

The Life of Elizabeth I Study Guide

The Life of Elizabeth I by Alison Weir (historian)

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



Contents

[The Life of Elizabeth I Study Guide.....1](#)

[Contents.....2](#)

[Plot Summary.....4](#)

[Introduction and Chapter 1, The Most English Woman in England.....5](#)

[Chapters 2 and 3 God Send Our Mistress a Husband and Disputes Over Trifles.....7](#)

[Chapter 4 Bonny Sweet Robin.....8](#)

[Chapters 5 and 6 Presumptions of Evil and Dishonourable and Naughty Reports.....9](#)

[Chapters 7 and 8 Daughter of Debate and Without a Certain Heir.....10](#)

[Chapters 9 and 10 A Matter Dangerous to the Common Amity and Things Grivouser and Worse
.....12](#)

[Chapters 11 and 12 A Dangerous Person and A Vain Crack of Words.....13](#)

[Gloriana.....14](#)

[Chapter 14 A Court at Once Gay, Decadent, and Superb.....15](#)

[Chapters 15 and 16 The Axe Must Be the Next Warning and Less Agreeable Things to Think
About.....16](#)

[Chapters 17 and 18 Princely Pleasures and Frenzied Wooing.....18](#)

[Chapters 19, 20, and 21 Between Scylla and Charbdis, Practices at Home and Abroad, and The
Tragical Execution.....19](#)

[Chapters 22 and 23 Eliza Triumphant and Great England's Glory.....21](#)

[Chapters 24 and 25 We Are Evil Served and The Minion of Fortune.....23](#)

[The Sun Setteth at Last.....24](#)

[Characters.....25](#)

[Objects/Places.....28](#)

[Themes.....31](#)

[Style.....33](#)

[Quotes.....35](#)



Topics for Discussion.....37



Plot Summary

THE LIFE OF ELIZABETH I focuses on Elizabeth I's personal life more than her political life, looking through the lens of Elizabeth as a person and not just a Queen. The reader gains insight into her personality and the details that accompanied her everyday life. The book follows Elizabeth throughout her entire reign, emphasizing her intelligence, wit, and tenacity as a female monarch.

The beginnings of Elizabeth's reign were fraught with tensions because of the unsuccessful reign of her half-sister Mary Tudor. The people did not want another female monarch, but Elizabeth was not a religious fanatic like Mary and quickly brought the public around to support her. She changed the official religion to Protestantism and made the Book of Common Prayer the official book of worship. She entertained ideas of marrying many different suitors, including Robert Dudley, later Earl of Leicester. She never married because she did not want to give up her power as Queen and did not want to put England in the hands of a foreigner. Mary, Queen of Scots was Elizabeth's cousin, and she lived in England after her unsuccessful reign as Queen of Scotland. Mary was Catholic, and throughout Elizabeth's reign there were plots to put Mary on the throne of England instead of Elizabeth and restore Catholicism to England. This plan was supported by King Philip II of France, who had been wed to Mary Tudor before her death. Elizabeth was a very visible monarch, and made a point to put herself on display for her people. She went on tours of her kingdom every summer, staying with nobility and members of her court. She was a great horsewoman and a patron of the arts, enjoying music, painting, and theatre. As a single woman, she was always under threat of conspiracy or attack and was sometimes forced to execute traitors for her own safety, including the Duke of Norfolk and Mary, Queen of Scots. She had many favorites, including the Earl of Leicester, with whom she may have been in love. She famously defeated the Spanish Armada with a combination of bad weather and good military strategy, and made the speech at Tilbury to her many troops. She also defeated the Irish rebels and brought economic prosperity to England. She kept control until the very end of her reign when she began to tire of being a ruler. Most of those she loved from early in her life had died, and England was on the cusp of a new era. Elizabeth was still hesitant to name a successor but finally indicated James V of Scotland, who became James I of England. Elizabeth I was buried in Westminster Abbey, and thus ended England's Golden Age.



Introduction and Chapter 1, The Most English Woman in England

Introduction and Chapter 1, The Most English Woman in England Summary and Analysis

THE LIFE OF ELIZABETH I chronicles Elizabeth's life from the beginnings of her reign through her death. As a female sovereign, she was constantly battling prejudice in a male-dominated society, and the book examines how she used her femaleness to her advantage. Allison Weir as an author, is more interested in Elizabeth's personal experiences than her grand accomplishments as a monarch, so much of the book focuses on Elizabeth's thoughts, feelings, and relationships rather than a cut-and-dried historical account. The Queen's reign is used as a framework to examine her personal life.

In Chapter One, Elizabeth was determined not to let foreign power influence England's government. Spain's involvement in the reign of her sister, Mary Tudor, was a disaster. She wanted to stress English nationalism. Elizabeth was the daughter of King Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, who was beheaded. After seeing her father's wives die one after another, Elizabeth said to a friend, "I will never marry." Elizabeth's father's marriages undoubtedly affected her future attitudes toward marriage. Historians theorize that she learned to associate marriage with death from an early age, and decided she could only trust herself. When Henry died in 1547, Elizabeth's nine-year-old brother Edward succeeded to the throne. Roger Ascham was Elizabeth's teacher and probably taught her about Protestantism. She was eventually fluent in Greek, Latin, Spanish, Italian, Welsh, and French. She was a very courageous, cautious person, who had an incredible capacity for humanity. She could also have a cruel sense of humor and was not afraid to make sharp remarks. Edward VI died of tuberculosis in 1553, and an attempt was made by the Duke of Northumberland to place Lady Jane Grey on the throne, Henry VIII's great-niece. Her reign lasted only days before the people of England chose to support Mary, and Lady Jane was beheaded. Elizabeth had to be very careful on the subject of religion because Mary persecuted English Protestants for years during her reign. She also did not want to make enemies of Catholic countries in Europe before her court had a chance to stand on its feet. When Mary wed King Phillip of Spain, Sir Thomas Wyatt's rebellion of 1554 occurred, a protest against the marriage. Queen Mary was convinced Elizabeth contributed to the revolt and had her incarcerated in the Tower of London. After being liberated from the Tower, Elizabeth led a quiet life in the country until she succeeded Mary. William Cecil became Elizabeth's Secretary of State and was a very cautious Protestant statesman whom Elizabeth nicknamed her Spirit. Lord Robert Dudley was made Master of Horse, nicknamed the Gypsy. As was custom, the Queen returned to the Tower before her coronation, pausing before entering to reflect on her time there: "Some have fallen from being princes of this land to be prisoners in this place. I am raised from being a prisoner in this place to be a prince of



this land. That dejection was a work of God's justice. The advancement is a work of His mercy" (p.28). As a woman, she learned to use the stereotypes of her gender to her advantage, though she did often change her mind and took her time to decide on matters of state. She was captivating and felt more comfortable around men than women, whom she often regarded as threats. She capitalized on her youth and beauty, giving hints of what was to come in her reign.



