

Elizabethan era

The **Elizabethan era** is the epoch in the Tudor period of the history of England during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I (1558–1603). Historians often depict it as the golden age in English history. The symbol of Britannia (a female personification of Great Britain) was first used in 1572, and often thereafter, to mark the Elizabethan age as a renaissance that inspired national pride through classical ideals, international expansion, and naval triumph over the Spanish – at the time, a rival kingdom much hated by the people of the land. In terms of the entire century, the historian John Guy (1988) argues that "England was economically healthier, more expansive, and more optimistic under the Tudors" than at any time in a thousand years.^[1]

This "golden age"^[2] represented the apogee of the English Renaissance and saw the flowering of poetry, music and literature. The era is most famous for theatre, as William Shakespeare and many others composed plays that broke free of England's past style of theatre. It was an age of exploration and expansion abroad, while back at home, the Protestant Reformation became more acceptable to the people, most certainly after the Spanish Armada was repulsed. It was also the end of the period when England was a separate realm before its royal union with Scotland.

The Elizabethan Age contrasts sharply with the previous and following reigns. It was a brief period of internal peace between the English Reformation and the religious battles between Protestants and Catholics and then the political battles between parliament and the monarchy that engulfed the remainder of the seventeenth century. The Protestant/Catholic divide was settled, for a time, by the Elizabethan Religious Settlement, and parliament was not yet strong enough to challenge royal absolutism.

England was also well-off compared to the other nations of Europe. The Italian Renaissance had come to an end under the weight of Spanish domination of the peninsula. France was embroiled in its own religious battles that were (temporarily) settled in 1598 by a policy of tolerating Protestantism with the Edict of Nantes. In part because of this, but also because the English had been expelled from their last outposts on the continent by Spain's tercios, the centuries-long conflict between France and England was largely suspended for most of Elizabeth's reign.

The one great rival was Spain, with whom England clashed both in Europe and the Americas in skirmishes that exploded into the Anglo-Spanish War of 1585–1604. An attempt by Philip II of Spain to invade England with the Spanish Armada in 1588 was famously defeated, but the tide of war turned against England with an unsuccessful expedition to Portugal and the Azores, the Drake-Norris Expedition of 1589. Thereafter, Spain provided some support for Irish Catholics in a debilitating rebellion against English rule, and Spanish naval and land forces inflicted a series of reversals against English offensives. This drained both the English Exchequer and economy that had been so

carefully restored under Elizabeth's prudent guidance. English commercial and territorial expansion would be limited until the signing of the Treaty of London the year following Elizabeth's death.

England during this period had a centralised, well-organised, and effective government, largely a result of the reforms of Henry VII and Henry VIII, as well as Elizabeth's harsh punishments for any dissenters. Economically, the country began to benefit greatly from the new era of trans-Atlantic trade, persistent theft of Spanish treasure, and the African slave trade.

OMER R. MARZAH

Elizabethan Era



The Elizabethan Era.

The English Elizabethan Era is one of the most fascinating periods in the History of England. The Elizabethan Era is named after the greatest Queens of England - Queen Elizabeth I. The Elizabethan Era is not only famous for the Virgin Queen but also for the era itself - Great Explorers, such as Sir Francis Drake and Walter Raleigh. The era of the very first Theatres in England - William Shakespeare, the globe Theatre and Christopher Marlowe!

Elizabeth 1st Queen of England

The people of the era - the Famous Figures who featured in the history of this era such as the Queen's love Robert Dudley, the sinister Dr. John Dee, the intrigues of the spy-master Sir Francis Walsingham and the Queen's chief advisor Sir William Cecil (Lord Burghley). Religion - Politics - Executions - Crime and Punishment all played their part in the Elizabethan era. And so did the commoners.

Click here if you need detailed facts and information about Medieval Times and Life of the Middle Ages or additional info about The Tudors and Henry VIII the Globe Theatre or William Shakespeare

The Golden Age of the Elizabethan Era

What was their life like? Entertainment, clothes, food, drink, sports, music, education, language, medicine and marriage customs and culture of the era. Facts and information about all of these subjects and the history of the era are covered as detailed in the sections below. The Elizabethan Era Sitemap provides full details of all of the information and facts provided about the fascinating subject of the Elizabethan Era.

England during the Elizabethan Era

The section and era covering Elizabethan England provides the History, Facts and Information about the Religion, Laws, Tortures and Punishments including executions in the Elizabethan Era.

