

Monarch → divine right to rule, absolute authority

The court → noblemen, Elizabeth's advisers and friends

Privy Council → nobles chosen by Elizabeth to govern, oversaw all other groups

Parliament → Lords + Commons, advised Elizabeth's government

Justices of the Peace → large landowners who managed local law and order

Lord Lieutenants → noblemen who governed counties & local militia



- Self-confident
- Indecisive
- Protestant
- Unmarried
- 'Virgin Queen'

Patronage = Elizabeth granted land, jobs and titles to people in her court in exchange for loyalty

Robert Dudley

- Elizabeth's favourite in early years
- Led disastrous Protestant military campaign in the Netherlands
- Later banished from court due to scandalous affairs

William Cecil

- Longest-serving minister
- Lord Treasurer
- Oversaw execution of Mary Queen of Scots
- Advised during war with Spain and defeat of the Spanish Armada
- Uncovered the Ridolfi Plot

Contemporary belief that women could not rule well

Increasing poverty due to high taxation and poor harvests

Problems facing Elizabeth I

The Crown was £300,000 in debt

Many (especially Catholics) thought she was illegitimate

Ongoing war with France

Francis Walsingham

- Ran network of spies (agent provocateurs) who uncovered Throckmorton and Babington plots
- Member of Parliament - could persuade them to pass laws

1. ELIZABETH'S COURT AND PARLIAMENT



Relations with Parliament

- Parliament could pass laws and criticise/pressure monarch
- Privy councilors tasked with persuading MPs to pass Elizabeth's laws - often used threats and bribery
- Elizabeth didn't call Parliament often and most MPs just wanted to return to their own business
- MPs punished for challenging monarch

Essex's Rebellion 1601

- Essex was banished from Elizabeth's court and failed to put down a rebellion in Ireland
- Needed to challenge Cecil's power (main rival in court)
- Gathered 300 supporters at Essex House and imprisoned the Lord Chancellor
- Tried to gather more support in London but overestimated how many would support him - was arrested and sent to the Tower



Good military successes

No rivals to the throne

Walsingham died (1590) and Cecil died (1598)

Elizabeth's authority at end of reign

'New men' in court quarreled with established advisers

Kept having to rely on Parliament to raise taxes for her

Bad harvests and rising taxation caused dissatisfaction

