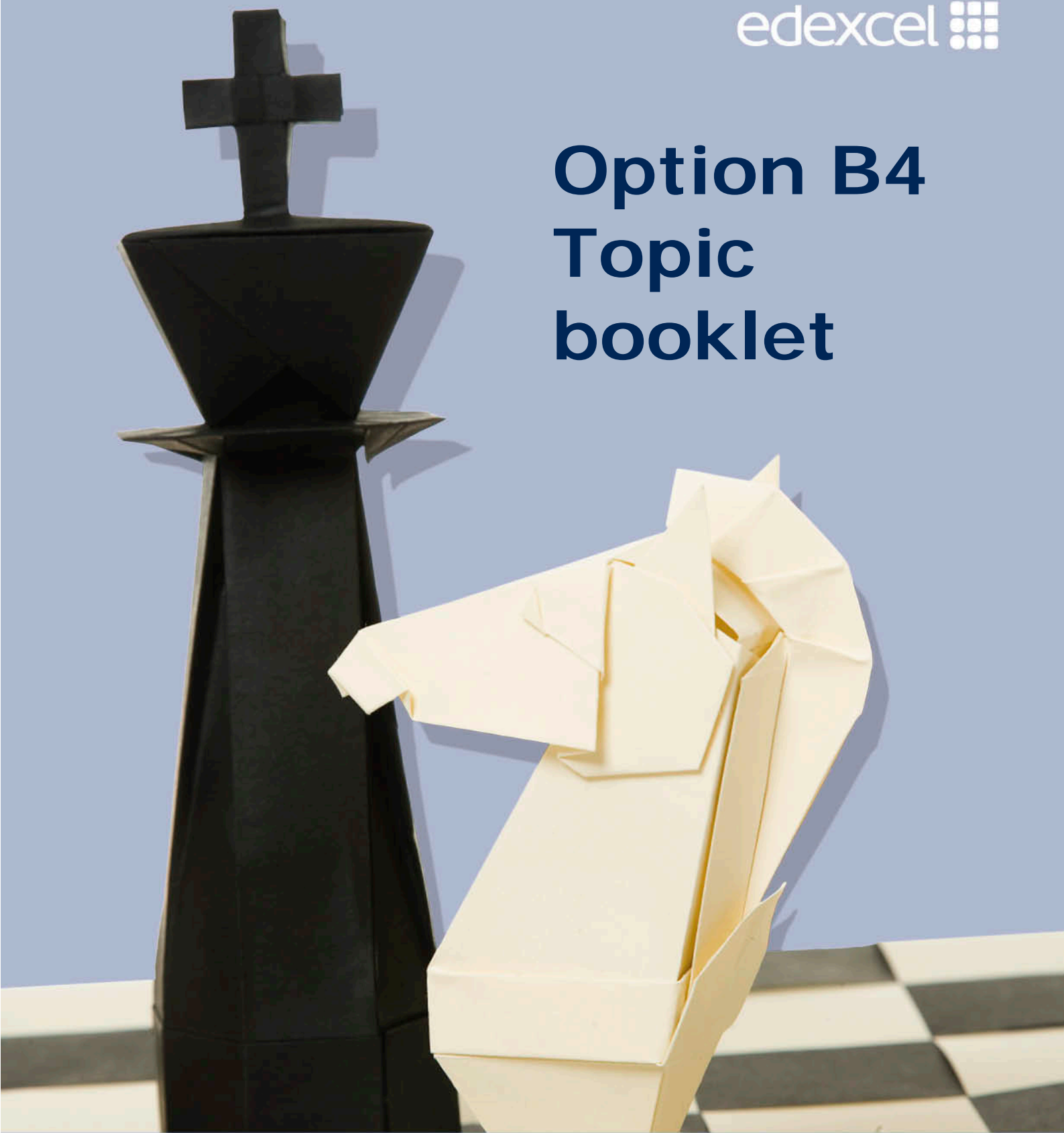


Option B4 Topic booklet



Early Elizabethan England, 1558–88

GCSE (9-1) History

Pearson Edexcel Level 1/Level 2 GCSE (9-1) in History (1HI0)

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Version 4 (March 2025)

This topic booklet has been updated to include changes made to new issues of the specification and sample assessment materials.

- Issue 5: language and assessment changes, for first assessment June 2025.
- Issue 6: content changes, for first teaching September 2024 and first assessment June 2026.

