

The National Archives
Education Service

Elizabethan Propaganda

How did England try
to show Spain planned
to invade in 1588?

Court of King's Bench
Coram Rege Rolls 1589
(KB27/1309/2)

Introduction

Lesson at a Glance

Suitable For: KS3

Time Period:

Early Modern 1485-1750

Curriculum Link:

The development of Church, state and society in Britain 1509-1745

- The Elizabethan religious settlement and conflict with Catholics (including Scotland, Spain and Ireland)

Learning Objective:

To closely examine a document in order to discover information.

To consider how documents were used to shape public opinion in the 1500s.

Resources needed:

Printed sources and questions

Preparing for the Armada

In the 1580s, relations between England and Spain had been getting worse and worse. By May 1588, King Philip II of Spain had finished preparing a fleet, the Spanish Armada, to invade England. His plan was for the fleet of 130 ships, carrying 30,000 sailors and soldiers, to sail up the English Channel. They would link up with the Spanish army based in the Low Countries, and together they would invade England. The Protestant Queen Elizabeth I would be removed from the throne and replaced with a Catholic ruler. The Catholic religion would be restored in England.

The arrival of the Armada on 29 July 1588 was no surprise. The English had known about its preparation for several years and had been making their own preparations to face the attack. The government had been building new ships, forts and warning beacons. They made efforts to disrupt the Spanish preparations. Francis Drake attacked the Spanish fleet in Cadiz harbour in 1587. They had also been trying to win the war of words – the propaganda battle between the two countries.

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Useful links:

[The Tudors](http://www.tudorbritain.org/)

(<http://www.tudorbritain.org/>)

Explore Tudor Britain with our interactive exhibition.

[The face of Royalty](http://www.pinterest.com/uknatarchives/the-face-of-royalty/)

(<http://www.pinterest.com/uknatarchives/the-face-of-royalty/>)

View a selection of Royal Seals and plea rolls held by The National Archives on our Pinterest board.

Teacher's notes

This lesson is intended for use either as part of a study of the use of propaganda over time, or within the context of work on Elizabethan England and the Spanish Armada.

The lesson can be taught as a whole or separated into tasks based on the individual sources to allow flexibility within your own schemes of work.

Sources are presented on their own pages, with transcripts which can easily be separated to suit a variety of purposes. Transcripts are translated and then simplified to aid understanding.

Background

The proclamation was part of the propaganda war between Elizabeth I and her Catholic enemies led by Philip II of Spain.

King Philip II of Spain was hostile to Queen Elizabeth's England for several reasons:

- England had become a Protestant country and as a devout Catholic himself Philip II wanted to change it back to a Catholic country
- Elizabeth I was helping the rebels fighting against Philip II in the Low Countries
- Elizabeth I had had the Catholic Mary, Queen of Scots executed in 1587 and Philip wanted to avenge her death
- English sailors were attacking Spanish ships and cities in the New World (in 1587 Drake had attacked Cadiz)

Queen Elizabeth I was unhappy with Philip II's Spain because:

