Early Elizabethan England, 1558–88

Key topic 1: Queen, government and religion, 1558–69

1. The situation on Elizabeth’s accession
   - The Virgin Queen: the problem of her legitimacy, gender, marriage.
   - Her character and strengths.
   - Challenges at home and from abroad: the French threat, financial weaknesses.

2. The ‘settlement’ of religion
   - The Church of England: its role in society.

3. Challenge to the religious settlement
   - The nature and extent of the Puritan challenge
   - The nature and extent of the Catholic challenge, including the role of the nobility, Papacy and foreign powers.

4. The problem of Mary, Queen of Scots
   - Mary, Queen of Scots: her claim to the English throne, her arrival in England in 1568.
   - Relations between Elizabeth and Mary, 1568–69.

Key topic 2: Challenges to Elizabeth at home and abroad, 1569–88

1. Plots and revolts at home
   - The reasons for, and significance of, the Revolt of the Northern Earls, 1569–70.
   - The features and significance of the Ridolfi, Throckmorton and Babington plots. Walsingham and the use of spies.
   - The reasons for, and significance of, Mary Queen of Scots’ execution in 1587.

2. Relations with Spain
   - Political and religious rivalry.
   - Commercial rivalry. The New World, privateering and the significance of the activities of Drake.

3. Outbreak of war with Spain, 1585–88
   - English direct involvement in the Netherlands, 1585–88. The role of Robert Dudley.
   - Drake and the raid on Cadiz: ‘Singeing the King of Spain’s beard’.

4. The Armada
   - Spanish invasion plans. Reasons why Philip used the Spanish Armada.
   - The reasons for, and consequences of, the English victory.

Key Topic 3: Elizabethan society in the Age of Exploration, 1558–88

1. Education and leisure
   - Education in the home, schools and universities.
   - Sport, pastimes and the theatre.

2. The problem of the poor
   - The reasons for the increase in poverty and vagabondage during these years.
   - The changing attitudes and policies towards the poor.

3. Exploration and voyages of discovery
   - Factors prompting exploration, including the impact of new technology on ships and sailing and the drive to expand trade.
   - The reasons for, and significance of, Drake’s circumnavigation of the globe.

4. Raleigh and Virginia
   - The significance of Raleigh and the attempted colonisation of Virginia.
   - Reasons for the failure of Virginia.