Information on new resources has also been added.

Summary guidance on the changes can be found [here](#).

1. Overview

Threats to the security of the country from home and abroad, differing views on religion, the education of young people, attitudes towards the poorest and most disadvantaged members of society; all these issues are matters which concern young people in Britain today. However, they are not matters which have suddenly appeared in recent years. On the contrary, all of these were important features of early Elizabethan England in the years 1558–88. Students studying this option will thus have a general understanding of the issues involved, but will study them in a different historical context. They will investigate matters which include religious issues, especially the Catholic threat to Elizabeth's security; relations with Philip II of Spain; social and economic issues; and England's changing relations with the wider world, including the first steps towards the creation of a seaborne empire.

Elizabeth inherited a country torn by religious division and decided the issue with her settlement of 1559, which attempted to steer a middle course in religion. She had to contend with a number of plots from leading Catholic nobles aimed at replacing the queen with the Catholic Mary Stuart.

Elizabeth's main concern abroad centred on relations with Spain and Philip II, the most powerful ruler in Europe, with political, religious and commercial rivalry leading to the Spanish Armada of 1588. The adventures of the privateers were one feature of a new era of exploration and discovery in late sixteenth-century Europe.

There were changes to the policies towards the poor, as well as to Tudor education and culture in this period, and cultural activities flourished in these years.

This topic touches on many areas of study with which students might be familiar, including the rise of the theatre, Mary, Queen of Scots, the Spanish Armada and the seafaring adventures of Francis Drake. The interplay and links across the three key topics should ensure students gain an understanding of the complex forces which shaped Elizabethan society.

The three key topics provide a framework for teaching and understanding the option but should not be taken in isolation from each other. There is chronological overlap between the topics and this structure helps highlight the complexity and interplay of different aspects within society.

1.1 Assessment (from June 2025)

Students answer four questions for the British depth study: Questions 1(a) and (b), Question 2 and either Question 3 or Question 4.

- Questions 1(a) and (b): these are compulsory and target AO1. Each question asks students to describe one feature.
- Question 2: this is compulsory and targets AO1/AO2. It focuses on causation.
- Questions 3/4: students have a choice of two questions. These target AO1/AO2 and require a judgement. They may focus on any of the following: similarity, difference, change, continuity, causation, consequence or significance.
(Note: there is no SPaG mark awarded.)

Detailed information and guidance on assessment can be found in the separate [Getting Started Guide](#).

2. Content guidance

2.1 Summary of content

Queen, government and religion, 1558–69

The first key topic is concerned with queen, government and religion in the years 1558–69. Students should be aware of the main features of England in 1558 when Elizabeth came to the throne. Elizabeth ascended the throne at a time of turmoil and so having a solid understanding of the issues that she faced in 1558, both nationally and personally, will provide students with a good baseline for the rest of the study. They should understand that, in the face of threats from France and within England, frequent, though unsuccessful, attempts were made throughout this period to persuade Elizabeth to take a husband and ensure the succession to the throne. They should be aware that her refusal to do so marks a break with Tudor tradition; Elizabeth made it clear that giving birth to an heir was not her highest priority.

Elizabeth's first success was in arranging a religious settlement that kept the peace, in 1559, and students should understand its key features and its consequences, both positive and negative. They should understand that the dissatisfaction of Catholics and Puritans posed a challenge to Elizabeth's authority and that Mary Stuart's personal claim to the throne provided a rallying point for Catholics, who also had support from abroad, and from the Pope. The complex nature of the relationship between Elizabeth and her Scottish cousin forms the last section of this key topic.

Challenges to Elizabeth at home and abroad, 1569–88

The second key topic deals with challenges to Elizabeth at home and abroad in the years 1569–88. It segues neatly into Catholic challenges to Elizabeth's throne and the alleged role of Mary Stuart in them. Students should understand the nature of the threat to the queen posed by the different plots of 1569–86 and the role of her Secretary Walsingham and his large network of spies in neutralising them. The execution of Mary Stuart in 1587 ended the primary challenge to the queen's security, but students should recognise that it was not a decision taken lightly by the Queen and led to a worsening of relations with Spain.