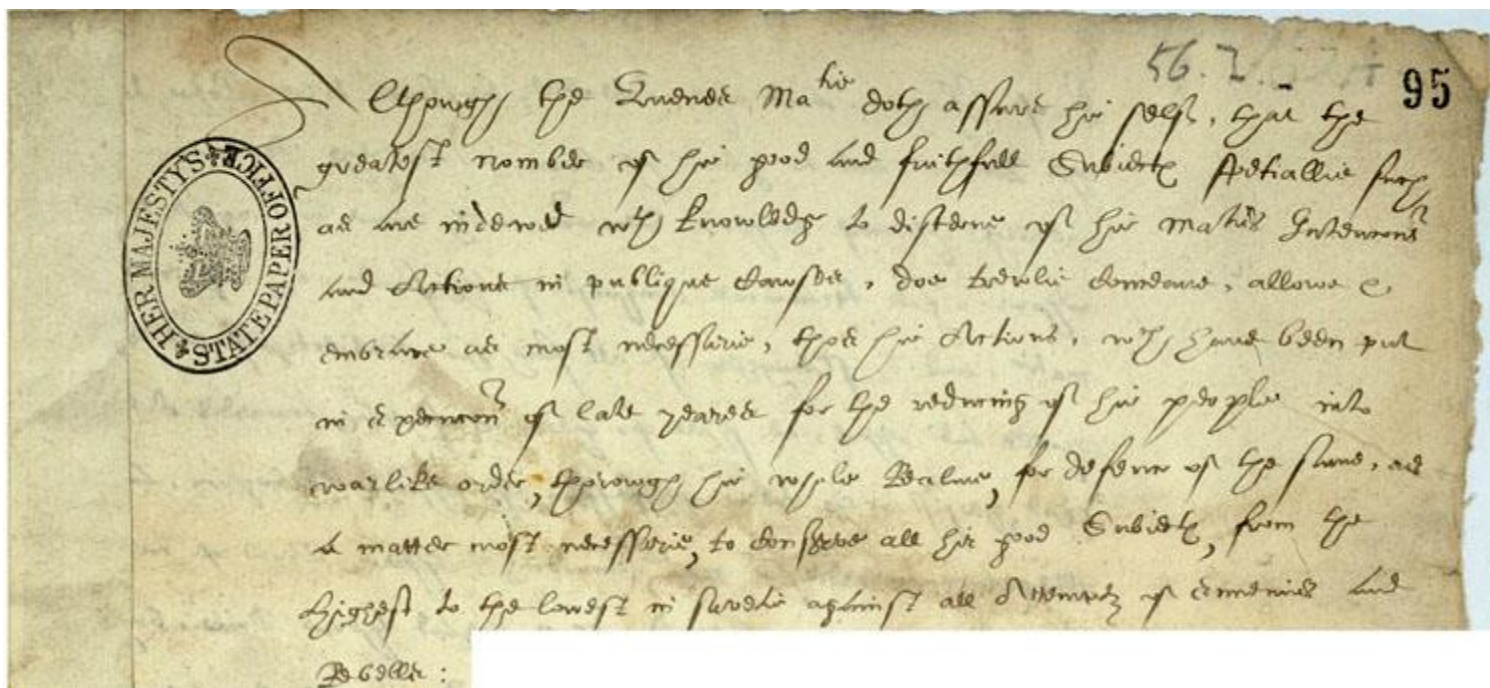
- English ships were barred from trading with the Spanish Empire
- Philip II was encouraging her Catholic subjects to plot and rebel against her and that is one reason why she had to execute Mary, Queen of Scots

The hostility between England and Spain can be traced back to much earlier in Elizabeth's reign.

- 1570 Pope Pius V ordered English Catholics not to obey Elizabeth I
- 1571 The Ridolfi Plot intended to use a Spanish army to overthrow Elizabeth I
- 1583 The Throckmorton Plot planned to put Mary, Queen of Scots on the English throne with Spanish support
- 1585 Philip II put an embargo on all English goods in Spain
- An English army was sent to the Low Countries to help the Dutch rebels against the Spanish
- Drake occupied Spanish ports in Galicia for ten days in October and then went on to sack islands in the Canaries and in the Caribbean
- Philip II began planning an invasion of England
- 1586 The Babington Plot planned to assassinate Elizabeth I and put Mary, Queen of Scots on the throne
- Nine new warships were built for Elizabeth I's navy
- 1587 Execution of Mary, Queen of Scots
- Drake's raid on Cadiz
- 1588 Anglo-Spanish peace talks began in the Low Countries on 8 March
- Peace talks moved to Bourbourg 23 May
- Armada sailed from Lisbon 28 May

Source One: Draft government proclamation, 1588

Draft government proclamation, 1588 (SP 12/211) sent with a letter on 24th June 1588 by Lord Burghley, Elizabeth I's chief minister, to Sir Francis Walsingham.



Transcript

This extract has been translated into modern English with line numbers added.

- Line 1 Although the Queen's Majesty does assure herself, that the greatest number of her good and faithful subjects specially such as are endowed with knowledge to discern of her Majesty's intentions and actions in public causes, do truly condone, allow and
- Line 5 embrace as most necessary, those her actions, which have been put in execution of late years for the reducing of her people into warlike order, through her whole realm, for defence of the same, as a matter most necessary, to conserve all her good subjects, from the highest to the lowest in surety against all attempts of enemies and
- Line 10 rebels: ...

Simplified Transcript

- Line 1 Her Majesty the Queen assures herself that the majority of her good and faithful subjects, especially those who know about Her Majesty's intentions and actions in public causes, truly excuse, allow and
- Line 5 hold as necessary her actions. These have been done recently to get her people ready for war, through her whole realm, for its defence. This is necessary to save all her good subjects, from the highest to the lowest, against all attempts of enemies and
- Line 10 rebels: ...

Source Two - Draft government proclamation, 1588

Draft government proclamation, 1588 (SP 12/211)



Transcript

This extract has been translated into modern English with line numbers added.