Chapters 2 and 3 God Send Our Mistress a Husband and Disputes Over Trifles

Chapters 2 and 3 God Send Our Mistress a Husband and Disputes Over Trifles Summary and Analysis

Chapter 2 begins with Elizabeth's coronation service on Sunday, January 15th. She was fitted with a ring on her finger, symbolically wedding her to the people. Elizabeth truly connected with her people before her accession ceremony, taking time to give them a kind word or allow them to give her small gifts, and her familiarity with her people was a staple of her reign. She quickly turned to the issues at hand: religion and her much-hoped-for marriage. She did not want the religious tyranny that was the cornerstone of Mary's reign, preferring to leave each to his own conscience. She only wanted the outward signs of obedience and was content as long as she had their political loyalty. The Council wanted her to marry someone who could protect England and with whom she could ensure a clear succession that could not be disputed. However, she wanted to reign as the Virgin Queen and be subject not to a husband but to England and God. Also, while she kept so many suitors in limbo, she was assuring England's protection by many different powers. The King of Sweden, the King of Spain, and others would protect England as long as there was potential that she would accept their marriage suits.

Chapter 3 states that Elizabeth disliked Puritanism but was tolerant. While Queen Mary ordered the burning of over 300 Protestants in three years, fewer Catholics were executed under Elizabeth's 45-year reign, and only 4 were burned at the stake. These executions were for political reasons and not religious fanaticism. On February 16th, 1559, Pope Paul IV proclaimed that all who supported heretical beliefs needed to be disposed of by the faithful, which put England in danger of usurpers in support of the Catholic Mary Stewart. Meanwhile, Elizabeth turned down the Catholic Archduke Ferdinand of Austria's son Charles's proposal, as well as Prince Erik of Sweden. Elizabeth wanted her suitors to come in person to England, claiming she could never marry someone she had not met. She was extremely sensitive about the succession because she knew if she chose a successor, she was giving up some of her power. By not naming someone immediately and playing the marriage game, she bought herself time to build her power and protect her kingdom. She liked to be in control of her relationships, and if she married, that control would be forfeit to her husband. This elusiveness made her the most desirable marriage in Europe and would keep her people safe from threats for many years.

All her suitors tried to win her favor, but she preferred her Master of Horse, Robert Dudley, with whom she almost assuredly was in love.



Chapter 4 Bonny Sweet Robin

Chapter 4 Bonny Sweet Robin Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 4, Robert Dudley became the Queen's absolute favorite. She did not have to commit herself to Robert because he was already married. She turned down the Archduke Ferdinand's son because she wished to remain single. When King Henry II of France was killed, his son Francis II took the throne and was controlled mostly by his mother, Catherine de'Medici. The Queen was worried about a Catholic attack, and she stated publicly that anyone who could make trouble for France she would take for her husband. Everyone at court was jealous of the Queen's favorite, Robert Dudley. Elizabeth was probably in love with Robert Dudley, and part of the allure was that she had the upper hand in their relationship. She could control her time with him, and he was completely dependent on her good will. He weighed heavily on many of her decisions, and her council was very worried she would marry him. This relationship satisfied Elizabeth emotionally, and she received a frenzy of proposals from suitors abroad with no intention of accepting anyone. Though rumors persisted that the Queen had a physical relationship with Dudley, she was far too smart and responsible a monarch to put herself in jeopardy. Though she very well may have been in love with him, to surrender her virginity would have meant surrendering everything she stood for and was building for herself. The Council, especially William Cecil, was afraid that Sir Robert would lead the entire country to ruin. Many thought it would be better if he was killed, and Norfolk accused him very publicly of interfering in state business.



Chapters 5 and 6 Presumptions of Evil and Dishonourable and Naughty Reports

Chapters 5 and 6 Presumptions of Evil and Dishonourable and Naughty Reports Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 5, William Cecil negotiated an end to the war with Scotland. The Queen was focusing exclusively on Robert Dudley, which caused gossip that made William Cecil worried for England's security. Robert's wife, Amy Dudley, was very ill, and Cecil wanted to cast suspicion on Robert should anything happen to Amy. On September 8th, Amy Dudley fell down the stairs in her home and broke her neck. Her death may have been an accident but may also have been a plan of Cecil's to make the only thing that could free Robert to marry Elizabeth (Amy's death) the thing that would keep him from being suitable for the crown. Robert went immediately to investigate his wife's death and make sure he was not a suspect. Many thought Amy had been murdered, although she may have committed suicide, since she was probably in the final stages of breast cancer and in a lot of pain, and breast cancer can weaken bones. Robert Dudley pushed for a formal inquest, but suspicion fell on him even though the death was officially declared an accident. Neither the Queen nor Dudley had anything to gain from Amy's death: it cast too much suspicion on Dudley for him to marry the Queen. The only person who really benefited from Amy's death was William Cecil, who was restored to the Queen's favor. There is no concrete evidence to support this theory, but Cecil very well may have killed Lady Amy Dudley to, as he saw it, protect England.

In Chapter 6, Lady Amy Dudley's death was the talk of Europe. After the court came out of mourning in October, there was renewed conjecture as to whether or not the Queen would marry Lord Dudley. Elizabeth publicly humiliated Robert by destroying his Letters Patent, meant to raise him to the peerage. Meanwhile, King Francis II of France died and was succeeded by his ten-year-old brother Charles IX. Thus, Mary Stewart was widowed at age 18, and the power in France placed in the hand of the Queen Regent, Catherine de'Medici, her mother-in-law. Lord Robert Dudley became a major contender in the political environment, though Elizabeth kept him in place by sometimes humiliating him in public. She learned to keep her emotions in check, and showed her court and kingdom that a man would not rule her. If she married Dudley, or anyone at all, she would forfeit the freedoms in which she reveled. However, marriage was the safest course for her kingdom as Catherine de'Medici rose to power. She needed children of her own so she could fight any pretenders to her throne.



Chapters 7 and 8 Daughter of Debate and Without a Certain Heir

Chapters 7 and 8 Daughter of Debate and Without a Certain Heir Summary and Analysis

Chapter 7 discusses Mary Queen of Scots, who believed herself the true Queen of England. She lived most of her life in France, and many believed she was a better claimant to the English throne than Elizabeth. Mary was younger than Elizabeth and considered a beauty, which Elizabeth saw as competition. Though Scotland was Protestant Calvinist, Mary had been raised Catholic in France. However, Mary was willing to compromise, and her half-brother James Stuart, whom she later named Earl of Moray, was her chief advisor. In Mary Queen of Scots, Elizabeth saw someone like herself: a female monarch. Elizabeth decided to befriend Mary if she would renounce her claims to the English throne, but Mary wanted to be named Elizabeth's successor. Not only were they cousins, but Mary and Elizabeth ruled kingdoms right next door to one another. Elizabeth most assuredly felt competition toward Mary—Elizabeth wanted to be known as the most beautiful, the most powerful, and the wittiest. But, Mary's very existence was comforting to Elizabeth, despite the fact that for the long years of Elizabeth's reign, Mary would continually try to overthrow her. In autumn, Erik of Sweden renewed his marriage negotiations with Elizabeth, which she entertained to avoid him transferring his proposal to Mary. Elizabeth feared Mary making a good marriage and did not want her to unite with another Catholic force. Thus, she fervently pursued her suitors once again to distract them from the tempting Queen of Scots. This was political as well as personal—she was protecting her kingdom but also stroking her ego by demanding that she was the fairest. Though Mary and Elizabeth wanted to meet in person, a war between the French Catholics and Huguenots broke out, and they agreed to postpone their meeting for a year. Elizabeth signed her support to the Huguenots, sending them reinforcements.