Students should be aware of Philip II's power – as King of Spain and also ruling over the Netherlands, England's most important trading partner – and that he wanted to restore England to Catholicism. They should be aware that Philip's empire in the Americas supplied Spain with phenomenal amounts of gold and silver, and that the actions of English privateers such as Francis Drake, who frequently attacked Spanish gold and silver fleets with great success, jeopardised these supplies, leading a bitter Philip to seek a military solution. This, along with England's involvement in the Netherlands and the execution of Mary Stuart in 1587, led to the 'Enterprise of England', the Spanish Armada of 1588.

Elizabethan society in the Age of Exploration, 1558–88

The third key topic deals with Elizabethan society in the Age of Exploration, 1558–88. Students should be aware that this topic deals with domestic life in this period and provides context for the rebellions and international crises covered in key topics one and two. Students are not required to study social developments beyond 1588. They should be aware of the nature of education in the home and in schools, and the social groups involved. Students should study the cultural activities, sports and pastimes that were popular in these years and their key features. For example, while theatres attracted large audiences drawn from all social classes, there was more social differentiation in sporting activities, as sports requiring equipment,

such as tennis, remained a preserve of the rich, while the favoured pastime for young apprentices and villagers was football.

Students should be aware that by 1558, the gap in provision for the poor and unemployed which had been left by the Dissolution of the Monasteries had become a crisis. Students should understand the factors which caused the growth of poverty and unemployment and the different steps taken to tackle the problem, including the distinction between the 'deserving poor' and the 'undeserving poor'.

Finally, students will study the technical developments which stimulated voyages of exploration and discovery, allowing for longer voyages in search of trade routes and land and the extent of their success. The early attempts to establish an empire, via colonies on the North American seaboard, will be covered, along with a case study of Raleigh's doomed colony of Virginia, which draws an interesting parallel between England's naval success abroad and her struggle to extend control over new land. While both attempts at colonisation may be included in the study, only the failure of the first settlement is included, as the causes of the disappearance of the second colony, which occurred while England was managing the turmoil of the Spanish Armada, remain shrouded in mystery.

Key terms

It may be useful at the start of the course to provide students with a list of key terms and concepts that they will need to be familiar with for this option. Students should be familiar with the terminology found in the specification content.

The list of terms below is not intended to be a comprehensive checklist, rather simply a useful starting point for teachers to produce their own list of terms that their students may not fully understand or have difficulty spelling.

Students should also be familiar with broad terms, such as economic, government, political, religious and social.

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------------|
| • Catholic | • Lords |
| • ciphers | • Monarch |
| • circumnavigation | • navigation |
| • clergy | • nobility |
| • colonisation | • Papacy |
| • Commons | • privateers/privateering |
| • deserving poor | • Privy Council |
| • enclosure | • Puritan |
| • financial | • real wages |
| • idle poor | • the slave trade |
| • inflation | • vagabondage |
| • legitimacy | • vestments |

2. Content guidance

2.2 Content exemplification

This section provides additional guidance on the specification content. It should be remembered that the official specification is the only authoritative source of information and should always be referred to for definitive guidance. Any examples provided here do not constitute additional specification content.

Key topic 1: Queen, government and religion, 1558–69		Exemplification
1 The situation on Elizabeth's accession	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Elizabethan England in 1558: society and government.• The Virgin Queen: the problem of her legitimacy, gender, marriage. Her character and strengths.• Challenges at home and from abroad: financial weaknesses, religious divisions, the French threat.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Structure of society; the significance of the cloth and wool trade.• The role in government of the monarch, Lords and Commons, and the Privy Council.• Elizabeth's illegitimacy including, contemporary views on gender and on the abilities of women. The importance of marriage in providing an heir. The queen's self-confidence as well as her indecisive nature, for example, her deeply religious and intellectual character.• The domestic problems, such as increasing poverty, caused by high taxation coupled with poor harvests.• Catholics, Protestants and Puritans, including their different religious beliefs and practices. Regional divisions, specifically increased Catholic support in the north.• The ongoing war with France.
2 The 'settlement' of religion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Elizabeth's religious settlement (1559): its features and impact.• The Church of England: its role in society.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity, 1559; key features, including the retention of some Catholic features in churches, such as candles, crosses and vestments. The 'Middle Way' between Catholic and Protestant beliefs.• Impact of the religious settlement on the population and society, as well as Catholic and Puritans.• The important role of the Church in national government, its position within town and village life. The role of parish clergy.• The role played by the Church of England in enforcing Elizabeth's religious settlement.