- Line 10 yet considering it is seen how malice doth commonly pervert as seditious and slanderous untruths the sincerity and truth of all honourable actions, which is certainly seen at this present in that some of her rebels abroad by infamous and traitorous libels do at this time seek to entice and draw forth as they do think
- Line 15 do favour their weak attempts, and others that of simplicity cannot judge thereof, to have them think, that the great preparations of war that have been long in making, both in Spain, and in the Low Countries, and now as they say, are without delay to be used with all manner of forcible execution to invade this realm, are
- Line 20 only for the relief and comfort of such as their account Catholics,
- Line 21 being in truth her traitors: ...

Simplified Transcript

- Line 10 Yet it is seen how nastiness often misrepresents as disloyal and slanderous lies the sincerity and truth of all honourable actions. This is certainly seen at the present. Some of her rebels abroad now seek by wicked and traitorous lies to persuade and draw forth those they think
- Line 15 support their weak attempts, and others too simple to judge, and to have them think that the great preparations of war that have long been in the making, both in Spain and in the Low Countries, and they now say are without delay to be used with force to invade this realm, are
- Line 20 only for the relief and comfort of Catholics,
- Line 21 being in truth traitors: ...

Source Three - Transcripts

Transcript

This extract has been translated into modern English with line numbers added.

- Line 21 whose profession is certainly known in favour of the Pope whom they make their God on the earth, to deny their allegiance to her Majesty their sovereign natural Lady and Queen, and to change and subvert the happy state of the realm, and
- Line 25 to make the same subject to the Popes will, and the Crown to be translated to such a foreign potentate as he shall thereto name to usurp the same, for so by therein writing they do directly pronounce the intentions of the Pope to be, in procuring of the
- King of Spain, and other potentates vasselled to the Pope, to invade
- Line 30 this Realm, and to gain the Crown and the realm with the wealth thereof to therein devour, which cannot be imagined to be done without a full tyrannical conquest of the same, by depriving of her Majesty, and by slaughter of all such her subjects of all degrees both noble and others, as shall for their conscience towards Almighty
- Line 35 God, persist in the true profession of Christian Religion, and for their allegiance towards her Majesty (according to their bond of nature, being naturally born her subjects: (shall hazard their lives, both in defence of her Majesty's person, and to the maintenance of this Crown, Kingdom Country, and people, in the Kingly honour, and ancient liberty wherein
- Line 40 it hath remained and been inhabited with kings and people of mean
- Line 41 English blood, more than this five hundred years: ...

Simplified Transcript

- Line 21 They are certainly known to be in favour of the Pope whom they make their God on the earth, denying their loyalty to Her Majesty their natural sovereign Lady and Queen, and changing and threatening the happy state of the realm,
- Line 25 making it subject to the Pope's will, with the Crown given to a foreign ruler named by him to take over. In writing they openly say the intentions of the Pope are, in getting hold of the
- King of Spain and other rulers who are the Pope's vassals, to invade
- Line 30 this realm, and to gain the Crown and the realm with its wealth to devour it. This cannot be done without a full and cruel takeover of the country, depriving Her Majesty, and the murder of all her subjects of all levels, both noble and others, who for their conscience towards Almighty
- Line 35 God continue in the true Christian Religion, and for their loyalty towards Her Majesty (according to their bond of nature, being naturally born her subjects) risk their lives, both in defence of Her Majesty's person, and in keeping this Crown, kingdom country, and people in the kingly honour and ancient liberty in which
- Line 40 it has remained, and been inhabited with kings and people of ordinary
- Line 41 English blood, for more than 500 years: ...

Source One - Questions

This is an extract taken from a draft proclamation by the government of Elizabeth I. This was sent with a letter on 24th June 1588 by Lord Burghley, Elizabeth I's chief minister, to Sir Francis Walsingham. They were clearly discussing how to make their case most persuasive and to blame the war on others.

1. Elizabeth I had clearly been blamed by the Spanish for starting the war by building up her armed forces, her army and her navy. What reasons did the writer give to explain Elizabeth's actions?
2. Why were there more soldiers than sailors?
3. How did the writer try to appeal to as many English people as possible?

Source Two - Questions

Elizabeth's ministers accused Catholic English rebels of trying to make her 'honorable actions' look bad.

1. In this document they use the following writer's tricks, can you find them?
 - strong adjectives
 - alliteration
2. What evidence can you find to support the view that the English knew about Philip II's preparations well in advance?

Source Three - Questions

Elizabeth I's ministers tried to shift the blame for the war on to others. Again they used writer's tricks.

1. Can you find a strong adjective and a strong verb?
2. Which religious leader did the English Government blame for encouraging the invasion?
3. What did Elizabeth I's ministers say that leader's motive was?
4. What did they say would happen to ordinary English people?