In Chapter 7, the Queen contracted smallpox and was in bed for six days. She survived, but the situation made Parliament fiercely determined to make a marriage. Elizabeth's first brush with her own mortality frightened her, and she began to look into marriage more seriously as a way to secure her people's safety. Many were still in favor of Mary Queen of Scots as the successor, and Elizabeth wanted to marry her to Lord Robert. William Cecil supported this idea, probably to get Robert out of the way. Elizabeth knew she could never marry Dudley herself and proposed him as a husband to Mary to keep them both as tightly under her thumb as possible. Lord Robert was a commoner, so on September 28th Robert Dudley was made Baron Denbigh and Earl of Leicester so Mary would be more inclined to the marriage. This did not impress Mary, and she thought more of marrying Lord Darnley, son of Mary Stuart. Mary's half-brother, the Earl of Moray, claimed if Elizabeth made Mary her successor, Mary would wed Leicester.

Elizabeth was using Mary's potential marriage to Leicester to stave off more dangerous Catholic suitors because England's position in Europe was still precarious.



Chapters 9 and 10 A Matter Dangerous to the Common Amity and Things Grivouser and Worse

Chapters 9 and 10 A Matter Dangerous to the Common Amity and Things Grivouser and Worse Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 9, Mary Queen of Scots fell in love with Lord Darnley, though her councilors did not approve of him. Since it was obvious that Mary would not accept Leicester, he began again to court Elizabeth, and in Chapter 10 the court split into pro-and anti-Leicester factions. Sussex, Norfolk, the lords Hunsdon, and Howard of Effingham were against him. In 1565, Catherine de'Medici proposed that the Queen marry Charles IX, which Elizabeth formally declined because she thought him too young for her. Cecil, Norfolk, and Sussex were afraid this would open the door for Leicester, and they put all their energy into bringing about a Hapsburg marriage to Maximilian II. Elizabeth denied him because he was Catholic. On July 29th, 1565, Mary Queen of Scots married Lord Darnley, though within months she realized he was an irresponsible monarch. Mary Queen of Scots was an impulsive woman, and Elizabeth had allowed Lord Darnley to go to Scotland knowing he was unfit to rule. Elizabeth was officially furious at the marriage but knew she could just sit back and let Mary ruin her reign for herself.

Leicester began to favor Lettice Knollys, Elizabeth's cousin. Elizabeth's relationship with Leicester grew more turbulent during this time: the first flush of their love was gone, and they had grown used to each other. They had a very public argument and he realized he would probably never marry her, but he always remained her favorite. Elizabeth publicly humiliated him to show him her power, but they always reconciled after such public fights. That was one of Elizabeth's great strengths as a monarch—she was entirely able to control her relationships. Leicester's rivalry with Norfolk was still fierce. The others at court still deeply resented his influence and saw him as a danger to the country. Lord Darnley was very jealous of Mary's relationship with her secretary, Rizzio, and had a group of six men killed Rizzio in Mary's presence by stabbing him 56 times. On June 19th, Mary gave birth to a son, James, which strengthened her claim to Elizabeth's throne. By November 1566, Mary was discussing ways to free herself from Darnley without jeopardizing her son's legitimacy. Elizabeth let Darnley go to Scotland with full knowledge that he would be a disastrous ruler. She wanted Mary dependent on her for help.



Chapters 11 and 12 A Dangerous Person and A Vain Crack of Words

Chapters 11 and 12 A Dangerous Person and A Vain Crack of Words Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 11, Lord Darnley became ill, probably from syphilis. Mary went to visit him, and on February 10th at 2am, Darnley's house exploded. The bodies had not died in the explosion—they were strangled. Mary was suspected, as was the Earl of Bothwell, who kidnapped and married her. The marriage did not stand, and Mary's reign was effectively over. The discovery of the Casket Letters, allegedly written between Mary and Bothwell planning Darnley's murder, meant that Mary could go on trial for murder. Her infant son, James, was crowned James VI, and Mary fled south to England. Elizabeth wanted her restored to the throne of Scotland claiming it was unacceptable for an anointed prince to be deposed. Mary was kept in England because she was too dangerous to be allowed abroad. She plotted for Elizabeth's throne and was moved into the guardianship of George Talbot, the Sixth Earl of Shrewsbury. Elizabeth was faced with a dilemma: as an anointed sovereign, Mary was chosen by God to be ruler of Scotland. If she was deposed, that could set a precedent, which would be extremely dangerous for Elizabeth. It was in her best interest to lobby for Mary's reinstatement, as it would also cause Mary to be indebted to Elizabeth. However, having Mary in England was dangerous for Elizabeth as well, because it put Mary within the clutches of English Catholics who would center their plots for the throne on her. When Elizabeth was excommunicated, it made her position in Europe more dangerous because it officially gave Catholic nations reason to attack her. She turned to her old trick, marriage negotiations, to make her nation more secure against attack.

In Chapter 12, Norfolk wanted to marry Mary: not only did it make sense for her to be wed to a loyal Englishman, but he could gain a crown. Elizabeth feared it was a plot to depose her because he did not tell her of his plans, and Norfolk was in disgrace. He was sent to the Tower, and Elizabeth hoped to spare him and find him a suitable bride. Northumberland and Westmoreland headed the failed Northern uprising, attempting to march on Tutbury and free Mary. Both were eventually captured and put to death. On February 25th, 1570, Pope Pius V excommunicated Elizabeth from the Catholic Church. Cecil placed spies throughout the country, watching out for a Catholic threat. Elizabeth received a proposal of marriage from Charles IX's 19-year-old brother, Henry Duke of Anjou. Elizabeth sent Sir Francis Walsingham, whom she nicknamed her "Moor," to France to represent her. He passed back reports that Anjou was Catholic and bisexually licentious, even appearing in court in makeup and a gown. In 1576, November 17th was created the day of the Virgin Queen in England.



Gloriana

Gloriana Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 13, Elizabeth believes herself appointed as monarch by God. She wanted to give England stability and retain her peoples' love. As much as possible she put herself on display for the public to see, though Elizabethan society was still discriminatory against female monarchs because of Queen Mary Tudor's reign. Elizabeth encouraged the Virgin Queen image, claiming she was married to her people. This idea provided poets and dramatists with imagery galore, and Edmund Spenser referred to Elizabeth as Gloriana in his epic poem, *The Fairie Queen*. As she aged, Elizabeth turned to wearing makeup and incredible costumes to keep up her image. The Virgin Queen had passed into legend, and she intended the public to continue thinking of her as the young, ageless beauty. Of course, this was also for the Queen's own vanity, but it was a brilliant plan on her part, and she continued to go on progress throughout her kingdom, entertaining lavishly and making sure she was on display to the people. Elizabeth subscribed to the old medieval ideals of societal rank and had strict economic policies. She participated in the ancient ceremony the King's Evil, where she laid her hands on ill subjects in hopes that her divine touch would cure them. The Queen was extremely intelligent and translated many ancient classics to English. She enjoyed dancing and games of wit and avidly supported education. She was generally very healthy throughout her life and took daily hunting excursions. She was, however, under a tremendous amount of pressure and sometimes succumbed to panic attacks. As she grew older, she suffered from headaches and had a slight limp after an ulcer appeared on her leg in July of 1569. She also had problems with toothaches. She hated people thinking she was ill and wanted to maintain the youthful image of the Virgin Queen. When there were rumblings that she was ill, she made a point to go out riding or make a public display—she knew that, in a prince, rumors of illness could very well inspire foreign leaders to move against her. She lived large, feeding her ego, but most importantly keeping up the expectations of her people. Elizabeth was thought to have over three thousand gowns, and multiple wigs and headpieces that she wore as she got older. She had 628 pieces of jewelry by 1587. In her portraits, Elizabeth demanded that the myth of the Virgin Queen take precedence over any realism, and even in portraits of her in her later years, her face is smooth and ageless.