Key topic 1: Queen, government and religion, 1558–69		Exemplification
3 Challenge to the religious settlement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reasons for the Puritan challenge, the forms it took and the extent of the threat. The nature of the Catholic challenge, including Catholicism in England in 1558, Catholic influence in outlying areas, especially the north, and the threat posed by the Catholic nobility. The extent of the threat. Growing external opposition to the religious settlement including papal opposition, the importance of the subsequent excommunication of 1570 [relates to plots and revolts in key topic 2], the political threat posed by the Catholic powers of France and Spain.
4 The problem of Mary, Queen of Scots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mary, Queen of Scots: her claim to the English throne. Relations between Elizabeth and Mary, 1568–69. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The significance of Mary's descent from Henry VIII's sister Margaret Tudor; support for Mary from Catholics in England; the implications for Elizabeth of Mary's flight from Scotland in 1568. Elizabeth's attitude to Mary and factors affecting their relations including, for example, the so-called 'Casket Letters' affair and the York Conference, 1569, which investigated possible wrongdoing by Mary.

Key topic 2: Challenges to Elizabeth at home and abroad, 1569–88		Exemplification
1 Plots and revolts at home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strength of Catholicism in the north; noble anger at the extension of Elizabeth's power in the region. Events and consequences of the Revolt. Aims of each plot, and the nature and extent of the threat they posed. Walsingham's efficient network of spies and informers. His methods, for example the use of ciphers in written communications.

2. Content guidance

Key topic 2: Challenges to Elizabeth at home and abroad, 1569–88		Exemplification
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The reasons for, and significance of, Mary Queen of Scots' execution in 1587. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mary's involvement with conspiracies against Elizabeth, especially Babington's plot. Significance for Elizabeth of the execution of an anointed monarch. Philip II's plans for retaliation against England.
2 Relations with Spain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Political, religious and commercial rivalry. The significance of privateering and the activities of Drake. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Philip II's power as a European rival to England; his strong Catholicism; his opposition to the religious settlement of 1559. The nature of English support for the Dutch Protestants rebelling against Spanish rule and the tension this caused. Anglo-Spanish commercial rivalry, for example in the Netherlands. Growing English involvement in the Americas; Drake's attacks on gold and silver fleets heading for Spain in the 1560s and 1570s.
3 Outbreak of war with Spain, 1585–88	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reasons for deteriorating relations with Spain: English direct involvement in the Netherlands and the actions of Robert Dudley. Drake and the raid on Cadiz: 'Singeing the King of Spain's beard'. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Importance of English trade with the Netherlands, especially Antwerp. Elizabeth's formal support for the Dutch rebels: the Treaty of Nonsuch, 1585; Dudley's expedition of 1585. Drake's role spying on Spanish naval activity. The destruction of Spanish ships and supplies in Cadiz harbour, 1587. Effect of the raid on Spain's preparations for the Armada.
4 The Armada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spanish invasion plans. Key events of the Spanish Armada. The reasons for the English victory. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Philip's plans for the 'Enterprise of England'. The progress of the Armada along the English channel and the interactions between the Spanish and English ships. The combination of factors accounting for English success, including superior technology and tactics (the use of fireships at Calais, for example) and the fate of the remnants of the Armada on the route around Britain and back to Spain.

Key topic 3: Elizabethan society in the Age of Exploration, 1558–88		Exemplification
1 Education, and leisure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education in the home and schools. Sport, pastimes and the theatre. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The nature of education in home and in schools. Popular sports and pastimes, including fishing, football, bear-baiting and cockfighting. Aristocratic pastimes, for example fencing and bowls. The growing popularity of tennis. The growing number and popularity of public theatres, especially in London. Theatres in Southwark. The acting companies.
2 The 'problem' of the poor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The reasons for the increase in poverty and vagabondage during these years. The changing attitudes and policies towards the poor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long-term factors, for example rural enclosure, price inflation and the fall in the value of real wages, and the effects of a rising population. Short-term factors, including the effects of the bad harvests of the 1550s and 1560s. The government's belief that growing poverty would lead to disorder and rebellion. Changing attitudes towards the poor, for example the aims and effects of the Vagabonds Act, 1572 and the Act for the Relief of the Poor, 1576; the distinction between the 'idle/undeserving poor' and the 'deserving poor'.
3 Exploration and voyages of discovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New shipyards and the development of faster and more stable ships. The development of new navigational aids, and the new science of transatlantic navigation. The need to compete with European powers in acquiring overseas possessions. Exploration to extend trade. Drake's expedition against Spanish colonies, 1577. His reasons for crossing the Pacific. His return to England in 1580 with a huge amount of treasure.
4 Attempted colonisation of Virginia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reasons for the attempted colonisation of Virginia, including the significance of Raleigh. Reasons for the failure of the first settlement in Virginia. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The granting of a patent to Raleigh to colonise Virginia, 1584. The attempts to establish a permanent settlement on Roanoke Island, 1585–86 and 1587. The combination of factors accounting for failure, including inadequate planning of the colony, the provision of inadequate food supplies, and conflict with Indigenous peoples.

