

Elizabeth's Court & Parliament

Who had power?

Elizabeth ensured support through a system of **patronage**. She awarded titles, land, monopolies and other powerful positions in exchange for obedience and support.

Lord Lieutenants were appointed by the queen, were responsible for running a particular area of the country, responsible for raising the **militia** to fight for the queen.

Justices of the Peace served in every county and were responsible for maintaining order and enforcing the law.

Parliament was made up of the House of Lords and House of Commons, and had influence over taxation, as well as responsibility for passing laws. The queen rarely called parliament and often ignored their advice.

Privy Council was responsible for the day-to-day running of the country. The queen appointed the wealthiest landowners to the council, as she wanted to prevent rebellion. If the council was united it was difficult for Elizabeth to go against their wishes. However, as they were all very ambitious they rarely agreed and Elizabeth used this to her advantage.

What challenges did Elizabeth face?

- ◆ She was a female ruler in a time when women did not hold positions of authority.
- ◆ She had a number of initial problems to deal with, including religion, foreign policy, taxation, Ireland, marriage and succession.
- ◆ Elizabeth never married despite many suitors. Some saw this as a clever decision.
- ◆ Elizabeth had to deal with Parliament and a number of disagreements and tensions arose— particularly around religion, monopolies and Mary, Queen of Scots.

Example exam question

Although Elizabeth loved Dudley she certainly did not want to marry him, or any other man. The reason goes back to a childhood that would have been considered highly dysfunctional in modern terms. Elizabeth hated the idea of marriage. This is understandable when you consider that her father was Henry VIII and her mother was his second wife, Anne Boleyn whom her father had beheaded when Elizabeth was just three. Her stepmothers did not fare so well either. At the age of eight she declared that she would never marry.

From a newspaper interview with Alison Weir, who wrote a novel based upon Elizabeth's life.

1. How convincing is this interpretation about Elizabeth's decision not to marry? Explain your answer using the interpretation and your own knowledge.

Key characters:

Sir William Cecil— Secretary of State and then Lord Treasurer. Elizabeth relied heavily on Cecil and she admired the fact that he spoke his mind. A very skilful member of the privy council.

Sir Francis Walsingham—Fiercely loyal to Elizabeth. Secretary of state responsible for foreign affairs. As Elizabeth's spymaster he uncovered several plots to kill Elizabeth.

Francis, Duke of Anjou and Alencon—The French king's brother and heir to the throne. Elizabeth was 46 when marriage was proposed and probably beyond having children. He was Catholic and many were against the marriage.

King Philip II of Spain—The wealthiest and most powerful man in the world. He was married to Elizabeth's sister, Mary I, but the marriage had not produced an heir. Most people were against a marriage to Elizabeth.

Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester—A childhood friend and favourite of Elizabeth's throughout her reign. Many assumed they were in love. A key figure at court and member of the Privy Council. Already married and when his wife died in suspicious circumstances people were against a marriage to Elizabeth.