Chapter 14 A Court at Once Gay, Decadent, and Superb

Chapter 14 A Court at Once Gay, Decadent, and Superb Summary and Analysis

Chapter 14 discusses the Tudor court. It was nomadic because the entourage was too expensive for any one home to host them for a long time. The Queen's favorite house was Nonsuch, located in Surrey. Elizabeth distanced herself from the homes of her childhood and the tower. Many of her childhood memories were unhappy or even disturbing, and as Queen she wanted to remain in control, with no reminders that she had ever been anyone else. Her imprisonment in the Tower by Mary Stewart was by far the most terrifying time for her, but on her accession she made the obligatory trip there, stating publicly that God had chosen this destiny for her. She was a patron of the arts and loved the theatre. She enjoyed theatre perhaps because her life was a lot like theatre—her court was for state matters, but she was constantly on display. Every Sunday she went in procession from the Royal Chapel to her chamber, and people crowded to see her. Her food was prepared privately, and she disliked eating in public. Elizabeth expected her court to have strict morals, though scandals did occur. Many of her courtiers were family relations and therefore loyal to each other, which gave her court the feeling of a large family. There were not many women at court because Elizabeth preferred to be the center of the males' attentions, and she furthered the idea of courtly love, "in which the lover pays hopeless court to his unattainable mistress" (257). The Queen kept seven Ladies of the Bedchamber, six maids of honor, and four chamberers who she chose from relatives or courtier's families. The Ladies had to wear black or white so they would never upstage the Queen's brilliance, and they were often bribed by upstart courtiers to carry messages to the Queen. As Queen, Elizabeth had the right to approve all her Maid's marriages, as well as the marriages of others in the court. So, when her Ladies married without her permission, she was understandably angry. It was also difficult for her to understand why they wanted to marry, and she expected them to revel in their virginity as she did. It was, again, a control issue: not only did she want to be a part of every happening in her court, but should the wrong couple marry and produce an heir with a claim to the throne, it was a risky situation for her. The Queen went on 25 progresses during her reign; these tours helped her retain her popularity. On these progresses she would stay with her wealthier subjects or civic dignitaries. Though it was a great honor to receive the Queen, her visits were extremely expensive. .



Chapters 15 and 16 The Axe Must Be the Next Warning and Less Agreeable Things to Think About

Chapters 15 and 16 The Axe Must Be the Next Warning and Less Agreeable Things to Think About Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 15, the Queen made William Cecil the first Baron Burghley on February 25, 1571. Her most important advisors were Burghley, Sussex, Leicester, and Walsingham. Mary was still conspiring for the English crown with the help of Philip of Spain and Norfolk. Roberto Ridolfi, a papal agent, planned an invasion focused on deposing Elizabeth and putting Mary and Norfolk on the throne. When the plot came to light, Norfolk confessed his part. Mary denied involvement with Ridolfi and Norfolk. This was a turbulent time in foreign relations in England. Elizabeth was a little too old to rely on proposals of marriage to keep her safe, but the allure was still strong to marry the Queen of England. When she discovered Norfolk's implication in the plot against her, she was conflicted: he had been one of her advisors, and she was loath to sentence him to death if another solution could be found. She played a waiting game, as she often did, to try and spare him, but when it came to Norfolk or Mary, she had to let Mary live. As an anointed female sovereign, Elizabeth still thought it was wrong to hold Mary to judgment—she was divinely appointed, and God was her only judge. It was important for Elizabeth to take a stand, so she made an example of Norfolk. Elizabeth was never unnecessarily violent and preferred to solve problems with diplomacy.

Catherine de'Medici of France suggested her younger son Hercules-Francis, Duke of Alencon as a suitor for Elizabeth though he was only seventeen. On January 16, 1572, Norfolk was found guilty on thirteen counts of high treason. She did not allow him to be hanged, drawn, and quartered but instead commuted because it was considered a more respectable death. On the morning of June 2nd, he stated, "For men to suffer death in this place is no new thing. Since the beginning of our most gracious Queen's reign I am the first, and God grant that I may be the last" (p. 283).

In Chapter 16, England and France agreed upon the Treaty of Blois on April 19, 1572. This gave England an ally in Europe and was the end of French support for Mary Stewart. On April 24, 1572, Catherine de'Medici ordered the Huguenots out of the capital, which led to almost 10,000 deaths. When the Huguenots were slaughtered in France, Elizabeth was torn: she wanted to help the Protestants but could not put the new treaty in danger. Again, she used the marriage card to sway events in her favor and gain better conditions for Huguenots. Her virgin status still gave her clout in the marriage market, and the rumors that she was promiscuous were most likely false. She endangered her kingdom by being anything other than the Virgin Queen; if she was



discovered in an illicit affair, she would be unmarriageable and harshly judged. It was more prudent for her to be true to her word. Elizabeth vowed she would never marry Alencon until the French treated their Protestants more fairly. On May 30 1574, Charles IX died, and Anjou, a fanatical Catholic, took the French throne as Henry III. England then signed the Treaty of Bristol with Spain against the threat of the French. Catholic priests were docking in England to preach the true Catholic religion and overthrow Elizabeth in favor of Mary. Although there were rumors that the Queen bore Leicester's children, Leicester secretly married Douglas, Lady Sheffield, who bore him a son. Leicester would always refer to this son, named Robert, as his "base son" because he was to be proved illegitimate.



Chapters 17 and 18 Princely Pleasures and Frenzied Wooing

Chapters 17 and 18 Princely Pleasures and Frenzied Wooing Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 17, the Queen went on progress to Kenilworth, one of her favorite houses, entertained by Leicester. He moved on in his affections from Douglas Howard to Lettice Knollys, the Queen's cousin. The Queen clashed with the Archbishop Grindal over Puritanism and made herself leader of the Anglican Church. The Dutch Protestants in the Netherlands wanted Elizabeth to become their Queen and head a Protestant army against Spain. Elizabeth did not want to become Queen of the Netherlands; the endeavor would be a drain on England's economy and obligate her to fight the Netherlands' war against Philip of Spain. She did send aid to their cause, even as she took over the Anglican Church in her own country. Unfortunately, this made the Puritan movement even stronger in the years to come, sparking many pamphlets preaching religious freedom. Elizabeth thought a stable state needed uniformity of religion.