3. Student timeline

The timeline below could be given to students, and could be further edited and added to by them. Inclusion of dates and events in this timeline should not be taken as an indication that these are prescribed: the official specification and associated assessment guidance materials are the only authoritative source of information and should always be referred to for definitive guidance.

1533	Birth of Elizabeth to Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn
1558	Elizabeth accedes to the throne on the death of her sister, Mary Tudor
1559	The Elizabethan religious settlement: the Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity
1568	Mary, Queen of Scots flees to England
1569	Revolt of the Northern Earls aims at placing Mary, Queen of Scots on the throne
1570	Pope Pius V excommunicates Elizabeth from the Catholic Church, declaring her deposed from the throne
1571	The Ridolfi Plot, the second major Catholic threat to Elizabeth
1572	Act for the Punishment of Vagabonds establishes harsh treatment of offenders
1576	Act for Setting the Poor to Work displays a more enlightened attitude towards poverty
1577	Drake begins his circumnavigation of the globe (the expedition lasts three years)
1583	The Throckmorton Plot, a further Catholic plot against Elizabeth
1584	Granting of a patent to Raleigh to colonise Virginia
1585	War begins between England and Spain
	Dudley's disastrous expedition to the Netherlands
	All Catholic priests ordered to leave the country
1586	The Babington Plot. Ciphered letters prove that Mary, Queen of Scots was directly implicated in the plot
1587	Execution of Mary, Queen of Scots
	Drake's assault on the Spanish fleet in Cadiz harbour
1588	The Spanish Armada is sent against England. The Spanish suffer serious losses at Calais, leading to the failure of the whole enterprise

4. Resources

The sections below list a range of resources that could be used by students and teachers for this topic.

The first section lists information on free support materials available on the Edexcel website. On the [GCSE History \(9–1\) from 2016](#) page:

- select the [Teaching support](#) tab, where resources are separated out by Plan, Teach, and Track and Assess;
- or select the [Course materials](#) tab, and then select the appropriate tab for [Specification and sample assessments](#), [Exam materials](#), or [Teaching and learning materials](#).

The table below provides a selection of the free support materials available on the Edexcel website. Details and links for all the free support available can be found in [this document](#). It is updated regularly, so worth bookmarking.

The second section lists publishers who have been endorsed for GCSE (9–1) History. Endorsement means that a resource has been through our quality assurance process to confirm that it meets the teaching and learning requirements a specification is aimed at. Endorsement of a resource doesn't mean it's the only suitable material available, or that it is required to achieve the qualification.

The remaining sections list both endorsed resources and those that have not been endorsed. While these resources – and others – may be used to support teaching and learning, the official specification and associated assessment guidance materials are the only authoritative source of information and should always be referred to for definitive guidance.

There has been a rapid growth in podcasts in recent years, and we have added below links to a few well-known ones. Some may not be suitable for younger listeners, so please check carefully before sharing with students. Similarly, there are plenty of useful videos for History students on online sharing platforms, and any links below have been checked, but please exercise care before sharing social media links with students.

4.1 Free support materials

Resource	Details
Specification , sample assessment materials and specimen papers	The starting point for information on content and assessment in GCSE (9–1) History.
Past papers, mark schemes and examiner reports	An Edexcel Online login is required to access files with a silver padlock – check with your exams officer if you can't open them.
Getting Started Guide	An overview of the specification, to help you get to grips with the content and assessment requirements of the specification. Updated for Issues 5 and 6.
Summary guidance on changes for 2025 and 2026	Summary guidance with links on the changes being made for Issue 5 (first assessment 2025) and Issue 6 (2026).
Content changes for 2026: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic guidance • FAQs 	Guidance for each option on the changes being made to the content for Issue 6 of the specification (first assessment June 2026), and FAQs.

