

Knowledge Organiser – Early Elizabethan England 1558-88.

Part 2 – Queen, government and religion 1558-69 : Legitimacy, Gender and Marriage

1. When Elizabeth became queen, she had to find a way of establishing her authority as a new female, **Protestant** monarch.

Legitimacy – Elizabeth's **legitimacy** was in doubt, as the Pope, and therefore committed **Roman Catholics**, refused to accept the marriage of her parents **Henry VIII** and **Anne Boleyn**. The Pope had first refused to accept Henry's divorce from **Catherine of Aragon**. This meant that Elizabeth was not seen as **legitimate**, as her parents' marriage was not recognised. Henry himself had even excluded Elizabeth from the line of **succession** when Anne Boleyn was executed for treason, although he later reversed this decision.

Gender – People thought it was unnatural for a woman to rule in the 16th century. They were seen as physically, mentally and emotionally incapable of ruling, and could not lead their armies into battle, which monarchs were expected to do. Christianity also taught that women should be under the authority of men. The turmoil during **Mary I's** reign seemed proof that women could not rule (this included religious persecution of Protestants and an unsuccessful war with France).

Marriage – People expected Elizabeth to marry, as they disapproved of the idea of a '**queen regnant**'. Elizabeth needed an **heir**, as if she died without one the throne would be vacant and it could lead to civil war. A potential husband could also fulfil the military role of a monarch. However, if she married a Catholic it would anger Protestants, and if she married a Protestant it would anger Catholics. A foreign prince may put his own country first, or involve England in costly wars, and a husband would reduce Elizabeth's power to rule. Elizabeth therefore remained unmarried, and became known as the 'Virgin Queen', married only to England. She turned down offers of marriage from **Philip II** of Spain (who had been married to Mary I), King Eric of Sweden and Duke of Alencon, heir to the French throne.

Character and Strength – Elizabeth was confident and charismatic, allowing her to win over her subjects and command support in Parliament. She had an excellent grasp of politics, understood the dangerous world it could be (having been held in the Tower herself on suspicion of treason) and recognised the ambitions of her subjects and especially her courtiers, who wanted power and influence. Elizabeth was well educated, and could speak Latin, Greek, French and Italian. However, people feared Elizabeth's bad temper, and she often took a long time to make important decisions.

Key Events

2.	1553 – Henry grants himself a divorce (known as the annulment) from Catherine of Aragon and marries Anne Boleyn.
3.	1536 – Anne Boleyn is executed for treason, and Elizabeth is removed from the line of succession (this was later reversed).

Key Individuals

4.	The Pope – The head of the Roman Catholic Church.
5.	Henry VIII – Elizabeth's father.
6.	Catherine of Aragon – Henry's first wife, who he 'divorced' when he set up the Church of England in 1533. The Pope refused to accept it.
7.	Anne Boleyn – Henry's second wife, and Elizabeth's mother. The Pope refused to accept their marriage.
8.	Mary I – Elizabeth's half sister and daughter of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon, who ruled from 1553-58.
9.	Philip II – King of Spain, who had been married to Mary I before her death in 1558.

Key Words

10.	Legitimacy	The right to lawfully rule as monarch, by being legitimate.
11.	Legitimate	Being born in wedlock, when the child's parents are married.
12.	Succession	The issue of who is going to be the next monarch.
12.	Heir	The person who will be the next monarch.
14.	Queen Regnant	A queen who rules in her own right.
15.	Roman Catholics	Christians who follow the authority of the Pope and the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church.
16.	Protestants	Christians who no longer accepted the authority of the Pope and the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church.