Chapter 18 discusses the explorers and discoveries during Elizabeth's reign. Among them was Sir Francis Drake, who sailed to the New World and returned with treasure looted from Spanish ships. He became a favorite of the Queen. In March 1578, James VI, at twelve years old, was declared of an age to rule Scotland. Leicester secretly married the pregnant Lettice Knollys at Kenilworth so his heir could be legitimate. Elizabeth's relationship with Leicester again took a downswing when he married Lettice Knollys, whom he may have genuinely loved. The Queen was furious and probably brokenhearted. From Leicester's point of view, he could not wait forever for Elizabeth to marry him: he was getting older as well and needed heirs for his estate. Eventually they reconciled, but she made of point of shunning Lettice to punish Leicester and Lettice, of whom Elizabeth was probably jealous. Leicester bribed Douglas to say their marriage was not sanctified and asked her to give him sole custody of their (illegitimate) son Robert. This incident with Leicester's marriage may have spurred the Queen to reconsider Alencon, (who, after his brother became Henry III, moved up in rank as the new Duke of Anjou). He agreed to come and meet the Queen in person, and they were attracted to each other from the start. She nicknamed him her "Frog," thus beginning perhaps the most serious courtship of her reign. She genuinely liked him, and if she wanted to become a wife and mother, this was her last chance. If public opinion had not been so opposed to the match, Elizabeth may have finally married. He swept her off her feet, and she uncharacteristically showed vulnerability in longing for the marriage.



Chapters 19, 20, and 21 Between Scylla and Charbdis, Practices at Home and Abroad, and The Tragical Execution

Chapters 19, 20, and 21 Between Scylla and Charbdis, Practices at Home and Abroad, and The Tragical Execution Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 19, Pope Gregory XIII reissued the Papal bull excommunicating Elizabeth. Again troubled by the Pope and King Philip of Spain, Elizabeth chose to fine her Catholic subjects for failing to attend Anglican Church instead of hunting them out or going to war. Anjou accepted the crown of the Netherlands, a country desperate for a protector. Elizabeth commended Sir Francis Drake for his voyages, despite the fact that he blatantly sacked Spanish ships. Anjou needed Elizabeth's money in the Netherlands to fund his war, so he went to England to woo her again. She allegedly accepted his proposal in front of witnesses but changed her mind two days later, stating she could not marry him without the approval of her people. When she accepted Anjou, Elizabeth made a mistake; she let her personal feelings get in the way of her duties as Queen. She would never again let herself get so carried away. He left on February 7th, 1582, ending Elizabeth's courting days. Sir Walter Raleigh became one of Elizabeth's inner circle, though he was never popular at court because he was condescending and arrogant. Elizabeth still enjoying being fawned over, and Sir Walter Raleigh was a fascinating man who could pay her compliments and match her intellectually. Leicester was still a favorite, and he and the Queen both turned fifty in 1583.

In Chapter 20, the Duke of Anjou died on June 10th, 1584, leaving the French crown to Henry of Bourbon, a Huguenot. Later that year, Philip II assassinated William of Orange, a Protestant leader in the Netherlands. With these events, Europe grew unstable, and Elizabeth sent Leicester on December 8th as her representative. He accomplished no major military goals.

In Chapter 21, Walsingham's spy network included Gilbert Gifford, a Catholic trainee priest. He passed Mary's letters on to Walsingham. In March of 1586, Philip II was given permission for the English Enterprise: a holy war against England. Mary's letter detailing the plot for the throne was intercepted by Walsingham, and England reached a treaty with Scotland. On September 9th, Elizabeth called Parliament into session to discuss Mary's treason plot. Parliament found Mary guilty, sentencing her to death. Elizabeth delayed signing the death warrant as long as possible, though her councilors urged her to end the threat of Mary once and for all. She used Sir William Davison, who carried the warrant to Burghley and the rest of the councilors, as a scapegoat and pretended he had misheard her, and that she had not actually sentenced Mary to death. She also did not want the world to think it was her fault that Mary died, though many of the other



leaders blamed her anyway. Elizabeth had no choice but to take action against her cousin. She had given Mary many chances, even allowing her to live in England with a large household, wanting for nothing. Elizabeth was nothing if not merciful and hated to put anyone to death—even Mary, who had plotted against her for so long. On February 8th, 1587, Mary Queen of Scots was beheaded. Elizabeth was completely distraught after Mary's death and allowed her a full Catholic funeral. Before Mary died, she bequeathed her claim on the English throne to Philip, who was determined to crush the English heretics.



Chapters 22 and 23 Eliza Triumphant and Great England's Glory

Chapters 22 and 23 Eliza Triumphant and Great England's Glory Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 22, Essex, Leicester's hotheaded stepson, rose in the Queen's favor and became of Master of Horse. Raleigh was bitter about Essex's rise, and the two were rivals. On July 19th 1588, the Spanish were seen in English territory sailing to the Netherlands. The English navy pursued them and sent burning ships into the Spanish fleet to destroy the galleons. The wind changed, forcing the fleet north, and the people took it as a sign from God, calling it a "Protestant" wind. Elizabeth rode to Tilbury to address her troops, where she delivered one of the most famous speeches of her reign to rally her army, riding for three days into potentially dangerous territory to declare that she may be "a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a King, and a King of England too" (p. 393). This was a Queen who was not afraid to ride to the front lines of the battlefield, and this inspired her army. Of course, the event was stage managed by Leicester and meant to inspire and further the image of the ever-youthful Virgin Queen, but it was another example of Elizabeth's love for her people. England's victory made her legend, and now the Virgin Queen was godlike, practically invincible, but Leicester died shortly after, probably of stomach cancer. After 1588, Elizabeth was widely respected and feared in Europe, and the myth of the Virgin Queen gave way to the English Renaissance.

In Chapter 23, Leicester's stepson Essex became Elizabeth's favorite, though there was a rivalry between him and Burghley's son Robert Cecil. By now, it was clear that times were changing. Many of Elizabeth's councilors were growing old, and the deaths of Walsingham and Leicester devastated Elizabeth. When Essex and Cecil gained favor with her, it seemed she was recreating the court of her youth, surrounded by the offspring of her old court. Essex, whom Elizabeth loved like a son, was foolhardy and disobeyed the Queen on many occasions. She almost always forgave him, but it caused her grief and was the beginning of a youth movement in England. They were tired of the old regime and Elizabeth's outdated politics. They had grown up in peace and were hungry for adventure. Elizabeth was older as well, and while she was still sharp and aware of national issues, began to let small things slip, namely Essex's behavior toward her. Sir Francis Walsingham died on April 6th, 1590. Robert Cecil, Burghley's son, took over his Secretarial duties. Henry IV asked Elizabeth for support against Catholic French forces and the Spanish, so Elizabeth sent Essex with an army. The venture was a disaster due to Essex's leadership. Sir Walter Raleigh secretly married Bess Throckmorton, one of Elizabeth's Ladies. They were each sent to the tower for their deceit, and he never fully recovered the Queen's favor. Elizabeth made an example of Raleigh to assert to herself and others that she was still very much Queen of England. In February of 1593, Essex was appointed a Privy Councilor. He became the leader of

the anti-Spanish, pro-war faction at court and was extremely popular with the English people.



