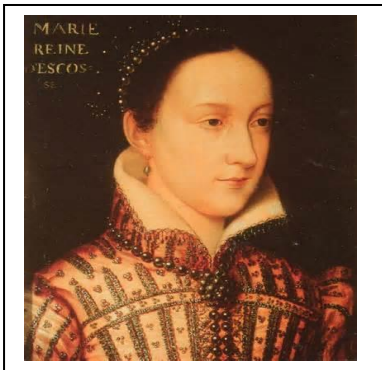


Mary Stuart and Elizabeth 1

Notes for a CE Source Question

Introduction

Mary Queen of Scots (1542-1587)



Mary was the daughter of James V of Scotland and Mary of Guise. She became Queen of Scotland when she was six days old after her father died at the Battle

of Solway Moss.

A marriage was arranged between Mary and Edward, only son of Henry VIII but was broken when the Scots decided they preferred an alliance with France. Mary spent a happy childhood in France and in 1558 married Francis, heir to the French throne. They became king and queen of France in 1559.

Francis died in 1560 of an ear infection and Mary returned to Scotland a widow in 1561. During Mary's absence, Scotland had become a Protestant country. The Protestants did not want Mary, a Catholic and their official queen, to have any influence.

In 1565 Mary married her cousin and heir to the English throne, Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley. The marriage was not a happy one. Darnley was jealous of Mary's close friendship with her secretary, David Rizzio and in March 1566 had him murdered in front of Mary who was six months pregnant with the future James VI and I. Darnley made many enemies among the Scottish nobles and in 1567 his house was blown up. Darnley's body was found outside in the garden, he had been strangled.

Three months later Mary married the chief suspect in Darnley's murder, the Earl of Bothwell. The people of Scotland were outraged and turned against her. She was removed from the throne and fled to England. She appealed to Elizabeth for help and support, but Elizabeth, suspicious that she was going to raise Catholic support and take the throne of England, kept Mary a virtual prisoner for the next eighteen years.

Elizabeth 1 (1533-1603)



Elizabeth was born in 1533 the daughter of Henry VIII and his second wife Anne Boleyn. Elizabeth had a troubled childhood. In 1536 her mother had been charged with adultery and accused of being a witch and had been executed. Elizabeth had been

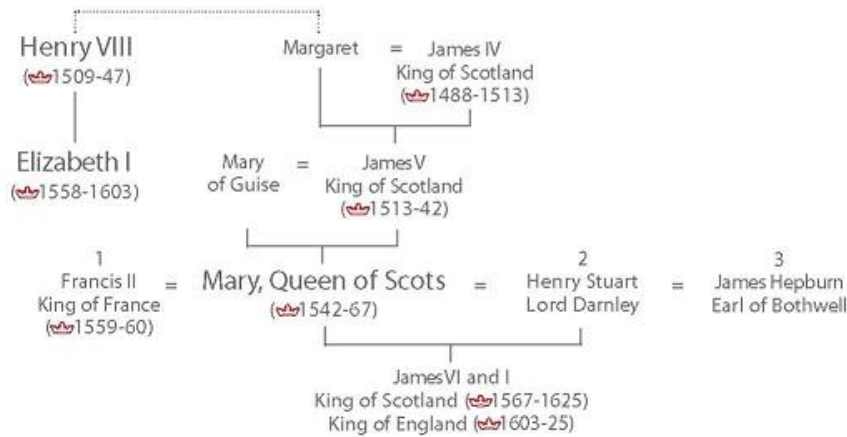
declared illegitimate.

Elizabeth was a highly intelligent child and spoke Latin, French, Italian and Spanish. She was a Protestant and suffered for her beliefs. During the reign of her sister Mary she was imprisoned briefly in the Tower of London after Wyatt's rebellion in 1554.

When Elizabeth came to the throne in 1558 she immediately faced 4 problems:

- **The possibility of invasion.** There was a real danger that France would attack England. The French King (and many Catholics) believed that Elizabeth was illegitimate. They believed that Henry VIII had been validly married only to Catherine of Aragon. His divorce was never recognised in the eyes of the Catholic Church and therefore Elizabeth as the daughter of Anne Boleyn would have been illegitimate. The only legitimate heir to Henry VIII would have been Mary I. Mary died in 1558 and then the English crown should have passed to the nearest legitimate descendant of Henry VII who was of course Mary Stuart also wife to Francis of France. Later in her reign the threat from Spain and its Armada also became a problem.
- **Religious division-** the country was divided by religion. Religious turmoil had dominated people's lives since the time of Elizabeth's father Henry VII. Although she was a Protestant Elizabeth was determined to establish a middle path - a religious settlement that would be as inclusive as possible.
- **Legitimacy, Marriage and gender** - Elizabeth was a female and many felt she was unable to be a strong ruler because of this. She was also under pressure to marry and produce an heir to continue the Tudor dynasty.
- **Money-** the country was short of money and for a country facing a foreign invasion this was a major concern.

