

1.2 Young Elizabeth: what was she like?

In 1533, King Henry's second wife, Anne Boleyn, announced she was pregnant. The king desperately wanted a son who could be king after him. He already had one daughter, Mary, but wanted a son because he worried that a woman would never be clever or strong enough to run a country. On 7 September 1533, Princess Elizabeth Tudor was born. Henry was very disappointed. But he soon came to realise Elizabeth had many strengths.

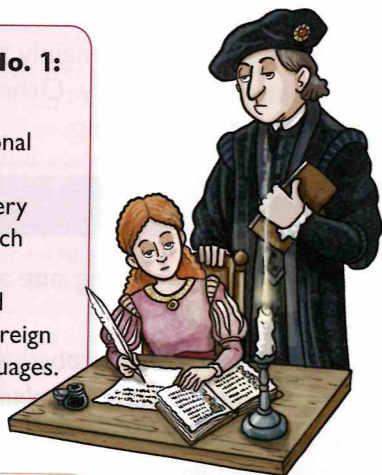
Elizabeth was two years old when her mother was executed. She never lived with her father, who had four wives after Anne, but was sent to live with her half-sister, Mary. The girls had three houses: Hatfield and Eltham, near London, and Hunsdon House in Hertfordshire. When they travelled between each house, they would fight over who would walk at the front of the procession. It doesn't appear to have been an easy life for young Elizabeth: a dead mother, a tough

father, an awkward half-sister and lots of stepmothers. And when her half-brother Edward was born in 1537, it didn't look like she would ever be queen!

But despite some difficulties in her life, Princess Elizabeth had one major factor in her favour – she was clever. By the time she was sixteen, she could speak five languages – English, French, Italian, Greek and Latin. So what was the secret of her success? Study the cartoons and the sources carefully.

Secret of her success No. 1: She enjoyed learning

Elizabeth had her own personal tutors and enjoyed working hard at her lessons. It was very fashionable at the time for rich young women to be highly educated and Elizabeth loved writing poems, translating foreign books and learning new languages.



Secret of her success No. 3: She was lonely

Elizabeth didn't really have any close friends. But reading books and learning new skills meant that she could talk about these things with people. People weren't going to voice their real opinions about the country to the king's daughter, but they might be honest about their views on books, music and horses.



Secret of her success No. 2: She got attention because she was clever

King Henry was disappointed when Elizabeth was born but soon grew to love spending time with his clever daughter. When Henry visited Elizabeth, her half-sister was probably very jealous. Mary was often kept away in a separate room while the king and his youngest daughter chatted, swapped gifts and sang together.



Secret of her success No. 4: There wasn't much else to do

There was no television, radio or Internet in Tudor times. Books, music and horse riding provided entertainment for her – and she seemed to be very good at many of the things she tried.



Objectives

- Identify why Princess Elizabeth was such an able student.
- Examine the circumstances in which she became queen.

Key Words infer

▼ **A** Elizabeth had a very full timetable when she was being taught by one of her tutors.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Bible study	Bible study	Bible study	Bible study	Bible study
Book translation: Greek to English	Book translation: English to Greek	Book translation: Latin to English	Book translation: English to Latin	Philosophy
Lunchtime - Food - Walking - Riding - Games				
French conversation	Italian conversation	Latin conversation	English conversation	Greek conversation
Philosophy	Book translation: Latin to English	Book translation: English to Latin	Book translation: Greek to English	Book translation: English to Greek

Elizabeth was 13 in 1547 when her father died and her younger half-brother, Edward, became king (aged 9). Although she was quite close to Edward, many people suspected she might be plotting against him during his short reign (he died aged 15, in 1533). However, nothing could ever be proved against her.

When her older half-sister, Mary, became queen in 1553, Elizabeth was again suspected of plotting against the monarch – and again nothing could be proved. To be on the safe side, Mary kept Elizabeth like a prisoner at various country houses.

Five years later, in 1558, Elizabeth received word that her sister, Queen Mary, was dead. Aged 25, Elizabeth was now Queen of England.

▼ **SOURCE B** In this portrait, painted by the official royal painter in 1546, Elizabeth was aged 13.



▼ **SOURCE C** Adapted from a letter written by one of her tutors, Robert Ascham, to a friend of his. Ascham was Elizabeth's tutor between 1548 and 1550.

'She is most eager. Her mind has no womanly weakness; her perseverance is equal to that of a man and she has a long memory. She talks French and Italian as well as English, and has often talked to me in Latin and Greek. She has beautiful handwriting and is a skilful musician.'

Over to You

- 1 What difficulties did Elizabeth face in her early life?
- 2 Look carefully at Elizabeth's timetable (A) on this page.
 - a Explain why you think the following subjects take up so much of Elizabeth's study time:
 - Bible study
 - Conversation
 - Learning and translating foreign languages.
 - b Think of three subjects that you study at school that are not on Elizabeth's timetable. Why do you think it is important that you study them?
- 3 Imagine you are one of Princess Elizabeth's tutors. Write a summary for King Henry about his daughter's education. It should include details about:
 - a her lessons
 - b her strengths
 - c her attitude towards learning.

Source Analysis

- 1 Look at Source B. Describe the painting in detail.
- 2 Give two things you can infer from Source B about Princess Elizabeth.