Chapters 24 and 25 We Are Evil Served and The Minion of Fortune

Chapters 24 and 25 We Are Evil Served and The Minion of Fortune Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 24, Essex was growing far too powerful, challenging the Queen in court and in popularity with the public. Elizabeth and Essex were sick of each other. What began as a relationship with mutual respect had turned into something ugly, and Essex did not feel that he was beholden to the same rules as other subjects. He spoke against Elizabeth in court and even threatened her on one occasion. Elizabeth, ever the diplomat, chose to ignore the insult and continue as if nothing had ever happened. But Essex was too impatient and demanded to be sent to Ireland to fight while the rest of Europe was making peace. By this point in her reign, it was easier to wear Elizabeth down, and she consented. Burghley died on August 4th, 1598, and Elizabeth lost the last tie to the court of her youth. She was extremely upset at his death and saddened by the realization of her own mortality. The Queen appointed Essex in Ireland to fight the rebel Hugh O'Neill, second earl of Tyrone, though she did not want to send Essex to Ireland. He conducted the Irish campaign as he saw fit, rarely consulting Elizabeth or informing her of what was happening. He made no progress and was burning through men and money.

In Chapter 25, Essex grew tired of Ireland and the military life and hatched a plan to sail back to England and march on Elizabeth. His mind became more and more unstable, and he overestimated his power. He secretly arranged a cease-fire with Tyrone and asked for his support in the coup for the throne. Essex came back to England without the Queen's permission, demanding the removal of the Cecils from the court. He later mounted an abortive rebellion with The Earls of Southampton and Rutland, among other peers. On February 8th, 1601, he marched on Whitehall with some 200 men but had overestimated the support for his rebellion. Though Elizabeth was older, she was most certainly wiser, and made him answer for his treason with a very harsh sentence. He was hanged, drawn, and quartered: a traitor's death. This caused a public backlash; despite all his wrongdoings, he was still very popular, and people were upset to learn of his fate. But the Queen could not forgive him again without significantly giving up power, and she knew she had to make an example of him.



The Sun Setteth at Last

The Sun Setteth at Last Summary and Analysis

Elizabeth was showing signs of her age, and England was going through economic hardship. Beggars had become a problem, so Elizabeth passed the Poor Law Act, which put beggars in the care of their local parishes. Forty-five years of being Queen took its toll on Elizabeth. Toward the end of her reign she became forgetful and began to let her state duties slip. Her court was out of control, and she was could not get the power back; -all her old allies and friends were dead. She was very tired and certainly lonely without the people who had accompanied her for most of her reign, and Essex's death weighed heavily on her. She knew that her time was done and essentially lost the will to live. She had given so much to her country over the years and only wished to go to the God she had fought so hard to worship. On January 2nd, 1602, the English won control of Ireland. Though it was a great victory, 69-year-old Elizabeth was tired. She became ill, probably of bronchitis and then pneumonia. She tried to keep control to the very end by keeping the succession ambiguous and announced James only when she was on her deathbed; unable to speak, she signaled with her hands that her successor would be James IV of Scotland, now James I of England. She died on Thursday, March 24th, after forty-five years of a prosperous reign. This was a shrewd, kind, fair, and mighty Queen whose reign would be regarded in the years to come as a Golden Age.



Characters

Queen Elizabeth I

Elizabeth was the daughter of Henry VIII, and the second female monarch in English history. She lived from 1533 to 1603, and reigned as Queen for 45 years. Emerging from a difficult childhood, which included the death and beheading of her mother Anne Boleyn by her father, Elizabeth succeeded her sister Mary for the English throne. She chose her councilors meticulously and kept many of them with her throughout her life. Sir Robert Dudley, later the Earl of Leicester, was her undisputed favorite, and many historians speculate she may have been in love with him. However, Elizabeth maintained her image as the Virgin Queen, remaining symbolically single her entire life and claiming she was married to England. Though she never actually married, she did use her potential marriage as a political tactic to keep her enemies at bay. Catholic Europe was a constant threat, and the Queen kept England out of harm's way constantly keeping her suitors guessing. She was one of the most loved monarchs in English history and always put her subjects' needs before her own, even making a dangerous ride to rally her troops during her infamous Speech at Tilbury. Elizabeth revived Protestantism in England and was relatively tolerant of others' religions, especially compared to her fanatical sister, the Catholic Mary Tudor. Elizabeth used spectacle to her advantage and was constantly on display for her people and the world. Her elaborate costumes and grand public appearances inspired countless artistic tributes, including characters symbolic of Elizabeth in Edmund Spenser's "The Faerie Queene." Elizabeth's reign was a time of exploration and expansion; not only did she defeat the Spanish Armada, she also claimed Ireland and made peace with Scotland. Her reign became a Golden Age, and she was a legend in her own time.

Mary, Queen of Scots

Mary was crowned Queen of Scotland at one week of age after the death of her father James V. She was raised in France and later married the Dauphin, Francis, but returned to Scotland when he was killed in a jousting accident. She ruled Scotland starting at age 17 and was devoutly Catholic. Rumored to be enchanting and beautiful, Mary's many attributes left her cousin, Queen Elizabeth, jealous. Mary and Elizabeth tried to bring friendly relations between Scotland and England and even wanted to meet in person, but clashes between Catholics and Protestants abroad prevented them from doing so. Mary was a dangerous person for Elizabeth: if she married a strong European Catholic, Scotland provided an excellent front for an English invasion. Mary finally married the English Lord Darnley, who was also Catholic, though who was not fit for the crown, and they married against Elizabeth's wishes. Later, Mary may have been involved in Lord Darnley's murder after which she fled to England. She was too dangerous a person to be allowed to go abroad, so Elizabeth kept her in England. She was able to live according to her station with a large household and wanting for nothing, but she nevertheless spent the rest of her life involved in plots to overthrow the English throne.



and claim it for herself. Her son, James VI, was crowned King of Scotland, eventually to become Elizabeth's successor. Mary's transgressions were overlooked by Elizabeth over and over again, though the Scots Queen remained a threat to England. Mary did not feel she was subject to the laws of men, and as an anointed sovereign, she answered only to God. She was tried, found guilty of treason, and beheaded. She proclaimed herself a martyr of the Catholic faith and was granted a full Catholic funeral.

Robert Dudley, later Earl of Leicester

Robert Dudley was the son of John Dudley, Duke of Warwick and Duke of Northumberland. He and Elizabeth were childhood friends, though his family was involved in the Lady Jane Grey conspiracy, which sent him to the Tower for a time. During Elizabeth's reign, he held many prestigious offices, including Master of Horse. He and Elizabeth were rumored to be lovers, and he again came under scrutiny when his wife mysteriously died. He became Elizabeth's suitor, though she never married him, and he eventually married Lettice Knollys, her cousin. He organized Elizabeth's famous visit to the troops at Tilbury.

Sir William Cecil, later Lord Burghley

Cecil was the Secretary of State and Lord Treasurer under Elizabeth. He was politically conservative and a devoted Protestant. He was a brilliant administrator, and Elizabeth trusted his advice throughout her reign.

Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk

Norfolk was a Catholic sympathizer, though he denied being Catholic himself. He was a member of Elizabeth's Privy Council but was involved in Catholic plots to place Mary Queen of Scots on the English throne. After a conspiracy in 1571, the Queen reluctantly beheaded him.

King Philip II of Spain

A devout Catholic, Philip had been married to Queen Mary, Elizabeth's half-sister. He proposed to Elizabeth as well, though she did not accept him. He plotted against Elizabeth because she was Protestant and sent the doomed Spanish Armada to war against her. He also supported Mary Queen of Scots's claim to Elizabeth's throne.