- Crimes and Punishments
- Executions
- Tortures
- Religion
- Politics, spies and intrigue
- The Law - the Poor Law

- The Tower of London

Queen Elizabeth I and the Elizabethan era

The section and Queen Elizabeth I provides the History, Facts and Information about the life of Queen Elizabeth. The Biography and Timeline of Queen Elizabeth covers her family, her childhood, the scandals and danger that surrounded her as a young Princess and her succession to the throne of England and the commencement of the Elizabethan era. The court, her favorites and the dangerous politics of the Elizabethan era.

Elizabethan Times and Famous Elizabethans

The section and era covering Elizabethan Times provides the History, Facts and Information about the life and times of the famous people who lived during the Elizabethan Era. The Famous Elizabethan Women of the era and the famous men. There are Biographies, Pictures and Timelines about the life of famous Explorers, Courtiers, Politicians, Dramatists and Poets who lived during the Elizabethan era.

- Sir Francis Drake
- Sir Walter Raleigh
- Mary Queen of Scots
- Sir Francis Walsingham
- William Shakespeare
- Christopher Marlowe
- John Dee
- Lord Robert Dudley
- And many more.

Elizabethan Age

The section and era covering the Elizabethan Age provides the History, Facts and Information about Elizabethan Weapons and the English Navy. It also provides facts and information about Elizabethan architecture including the Elizabethan mansions, houses and the theatre.

- Elizabethan Timeline
- War
- Weapons
- The Spanish Armada
- The Navy
- Explorers

Elizabethan Life

The section and era covering Elizabethan Life provides the History, Facts and Information about the daily life of the Elizabethans. The life of men and women during the Elizabethan era - occupations, entertainment, customs, weddings, marriages and Family life. The Doctors, Medicines, Cures and Illnesses which were endured by the people who lived during the Elizabethan era.

- Daily life and Family Life
- Village Life
- Language and Vocabulary - and an Elizabethan Dictionary
- Elizabethan Insults.
- Education - Schools and Universities
- Elizabethan Occupations and jobs - the Commoners
- Medicine and Illnesses
- Marriages and Weddings
- Elizabethan Customs, Festivals, Masks and Entertainment

Elizabethan Online Dictionary

This section covers Elizabethan words, letters, language, education together with an Elizabethan Online Dictionary to help with the translation of literature including the famous play of William Shakespeare. The schools and Universities of the Renaissance era. On a lighter note there is even a dictionary of insults used during the Elizabethan Era!

Elizabethan Period

The section and era covering the Elizabethan Period provides the History, Facts and Information about Science and Technology, Inventions, Astrology, Superstitions, Elizabethan Ghosts and Witchcraft and Witches during the Elizabethan era.

- Science and Technology
- Inventions
- Astrology - Dr. Dee
- Superstitions
- Elizabethan Ghosts
- Witchcraft and Witches

Elizabethan Clothing

This comprehensive section and era covering the Elizabethan Period provides the History, Facts and Information about Elizabethan Clothing covers all aspects of Renaissance clothes and Fashion. Upper Class Fashion for men and women. Hair styles, Make-up, Jewellery and even Elizabethan Wedding Dress. Read how the

Elizabethan Sumptuary Laws dictated what Elizabethans were allowed to wear. And the Meaning of Colors - symbolic, religious and biblical. The Dyes, Materials and Fabrics used in Elizabethan clothes worn during the Elizabethan era.

Elizabethan Theatre

Another comprehensive section covering Elizabethan Theatre providing a Timeline and the History, Facts and Information about the emergence of the Renaissance Theatre. Inn-yards, amphitheatres and playhouses. Facts and information about the Globe Theatre and all of the other famous London theatres of the Elizabethan era. Audiences, Plays and Playwrights, Actors and costumes. The Theatre Companies and Troupes who performed during the Elizabethan era

- Elizabethan Theatre History
- Elizabethan Theatre Timeline
- Elizabethan Theatres in London including the Globe
- Audiences
- Plays and Playwrights
- Actors and costumes
- Theatre Companies and Troupes
- William Shakespeare

Elizabethan Sports

The section and era covering Elizabethan Sports provides the History, Facts and Information about the sports and games played during the Elizabethan era. The subjects covered include Fencing, Tournaments, Leisure and Entertainment, Games, Gaming and Gambling, Bear & Bull Baiting, Hunting and Hawking during the Elizabethan era - the Elizabethans knew how to have fun.

- Elizabethan Sports
- Fencing
- Tournaments
- Leisure and Entertainment
- Games
- Gaming and Gambling
- Bear & Bull Baiting

Elizabethan Music

The section and era covering Elizabethan Music provides the History, Facts and Information about Renaissance Music, Musical Instruments, Dance, Composers and Musicians and the Masques enjoyed during the Elizabethan era.

