

# Elizabethan Age and its characteristics

The time span during which Queen Elizabeth ruled England is considered as Elizabethan Age in England. She ruled England from 1558-1603. She succeeded Queen Mary, her elder sister and was the last ruler of England to come from the Tudor Dynasty. Her regime, barring few hiccups, was peaceful and prosperous to a large extent. Queen Elizabeth's personal interest in Arts and literature led to the flowering of it in a variety of forms. That's why scholars have considered the Elizabethan period as the golden period in the history of England.

## *Major characteristics of the period:*

- A) Queen Elizabeth was a wise and sagacious ruler who followed the policy of balance and moderation. She promoted religious tolerance and granted people religious freedom. Queen Elizabeth via Elizabeth settlement (1558) tried to find the midway between roman Catholicism and radical Protestantism and made Anglican church (or church of England) a reality.
- B) Her peaceful and prosperous regime led to the upsurge of patriotism for the country. Queen Elizabeth, a lady of sterling qualities, was ardently admired and turned muse for a lot of poets of the period.
- C) The period saw the expansion of geographical horizons, innovation and discovery. Renaissance knocked on the door of England during the queen's period. New knowledge was pouring in from all directions. The great voyagers Hawkins, Raleigh and Drake brought home both intellectual and material treasures from the east and the west. Pinto remarks that by the end of the sixteenth century, "the nation was conscious of the fact

that it was playing a memorable and heroic part in the great adventure of exploring the New World, discovered in the East and the West.”

- D) Literature saw unprecedented growth in the period. The spirit of action and exploration fired the imagination of the writers/ poets that paved the way for the dramatic growth of literature, particularly drama and poetry.

## Important concepts/events/terms

**Renaissance:** it was an intellectual and cultural movement in Europe approximately between 14<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> c. the period was characterized by the surge of interest in the revival of classical learning and the concept of humanism. Renaissance began in Venice (Italy) in the fourteenth century and gradually expanded to other parts of Western Europe. The renaissance witnessed the discovery of exploration of new continents, developments in astronomy and commerce and decline in feudal system. Humanism was imitated by secular men of letters who were instrumental in the revival of classical learning. In place of the medieval ideal of a life of penance as the highest and noblest form of human activity, the humanist looked to the struggle of creation and the attempt to exert mastery over nature. Humanists attempted to break free from the orthodoxy of religion and promoted free inquiry and criticism to realize the immensity of human possibilities. Some of the notable renaissance figures were Petrarch, Michaelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Galileo, Copernicus and so forth.

**Classical learning refers to the study of Latin and ancient Greek language and ancient knowledge produced in those languages.**

Renaissance in England. Renaissance reached England quite late roughly around the period of Queen Elizabeth from mid-fifteenth century to early 17<sup>th</sup> century. Renaissance style and ideas, however, were slow to penetrate England, and the Elizabethan era in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century is usually regarded as the height of the English renaissance. The

dominant art forms of English renaissance were literature and music. Major renaissance figures in England were Spenser, Francis Bacon, William Shakespeare, John Donne, Marlowe, Sir Philip Sydney to name a few.

Defeat of Spanish Armada: King Philip of Spain, ex co monarch of England planned a massive attack on England with his fleet of 130 ships, which was called Spanish armada. English naval force defeated this armada under the command of Lord Charles Howard and Sir Francis Drake in 1588. However, a treaty of peace between England and Spain was not signed until 1604. The defeat of invincible Spanish armada made England a world class power in Europe.