



Elizabeth I

Elizabeth was born nearly 500 years ago, in 1533. Her father, King Henry VIII, had six wives. When Elizabeth was two, her father ordered her mother's execution.

'Off with her head!'

Elizabeth was very clever, but she had a difficult childhood with her bad-tempered father and so many stepmothers. She was put in prison in the Tower of London for two months when she was twenty. Elizabeth became queen in 1558. 'Your sister is dead. You are the new queen.'

The English people liked Elizabeth and called her 'Good Queen Bess'. But Elizabeth was often bad-tempered and bossy.

'I said give me my wig!'

Elizabeth sent explorers sailing around the world. In 1577, Sir Francis Drake set sail in his ship, the *Pelican*.

'Goodbye, Francis. Discover some new countries and bring me back some Spanish treasure!'

In 1588, the Spanish king sent a huge fleet of ships to attack England. It was called 'the Spanish Armada'. Elizabeth gave a famous speech to inspire her army.

'My loving people! I know I have the body of a weak woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king. I will live or die amongst you all, but I know we shall have a famous victory!'

Spain lost the battle.

Elizabeth's cousin, Mary, was Queen of Scotland. Mary had to run away from Scotland and she asked Elizabeth to protect her.

'Please protect me, Elizabeth!'

Elizabeth was afraid that Mary wanted to become Queen of England. She locked Mary up. Nineteen years later she ordered Mary's execution.

'Off with her head!'

Elizabeth was queen for 45 years. It was a golden age for England. She died in 1603, aged 70, and James I, Mary's son, became king.

'Queen Elizabeth is dead. Long live King James!'

British tales



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