Elizabeth and Mary's family tree



Mary Flees to England

On 2nd May 1568 Mary escaped from Lochleven castle where she been imprisoned by the Scottish lords and fled to England where she hoped her cousin, Elizabeth, would look after her. Mary's logic was twofold. First, Mary was a queen and so was Elizabeth. Mary expected a queen to help a queen. Secondly, Mary assumed that their family ties would prove strong. She could not have been more wrong. Elizabeth was naturally wary of Mar who was a suspected murderer, a Catholic and had laid claim to her throne, but she was also reluctant to harm her. Elizabeth did what she did best and compromised. At the age of 25, the former queen of Scotland started a lengthy spell (19 years) in a number of manor houses or castles that were her prison.

Catholic Plots

Elizabeth's concerns turned out to be well justified. Mary became a focus for those who wanted to remove Elizabeth from the throne.

- **The Northern Rebellion 1569-** A leading catholic family the Dukes of Norfolk wanted Elizabeth to recognise Mary's claim to the throne and name her as her successor. They planned to marry Mary to the Duke of Norfolk. Elizabeth discovered this and the Duke was sent to the Tower. This led to

a rebellion by supporters of the marriage who gathered a force of about 6000 men, took control of parts of the North and hoped a Spanish force would come to their aid. The Spanish support did not materialise, the rebels were dispersed, 450 were executed including one of the ringleaders, the Earl of Northumberland.

- **The Ridolfi Plot 1571-** Roberto Ridolfi a rich Italian banker plotted to rescue Mary and the Duke of Norfolk and put Mary on the throne. He was discovered by Elizabeth's spy master, Sir Francis Walsingham and Norfolk was executed.
- **The Throckmorton Plot 1583-** Mary was supported in her claim to the English throne by Phillip of Spain who also believed Elizabeth was illegitimate. In 1583 a Catholic Francis Throckmorton took letters apparently written by Mary to the Spanish ambassador asking for help. We do not know if these letters were genuine but again Walsingham and his agents uncovered the plot and Throckmorton was executed. On this occasion Mary escaped punishment because Elizabeth could not prove that she had been involved.
- **The Babington Plot 1586-** This time Elizabeth finally ran out of patience. Walsingham's spies intercepted letters from Anthony Babington, a Catholic, to Mary. The letters were in code and were smuggled out of Chartley Hall in Staffordshire, where Mary was being held, in barrels of beer. It seemed that Mary was plotting to kill Elizabeth and replace her as Queen. Mary was put on trial for her part in the plot. The court could not prove that the handwriting was hers and it has been suggested that Walsingham may have added some of the text to implicate Mary. We know that he added an extra section to one of the letters asking Mary to reveal the names of others involved in the plot. Babington was arrested and charged with treason. In September 1586, Babington was executed. Now the government had a case against Mary. She was put on trial in October 1586.

The Trial

Mary defended herself well but the judges found her guilty of treason. To the judges, who would not listen to her arguments, she said "You are indeed my enemies". The reply was "We are the enemy of the enemies of our queen." The trial lasted just 2 days.

Mary was found guilty of plotting to kill Elizabeth. She was sentenced to death. In February 1587, Mary was given just 24 hours' notice that she would be executed the next day.

How strong was the evidence against Mary?

By 1587, she was in poor health and was frail. Was she in any fit state to become involved in a plot against her cousin?

How did Walsingham's men manage to find the letter by Mary that was hidden in a beer barrel? Did they know where to look? Did they write it?

Locked up in a castle, how could Mary know what others were doing or have any way of influencing their movements?

Regardless of this, Babington admitted his part in the plot and he admitted that Mary knew about the plot against Elizabeth all along. However, it is almost certain that his confession was as a result of torture.

Elizabeth hesitated about signing Mary's death warrant. Eventually she did and Mary was executed at Fortheringhay Castle, 70 miles north of London, on February 8th, 1587. Mary was not allowed to have her chaplain present at her execution.

