraved photo of herself, as well as manuscripts. Her propaganda

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swayed her subjects and military to have the same confidence as herself. This is one of the main reasons England was able to be so resilient during the war.

Three years into war, Queen Elizabeth gave a speech to her troops in Tilbury, England - this speech motivated and excited her troops which soon after led them to defeat the Spanish Armada. On August 9, 1558 Elizabeth arrived in Tilbury, ready to speak to her troops, covered in embellished armour, riding a horse as white as snow. In her speech she proclaimed, "... in the midst and heat of the battle, to live and die amongst you all; to lay down for my God, and for my kingdom, and my people, my honour and my blood, even in the dust. I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman; but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too..." Here, Elizabeth is reminding her troops of their obligations to their kingdom and to her. She also implies that if she was able, she would fight in the war just like her troops do. Her patriotism, confidence, and motivation are what inspired and pushed her men to victory.

The defeat of the Spanish Armada is one of the highest points of Queen Elizabeth's reign. As a result of Spain's failed invasion, England became a significant European naval power. England also became more Protestant than Catholic, as Catholicism was no longer popular among the people. Overall, England's defeat over Spain insinuated that England was superior, a force to be reckoned with, and destined for greatness. After the war, England was extensively stabilized as it prospered economically, religiously, and socially while it became one of the most dominant countries in Europe.

The Elizabethan Era stabilized England more than any other, thanks to Queen Elizabeth I. Without her leadership, England would have continued to endure religious persecution, which began with her father, King Henry VIII's reign and continued during her sister, Mary I's reign. The nation would have deteriorated from debt initiated by Henry. England would not have defeated the Spanish Armada, which made it one of the most popular, dominant countries in all of Europe. It's more than safe to say that after years of ambiguity, fear and oppression, Elizabeth finally brought stability to her country. In order to do this, she created an uncontroversial change of church, nursed England back to financial security, and put on her riding boots and rode into battle to save her troops with her speech at Tilbury.