- Music
- Musical Instruments
- Dance

- Composers
- Masks
- Festivals

Elizabethan Food

The section and era covering Elizabethan England provides the History, Facts and Information about the Food and Drink consumed during the Renaissance Era. The Food and Drink, Feasts and Banquets and Peasant Foods eaten by the people during the era.

Old Elizabethan Recipes

The section and era covering Elizabethan Recipes provides a fascinating insight into Renaissance cooking. The names of the old Renaissance recipes say it all. Pig Pie, Baked Swan and Goose Pudding. The Old Elizabethan Dessert recipes are more to our taste!

The Spanish Armada

This detailed account of the events leading up to and the defeat of the 'Invincible Armada. The roles played by the great seamen of the era including Drake, Raleigh, Gilbert and Hawkins. These and other brave men were responsible for ensuring that the Golden Age of the Elizabethan era continued.

The Elizabethan Era

Each section of this Elizabethan Era website addresses all topics and provides interesting facts and information about these great monuments to bygone times. The Sitemap provides full details of all of the information and facts provided about the fascinating subject of the Elizabethan Era.

Elizabethan theatre and William Shakespeare

Elizabethan Era and Theatre

The Elizabethan Era is the period associated with the reign of Queen Elizabeth I (1558–1603) and is often considered to be a golden age in English history. It was the height of the English Renaissance, and saw the flowering of English literature and poetry. This was also the time during which Elizabethan theatre flourished and William Shakespeare, among others, composed plays that broke away from England's past style of plays and theatre. It was an age of expansion and exploration abroad, while at home the Protestant Reformation became entrenched in the national mindset. European wars brought an influx of continental refugees into England, exposing the Englishman to new cultures. In trade, might, and art, England established an envious preeminence. At this time, London was the heart of England, reflecting all the vibrant qualities of the Elizabethan Age. This atmosphere made London a leading center of culture as well as commerce. Its dramatists and poets were among the leading literary artists of the day. Theatre had an unsavory reputation. London authorities refused to allow plays within the city, so theatres opened across the Thames in Southwark, outside the authority of the city administration. In this heady environment, Shakespeare lived and wrote. One of the most successful was also Christopher Marlowe, who many contemporaries considered Shakespeare's superior. Marlowe's career, however, was cut short at a comparatively young age when he died in a tavern fight in Deptford, the victim of a knife in the eye.

The first proper theatre as we know it was the Theatre, built at Shoreditch in 1576. Before this time plays were performed in the courtyard of inns, or sometimes, in the houses of noblemen. After the Theatre, further open air playhouses opened in the London area, including the Rose (1587), and the Hope (1613). The most famous playhouse was the Globe (1599) built by the company in which Shakespeare had a stake. Shakespeare's group was called Lord Chamberlains Men. The Globe was only in use until 1613, when a canon fired during a performance of *Henry VIII* caught the roof on fire and the building burned to the ground. The site of the theatre was rediscovered in the 20th century and a reconstruction built near the spot.

There were 2 kinds of play houses – private (were smaller roofed houses in which the wealthier audience go to watch plays) and public houses. Public theatre was usually round or square or octagonal wooden structure. It could accommodate between 2000 – 5000 people. Sitting in audience depended on the wealth on social status, each person had to pay 1 penny. Richer people usually paid more, and then they were seated in galleries, so they were protected from dust and dirt. Poorer people were called the groundlings, they stood in the yard, surrounding the stage. Public theatre can be called outdoor and private called indoor theatre. Both of them had yards for groundlings. Tiring house is place where actors change clothes and wait for their performance. The stage was roofed, it was called the heavens and it was supported by columns. Flying was special effect used – it used cranes

and ropes to make flying possible. In ground were special makers for fire, smoke and so on. There were usually 2 doors, which represented different locations – France, England. Private theatres were smaller but they did show even in winter. First private theatre was called Black friars. By time of Shakespeare actors had achieved satisfactory level of financial and social stability. Most of troops worked in sharing plan which means that risks and profits were shared. Troops were democratic and self-governing. Some of them own theatre building and they were known as house holders. When it was necessary they hired so called hirelings for more salary.

Theatre performances were held in the afternoon, because, of course, there was no artificial lighting. Women attended plays, though often the prosperous woman would wear a mask to disguise her identity. Further, no women performed in the plays. Female roles were generally performed by young boys.