Sir Francis Walsingham

Sir Walsingham created an extensive network of spys throughout Europe designed to detect Catholic plots against the Queen. She did not like his Puritan beliefs but respected his dedication to her. He was one of her inner circle.



Robert Deveraux, Earl of Essex

Essex was Leicester's stepson and enjoyed special treatment from the Queen, Leicester, and Burghley. Though the Queen cared for him like a son, he was hotheaded and a warmonger and challenged her at every turn. He led a rebellion against her in 1601, and was executed for treason.

James VI of Scotland, later James I of England

Born to Mary Queen of Scots and Henry Stewart, Lord Darnely, he was raised Protestant and crowned King of Scotland when he was one week old. He was later crowned King James I of England after Elizabeth's death in 1603.

Sir Walter Raleigh

He was an adventurer, scholar, and favorite of the Queen. Raleigh sailed to the New World but was not popular at court because he was highhanded and condescending. He was briefly imprisoned in the Tower for impregnating one of Elizabeth's maids, Elizabeth Throckmorton.

Hercules-Francis, Duke of Alencon

Son of Catherine de'Medici and the last suitor of Elizabeth. He became King of the Netherlands and asked Elizabeth to finance his campaign.

Duke of Anjou, later King Henry III of France

Briefly a suitor of Elizabeth I, the King Henry was a fanatical Catholic. He was also rumored to be a bisexual cross-dresser.

Catherine de'Medici

Queen Regent of France, mother of Henry III and Alencon.



Objects/Places

Whitehall

A primary royal residence of Elizabeth's.

Windsor Castle

Elizabeth's royal residence in Berkshire.

Westminster Abbey

The abbey where Elizabeth was crowned and also where she is buried. Located in London.

The Tower of London

Officially, the Tower was considered a royal residence, but it was mainly used as a political prison.

Rings

Elizabeth's sapphire ring symbolized her commitment to her people. When she died, the ring was taken off her finger and rushed to King James VI. She was also seen to give the Duke of Anjou a ring from her hand, which constituted a formal betrothal. Rings were commitments and pledges.

Kenilworth

The home of the Earl of Leicester. The Queen was entertained there multiple times during her reign.

Letters

Since writing was the only way to communicate long distances, letters were very important. Walsingham intercepted a letter of treason from Mary Queen of Scots, and Elizabeth reportedly kept Leicester's last letter until the day she died.



Calais

A region in France formerly held by England. The recovery of Calais was a sore spot for Elizabeth her entire reign.

The Book of Common Prayer

The official holy book of Protestant England.

Vienna

The Queen's councilors were sent to negotiate a Hapsburg marriage.

The Netherlands

The Queen sent an army to aid Protestants, though she refused to be Queen of the Netherlands.

Ships

Ships were the only way to travel long distances, and impressive weapons in warfare. The Spanish Armada had many huge galleons, while the English fleet had smaller, faster ships. Sir Francis Drake sailed to the New World and back, bringing looted treasure for the Queen.

Holyrood Palace

The palace where Mary Queen of Scots and Bothwell were wed in Scotland.

Elizabeth's Wardrobe

Her closet consisted of around 3,000 gowns, countless wigs and accessories. She had over 600 pieces of jewelry as well, and used all her costumes to further her image as the Virgin Queen.

Watches

Leicester gave Elizabeth the first wrist watch for a gift.

Papal Bull

A letter of patent or charter issued by the Pope. Pope Pious V issued the bull excommunicating Elizabeth.



Themes

Virginity vs. Marriage

Elizabeth's decision to remain a virgin protected her in many ways. Firstly, by avoiding marriage, she was able to be her own master and answer only to God. After England became Protestant, her virginity made her an almost holy figure, and the image of the Virgin Queen took the place of the Virgin Mary in the minds of the people of England. By remaining a virgin and not marrying, Elizabeth was married to England and considered all her subjects her children. Her single status meant she and England would never be subject to an unjust, foreign King like they had been in Mary's reign. While marriage was sanctified in the eyes of God, Elizabeth's virginity made her holy in her own right. Her virginity made Elizabeth invincible; she was subject to no one; therefore, England would be subject to no one. It made her pure and fair, unclouded by the oversexed masses and the erotic intrigues of her court. She was very interested in sex and did not deny it, but she was above the needs of her body. Almost Christlike, she lived and died for her people, and her concerns were the good and proper ways to run her kingdom. By remaining a virgin and creating the image of the Virgin Queen, she burned her image into the imaginations of England, Europe, and the world for the years and centuries to come.

Sovereignty

The monarch had absolute, god-given sovereignty, and for anyone to challenge that god-given right was treason and very close to sin. Elizabeth was so conflicted about executing Mary Queen of Scots because she was an anointed sovereign, appointed by God to her post. If Mary was judged on earth by men and not God, it was a complete breakdown of the hierarchical system. If Mary could be disposed, then Elizabeth could, too. Elizabeth wanted to place Mary back on the throne of Scotland to show the people that sovereigns were not disposable; they were absolutely imbued with the wisdom and strength to lead a people. Elizabeth remained the primary leader and power of England throughout her reign. God chose one person to rule the nation, passing down the necessary blood from one generation to another. The rulers had divine right but also divine responsibility and were expected to govern justly and according to their conscience. Though Mary, Queen of Scots was judged and found guilty by men, she knew she was not subject to the rulings of men and would be solely and ultimately judged by God.

Loyalty vs. Treason

Since the monarch had God-given sovereignty, the subjects owed the monarch loyalty, not only as the leader of the church but as the leader of the state. In Elizabethan England, people were distrustful of foreigners, who often had different languages and



religions and considered themselves more refined than England. Elizabeth garnered loyalty from her subjects through their love; she was a very visible monarch to the common people, like a living legend. She turned the other cheek whenever she could, binding those she trusted closer to her. Because of how quickly the political environment could change, treason was the very highest offense. In England under Elizabeth, a great tide of nationalism resurfaced, and English subjects truly identified with their "Englishness." To deny that inherent trait, that God-given identity in favor of power, titles, or riches was a very serious and foul thing. When Norfolk was executed, he understood why; he was being made an example. He, who was given so much by heritage, life, and the Queen herself, turned his back on everything in pursuit of something even grander. Treason held the very greatest penalty; a traitor's death was carried out by hanging, drawing, and quartering. While a very painful death for the traitor, it was also a reminder to others how serious it was to betray one's country. Elizabeth rewarded loyalty with powerful appointments, money, rank, and favor. She also remembered those who had been kind to her early on and made a point to honor faithful subjects with her favor. The loyalty of her subjects was a point of pride for her, and she took great satisfaction in how much they loved her.



