



Tip two

Compromise over religion... but be tough with extremists.

When Elizabeth became Queen, England was bitterly divided over religion. Religious war was a real possibility. Protestant and Catholic EXTREMISTS both posed a threat to Elizabeth.

THE PROBLEM

Protestant extremists

By 1558 more than half the people in England were Protestant. Some of them were extremists called Puritans. They wanted Elizabeth to wipe out all traces of the country's Catholic past. Some even wanted her to persecute Catholics in the same way that Mary had persecuted Protestants. Their aim was to get rid of Catholicism in England once and for all.

Catholic extremists

There were still many Catholics in England. Their beliefs had not changed just because they had a new queen. They saw the Mass as the only way to true salvation. The Pope sent priests to England to hold secret Masses and to try to keep Catholicism alive in England. These priests were often given special hiding places in the homes of rich Catholics. Many people thought they spied for Catholic countries. Catholic extremists wanted to get rid of Elizabeth and place a Catholic monarch on the throne.

Elizabeth

Elizabeth was a moderate Protestant. She realised that there could not be two competing religions in the same country. She also wanted to heal the divisions and hatred of the past. She wanted greater tolerance. Elizabeth wanted a Church everybody could belong to.

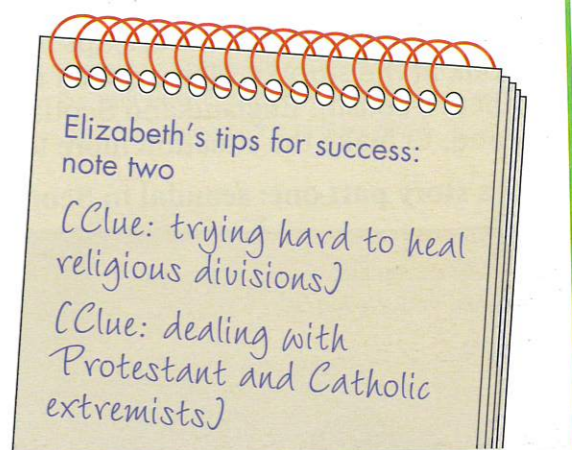
ACTIVITY

1 Note down two ways in which the method Elizabeth used to handle religious problems made her seem successful.

EXTRA

2 Look again at the picture on pages 32-33, and what you wrote for Question 5 on page 41. Now draw or describe who was winning the tug of war:

- a) when Mary was Queen
- b) when Elizabeth was Queen.



ELIZABETH'S SOLUTION

What she did about Protestant extremists

Elizabeth showed the Protestant extremists that she was not going to be pushed around. When a book was written that she did not agree with, she had the author's hand cut off.



What she did about the Church

Elizabeth took a 'middle road'. She made Protestantism the official religion in England. She brought back the changes made in Edward's reign – including the new Prayer Book, the Bible in English and simpler churches – and priests were again allowed to marry. However, she refused to give way to extreme Protestant ideas. She did not persecute ordinary Catholics, but she did fine them for not attending church. She kept some aspects of the old Catholic Church. For example, she kept bishops and cathedrals, allowed churches to continue using crosses and candles, and let the priests wear special VESTMENTS.

The result

Her policy of tolerance worked. More and more people moved towards her type of Protestant Church, and her tough treatment of extremists prevented ideas spreading.

What she did about Catholic extremists

Elizabeth sent the same message to the Catholic extremists as she did to Protestant extremists. When a Catholic priest, Edmund Campion, tried to convert people to Catholicism he was arrested, tortured and hanged. When some Catholics plotted to replace her she dealt ruthlessly with the rebellion.