William Shakespeare 1564 – 1616

William Shakespeare was an English poet and playwright, now widely regarded as the greatest writer in the English language and the world's prominent dramatist. He is often called England's national poet and the "Bard of Avon" (or simply "The Bard"). His surviving works consist of 38 plays, 154 sonnets, two long narrative poems, and several other poems. His plays have been translated into every major living language and are performed more often than those of any other playwright.

William Shakespeare was the son of John Shakespeare, and Mary Arden. He was born in Stratford-upon-Avon and baptised on 26 April 1564. His unknown birthday is traditionally observed on 23 April, St George's Day. This date, which can be traced back to an eighteenth-century scholar's mistake, has proved appealing because Shakespeare died on 23 April 1616. He was the third child of eight and the eldest surviving son. Shakespeare was educated at the King's New School in Stratford, and the school provided him an intensive education in Latin grammar and the classics.

At the age of 18, Shakespeare married the 26-year-old Anne Hathaway. Six months after the marriage, she gave birth to a daughter, Susanna, who was baptised on 26 May 1583. Twins, son Hamnet and daughter Judith, followed almost two years later and were baptised on 2 February 1585. Hamnet died of unknown causes at the age of 11 and was buried on 11 August 1596.

It is not known exactly when Shakespeare began writing, but contemporary allusions and records of performances show that several of his plays were on the London stage by 1592. Biographers suggest that his career may have begun any time from the mid-1580s. From 1594, Shakespeare's plays were performed only by the Lord Chamberlain's Men, a company owned by a group of players, including Shakespeare, that soon became the leading playing company in London. After the death of Queen Elizabeth in 1603, the company was awarded a royal patent by the new king, James I, and changed its name to

the King's Men. In 1599, a partnership of company members built their own theatre on the south bank of the Thames, which they called the Globe. In 1608, the partnership also took over the Blackfriars indoor theatre. Records of Shakespeare's property purchases and investments indicate that the company made him a wealthy man. Shakespeare continued to act in his own and other plays after his success as a playwright. Tradition said that Shakespeare played the ghost of Hamlet's father and later also played Adam in *As You Like It* and the Chorus in *Henry V*. After 1606–7, Shakespeare wrote fewer plays, and none are attributed to him after 1613. His last three plays were collaborations, probably with John Fletcher, who succeeded him as the house playwright for the King's Men.

Shakespeare retired to Stratford some years before his death and continued to visit London. He died on 23 April 1616, and was survived by his wife and two daughters.

PLAYS

Scholars have often noted four periods in Shakespeare's writing career. Until the mid-1590s, he wrote mainly comedies influenced by Roman and Italian models and history plays in the popular chronicle tradition. His second period began in about 1595 with the tragedy *Romeo and Juliet* and ended with the tragedy of *Julius Caesar* in 1599. During this time, he wrote what are considered his greatest comedies and histories. From about 1600 to about 1608, is his "tragic period", Shakespeare wrote mostly tragedies, and from about 1608 to 1613, mainly tragicomedies, also called romances.

The first recorded works of Shakespeare are *Richard III* and the three parts of *Henry VI*, written in the early 1590s during a vogue for historical drama. His first histories, dramatise the destructive results of weak or corrupt rule and have been interpreted as a justification for the origins of the Tudor dynasty. Their composition was influenced by the works of other Elizabethan dramatists, especially Thomas Kyd and Christopher Marlowe, by the traditions of medieval drama, and by the plays of Seneca.

Shakespeare's early classical and Italianate comedies, containing tight double plots and precise comic sequences, give way in the mid-1590s to the romantic atmosphere of his greatest comedies. After the lyrical *Richard II*, written almost entirely in verse, Shakespeare introduced prose comedy into the histories of the late 1590s, *Henry IV* and *Henry V*. His characters become more complex and tender as he switches deftly between comic and serious scenes, prose and poetry, and achieves the narrative variety of his mature work. This period begins and ends with two tragedies: *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Julius Caesar* - which introduced a new kind of drama.

Shakespeare's so-called "tragic period" lasted from about 1600 to 1608, though he also wrote the so-called "problem plays" *Measure for Measure*, *Troilus and Cressida*, and *All's Well That Ends Well* during this time and had written tragedies before. Many critics believe that Shakespeare's greatest tragedies represent the peak of his art. The plots of Shakespeare's tragedies often hinge on such fatal errors or flaws, which overturn order and

destroy the hero and those he loves. His last major tragedies, *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Coriolanus*, contain some of Shakespeare's finest poetry and were considered his most successful tragedies by the poet and critic T. S. Eliot

In his final period, Shakespeare turned to romance or tragicomedy and completed three more major plays: *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*. Less bleak than the tragedies, these four plays are graver in tone than the comedies of the 1590s, but they end with reconciliation and the forgiveness of potentially tragic errors. Some commentators have seen this change in mood as evidence of a more serene view of life on Shakespeare's part, but it may merely reflect the theatrical fashion of the day.