Style

Perspective

Alison Weir has an obvious respect for her subject. She makes a real effort to delve into the woman behind the crown and to understand Elizabeth psychologically. Weir is English herself and has written extensively on the royal families of England, both fiction and nonfiction. She seems to identify with Elizabeth and often points out that Elizabeth was a woman in a man's world surrounded by people who wished ill of her. She maintains that Elizabeth was, in fact, a Virgin Queen, and believes the gossip about the Queen's affairs to be unfounded. Elizabeth's life was so very public, she says, that there was no way for the Queen to have sexual relations without word getting out in a more concrete way. She gives Elizabeth the benefit of the doubt, preferring to believe Elizabeth's personal life was exactly as she said, especially given how complex the Queen's relationships had to be. Weir subtly points out how many sacrifices Elizabeth had to make as Queen, especially her virginity: while she became infamous as the Virgin Queen, she could never give herself to motherhood as was expected of women in her day. In fact, Elizabeth may have felt she was missing something later in her life, though while she was younger she must have reveled in her freedom. Weir has written many novels on the Tudors and seems to have a special understanding of the inner working of the family—the relationships, backgrounds, and expectations that produced not only great monarchs, but incredibly complex and interesting people.

Tone

The author seems very protective of Elizabeth, always stating reasons for her actions and giving her credit. While events can be stated in a very matter-of-fact manner, the novel is often more like a character study than history. Facts are stated according to the people they affect, and progress is not marred by many specific dates and times. One is given a reference point, then the characters' lives weave together to form another. The writing respects the integrity of its subjects and depicts them as true to life as history can reconstruct. Many of the historical figures and events are common knowledge: the Spanish Armada, the New World, the Catholics and Protestants, and even the Virgin Queen herself. However, the characters are so brought to life that one forgets the outcome of their lives is a forgone conclusion, already written about hundreds of times before. There is still suspense at Amy Dudley's death, jubilation at the Queen's coronation, and intense speculation on the Queen's "real" feelings for those close to her. The book is not ambiguous and does not invite judgment but rather lays out a very specific idea about the Queen of England, her court, and their lives. It gives an intricate portrait of Elizabeth and the people in her life sparing nothing: one sees the good, bad, ugly, scandalous, hilarious, tragic, and, above all, very human lives of these people who lived so long ago and did such great things.

Structure

The work is divided into chapters, with an introduction and an epilogue to begin and end. There is an extensive bibliography, as well as family trees, drawn out so one can visualize the complicated families. The book is basically chronological, beginning with Elizabeth's coronation and ending with her death, although the author sometimes uses information from different periods of her life to highlight points. The time period is extremely complicated, and the author weaves story lines in and out to give the reader a good overall sense of the atmosphere. Quotes are used specifically and sparingly, with large parts of Elizabeth's speeches included, as well as the entire address to the troops at Tilbury. Each chapter has a title that is the theme of the chapter, and the chapters are entwined to create a narrative within the framework of history. The preface offers insight into why Weir wrote the book. Weir includes a small section after the novel is finished, which is basically a personal tirade on the historical inaccuracy of filmmakers, and recommends films to the readers based on which are the most correct and truthful. There are beautiful prints in the center depicting the main characters of the book and multiple prints of Elizabeth at different times in her life. The author rarely uses footnotes, but does provide a reader's guide in the back of the book with discussion topics and questions to keep in mind while reading.



Quotes

"God's death, my Lord, I have wished you well, but my favor is not so locked up for you that others shall participate thereof. And if you think to rule here, I will take a course to see you forthcoming. I will have but one mistress and no master." (p.166). Elizabeth was speaking to Leicester, angry about rumors of their impending marriage.

"To be a King and wear a crown is more glorious to them that see it than it is a pleasure to them that bear it." (p.219). Elizabeth, on her sovereignty.

"Relations between Elizabeth and her male courtiers reflected the age—old ideals of courtly love, in which the lover pays hopeless court to his unattainable mistress." (p.257). Allison Weir on the politics of Elizabeth's court.

"For men to suffer death in this place is no new thing. Since the beginning of our most gracious Queen's reign I am the first, and God grant I may be the last." (p.283). The Duke of Norfolk, on the scaffold before his beheading.

"My loving people, we have been persuaded by some that are careful of our safety to take heed how we commit ourselves to armed multitudes, for fear of treachery; but I do assure you, I do not desire to live to distrust my faithful and loving people. Let tyrants fear. I have always so behaved myself that, under God, I have placed my chiefest strength and safeguard in the loyal hearts and goodwill of my subjects and therefore I am come amongst you, as you see, at this time, not for my recreation and disport, but being resolved in the midst and heat of the battle to live or die amongst you, to lay down for my God and for my kingdom, and for my people, my honor and my blood, even in the dust. I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a King, and of a King of England too, and think it foul scorn that Parma or Spain, or any prince of Europe, should dare invade the borders of my realm; to which, rather than any dishonor shall grow by me, I myself will take up arms, I myself will be your general, judge, and rewarder of every one of your virtues. In the meantime, my Lieutenant General (Leicester) shall be in my stead, then whom never prince commanded a more noble or worthy subject, not doubting but, by your obedience to my general, by your concord in the camp and your valor in the field, we shall shortly have a famous victory over these enemies of God, of my kingdom, and of my people." (p.393). Elizabeth's famous Speech to the Troops at Tilbury, on the cusp of the battle with the Spanish Armada.

"Some have fallen from being princes of this land to be prisoners in this place. I am raised from being a prisoner in this place to be a prince of this land. That dejection was a work of God's justice. The advancement is a work of His mercy." (p.28). Elizabeth, upon returning to the Tower before her Coronation.

"God's death, my Lord, I have wished you well, but my favor is not so locked up for you that others shall not participate thereof. And if you think to rule here, I will take a course



to see you forthcoming. I will have but one mistress and no master." (p.166). Elizabeth to Leicester, regarding his high-handed behavior in court and his marriage proposal.

"The Queen's much vaunted virginity was a matter, not of personal choice, but of state policy, and in many ways it cost her dear, condemning her to a lifetime of lonely isolation, emotional deprivation, and enforced chastity." (p.51). Alison Weir discussing the Queen's status as a virgin.

"I am already bound unto a husband, which is the kingdom of England. Every one of you, and as many as are Englishmen, are children and kinsmen to me." (p.44). Elizabeth, on her unmarried status and her people.

"I will never marry." (p.13). Elizabeth, at eight years old, in February 1542 after Katherine Howard's beheading.

"I am no subject, and I would rather die a thousand deaths than acknowledge myself to be one!" (p.369) Mary Queen of Scots, on the English court's right to try her for treason,

"No oblivion shall ever bury the glory of her name; for her happy and renowned memory still liveith and shall for ever live in the minds of men." (p.488). Quoted from Camden's biography by Alison Weir.



Topics for Discussion

How did Elizabeth's early childhood affect her later attitudes on marriage? How did her relationship with her father and siblings contribute to her the way she ruled her kingdom?

How did Elizabeth's imprisonment in the Tower affect her? Did it change her views on political imprisonment and how prisoners should be treated? Why was she always so hesitant to sentence prisoners to death?

Why was Elizabeth so hesitant to execute Mary, Queen of Scots? Why was she initially seeking friendship with Mary? How did their relationship evolve?

How did Elizabeth's councilors affect her policies? Were their thoughts and opinions highly regarded by her?

Why did Elizabeth never marry? How did she use the constant game of courting and proposals to her advantage? Was it ever a disadvantage?

Was Robert Dudley the love of Elizabeth's life? Why do you think he is/is not? How did he affect her reign?

How did the issue of religion affect Elizabeth's reign, and how did she deal with Catholic Europe? How did she deal with her Catholic subjects?

Why was the succession so important? Why did Elizabeth refuse to name a successor?