



Life in Tudor Times

3. Elizabeth I

NARRATOR: In 1558 one of the most famous monarchs in history inherited the throne: Queen Elizabeth I. She ruled for 45 years at a time when women were thought to need guidance from men. But even though she had a whole era named after her, her reign was one of threats and challenges - challenges that arose largely because of the actions of her father, Henry VIII.

HENRY VIII: I say!

NARRATOR: Let's take it back to untangle this story. Henry VIII had three children: Mary by his first wife, Elizabeth by his second and Edward by his third. Edward being the youngest child, but the eldest *male* child, became King when Henry VIII died in 1547, as back then male heirs jumped to the front of the queue. However, Edward was a sickly boy and, at the tender age of 15, he also died.

HENRY VIII: No! My only boy.

NARRATOR: But not before he named a cousin, Lady Jane Grey, as his successor in order to stop his Catholic sister, Mary, inheriting the throne. Nine days later, however, Lady Jane Grey found herself imprisoned and...well. So Mary inherited the throne after all. She married King Philip II of Spain. Keep him in mind, he'll be important later. But, alas, continuing the world's deadliest round of musical chairs, Queen Mary died and the the last of Henry's children inherited the throne: twenty-five-year-old Elizabeth.

Now, let's look at one of those challenges we mentioned. Mary Queen of Scots was, as her name suggests, the Queen of Scotland. Some people believed that she had a stronger claim to the English throne than her cousin Elizabeth because Henry VIII, Elizabeth's father, had divorced Catherine of Aragon. The Catholic church did not recognise that marriage as having ended, so Catholics believed Henry's marriage to Elizabeth's mother, Anne Boleyn, was illegal. This made Elizabeth seem like an illegitimate heir.

HENRY VIII: Don't listen to them! I'd put Mary and Elizabeth into my line of succession!

NARRATOR: Mary, Queen of Scots had had problems of her own and she had fled to England, seeking the protection of her dear cousin Elizabeth. Dear Queen Elizabeth however, was no fool. She recognised the threat of her cousin's claim and had her imprisoned upon her arrival in England. Mary, Queen of Scots remained there for 19 years until she was caught plotting to overthrow Elizabeth and promptly lost her head.

NARRATOR: Now, remember King Philip II of Spain? Mary, Queen of Scots' execution angered him greatly. He, too, was Catholic after all, and so he launched a fleet of ships, an *Armada*, across the sea. The plan was to overthrow England's Protestant Queen Elizabeth I, convert the country back to Catholicism and make Spain the ultimate power in Western Europe.



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As the Armada neared the English coast, fire ships with no crew were filled with burning materials and let loose by the English where they were carried by the trusty wind towards the Spanish. Afraid their ships would set alight, the Spanish ships scattered to the open sea. Still determined, the Armada continued their would-be invasion. Incensed, Queen Elizabeth delivered a rousing speech to her loyal troops, a speech that is remembered to this day as one of the greats.

ELIZABETH I: My loving people...

NARRATOR: ...she cried. And then some more important and inspiring stuff. But, er...

ELIZABETH I: ...for my God and my kingdom...

NARRATOR: ...she said, erm... Ah! Okay, here's the good bit!

ELIZABETH I: I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king and a king of England too!

NARRATOR: The Spanish Armada fled, sailing up the eastern coast of England. But the trusty English weather wasn't done with the would be invaders and stormy seas destroyed half of the Armada. It was an astounding victory for Queen Elizabeth and England became one of the most feared naval powers in Europe. The defeat of the Spanish Armada was just one of the significant events in Elizabeth I's time as queen. But, content on her own, Queen Elizabeth chose to never marry and to never have any children.

ELIZABETH I: The kingdom of England is the only husband I will ever need.

NARRATOR: Then, childless, Queen Elizabeth I died. And with her ended than legendary House of Tudor.