Shakespeare collaborated on two further surviving plays, *Henry VIII* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, probably with John Fletcher.

General description of Shakespeare's plays

1. Early point of effect
2. several lines of action which might seem independent at the beginning but later they merge (splynú) together, we speak about unity in diversity, best example is King Lear
3. there is a large number of & variety of incidents, mixed emotions as tears & laughter, violence
4. ideas of time & space are used freely, S doesn't stick in classical unity of time & space, audience has feeling of ongoing action or life behind the scene
5. large number of characters – 30 is quite common, they represent all social levels, they can be poor or rich but they are still individual
6. language also differs from play to play – can be elegant or witty even obscene & its function is to enhance character & his or her actions
7. subjects are taken from different sources – as mythology, history, legends, fiction

POEMS

In 1593 and 1594, when the theatres were closed because of plague, Shakespeare published two narrative poems on erotic themes, *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*. He dedicated them to Henry Wriothesley, earl of Southampton. Influenced by Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the poems show the guilt and moral confusion that result from uncontrolled lust. Both proved popular and were often reprinted during Shakespeare's lifetime. A third narrative poem, *A Lover's Complaint*, was printed in the first edition of the *Sonnets* in 1609.

SONNETS

Published in 1609, the *Sonnets* were the last of Shakespeare's non-dramatic works to be printed. Evidence suggests that Shakespeare wrote sonnets throughout his career for a

private readership. He seems to have planned two contrasting series: one about uncontrollable lust for a married woman of dark complexion (the "dark lady"), and one about pure love for a fair young man (the "fair youth"). It remains unclear if these figures represent real individuals, or if the authorial "I" who addresses them represents The 1609 edition was dedicated to a "Mr. W.H.", credited as "the only begetter" of the poems. It is not known whether this was written by Shakespeare himself or by the publisher, nor is it known who Mr. W.H. was. Critics praise the *Sonnets* as a profound meditation on the nature of love, sexual passion, procreation, death, and time.

STYLE

Shakespeare's first plays were written in the conventional style of the day. He wrote them in a stylised language that does not always spring naturally from the needs of the characters or the drama. The poetry depends on extended, sometimes elaborate metaphors and conceits, and the language is often rhetorical—written for actors to declaim rather than speak. Later on Shakespeare began to adapt traditional style to his own purposes, he combined traditional and free style. In the mid-1590s, Shakespeare had begun to write a more natural poetry. He increasingly tuned his metaphors and images to the needs of the drama itself

Shakespeare's standard poetic form was blank verse composed in iambic pentameter. In practice, this meant that his verse was usually unrhymed and consisted of ten syllables to a line, spoken with a stress on every second syllable. The blank verse of his early plays is quite different from that of his later ones. It is often beautiful, but its sentences tend to start, pause, and finish at the end of lines, with the risk of monotony. Once Shakespeare mastered traditional blank verse, he began to interrupt and vary its flow. This technique releases the new power and flexibility of the poetry. Shakespeare varied his poetic style further, particularly in the more emotional passages of the late tragedies. His style was "more concentrated, rapid, varied, and, in construction, less regular, not seldom twisted or elliptical". In the last part of his career, Shakespeare adopted many techniques to achieve these effects. These included run-on lines, irregular pauses and stops, and extreme variations in sentence structure and length. As Shakespeare's mastery grew, he gave his characters clearer and more varied motivations and distinctive patterns of speech. He preserved aspects of his earlier style in the later plays. In his late romances, he deliberately returned to a more artificial style, which emphasised the illusion of theatre.

INFLUENCE

Shakespeare's work has made a lasting impression on later theatre and literature. He expanded the dramatic potential of characterisation, plot, language, and genre. Until *Romeo and Juliet*, romance had not been viewed as a worthy topic for tragedy.

Soliloquies had been used mainly to convey information about characters or events, but Shakespeare used them to explore characters' minds. His work heavily influenced later poetry. The Romantic poets attempted to revive Shakespearean verse drama, though with little success.

Shakespeare influenced novelists such as Thomas Hardy, William Faulkner, Charles Dickens and American novelist Herman Melville. In Shakespeare's day, English grammar and spelling were less standardised than they are now, and his use of language helped shape modern English.

OMER R. MARZAH