Resource	Details
Assessment changes for 2025: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guide FAQs 	Guidance on the changes being made to the assessment model for Issue 5 of the specification (first assessment June 2025), and FAQs.
Specification language changes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Track changes on Rationale FAQs 	Guidance on the language changes made for Issue 4 of the specification (first teaching September 2023, first assessment June 2025).
Paper 2 Guide	Teaching approaches and ideas for the period study and British depth study, with case studies from practising teachers.
Schemes of work	Sample outline schemes of work for each topic in the specification, in editable Word files. A digital interactive scheme of work is also available for both KS3 and GCSE.
Mapping documents	Mapping documents to help support teachers in moving to Edexcel GCSE History.
Exemplar student answers	Exemplar student answers, with examiner commentaries and mark schemes.
Early Elizabethan England knowledge booster	A set of quizzes to support students with AO1 knowledge and understanding.
Student walkthroughs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paper 2B playlist 	A series of pre-recorded student walkthroughs, created in collaboration with Harris Federation. <i>Updated for Summer 2025.</i>
Revision tips	Some useful revision tips for students. <i>Updated for Summer 2025.</i>
Command words	A series of student-friendly files exploring each command word in turn, plus a summary document paper-by-paper. <i>Updated for 2025.</i>

4.2 Endorsed resources*

[Pearson](#) – Designed to help develop confident, articulate and successful historians.

[Hodder Education](#) – The Hodder GCSE History for Edexcel students' book helps students achieve their full potential while ensuring pace, enjoyment and motivation.

[Oxford University Press](#) – Oxford's Edexcel GCSE History student books help to develop young historians who have the confidence to succeed, with the most up-to-date exam practice and a tried-and-trusted, accessible approach.

[Zigzag Education](#) – Photocopiable resources for learning, revision and exam practice.

[Anglia Tours](#) – A range of fully-guided History tours which enhance both teaching and learning for the related Pearson qualification.

[NST Tours](#) – Guided History tours to support teachers and students with GCSE History.

* You don't have to purchase any resources, including those from Pearson, to deliver our qualifications.

4.3 Resources for students

Resource	Details
<i>Edexcel GCSE History (9–1) Early Elizabethan England, 1558–88</i> (Pearson, 2016)	Student book written for this option in the current specification.
<i>Edexcel GCSE History (9–1) Foundation Early Elizabethan England, 1558–88</i> (Pearson, 2018)	Foundation version of student book written for this option in the specification.
<i>Revise Edexcel GCSE (9–1) History: Early Elizabethan England Revision Guide and Workbook</i> (Pearson, 2017)	A combined revision guide and workbook written for this option in the specification.
<i>Revise Edexcel GCSE (9–1) History: Early Elizabethan England Revision Cards</i> (Pearson, 2019)	Pocket-sized revision cards covering the key facts.
<i>Revise Edexcel GCSE (9–1) History: Early Elizabethan England Practice Papers Plus</i> (Pearson, 2020)	A skills-focused companion to the revision guide.
<i>Target Grade 5 Edexcel GCSE (9–1) History: Early Elizabethan England, 1558–88 Workbook</i> (Pearson, 2018)	Workbook focused on key skills and barriers for students targeting grade 5.
<i>Target Grade 9 Edexcel GCSE (9–1) History: Early Elizabethan England, 1558–88 Workbook</i> (Pearson, 2018)	Workbook focused on key skills and barriers for students targeting grade 9.
<i>Hodder GCSE History for Edexcel: Early Elizabethan England, 1558–88</i> (Hodder, 2016)	Student book written for this option in the specification.
<i>Hodder GCSE (9–1) History for Pearson Edexcel Foundation Edition: Early Elizabethan England, 1558–88</i> (Hodder, 2019)	Foundation version of student book written for this option in the specification.
<i>My Revision Notes: Edexcel GCSE (9–1) History Early Elizabethan England, 1558–88</i> (Hodder, 2017)	A revision guide featuring key content coverage, exam-style questions, revision tasks, activities and practical tips.
<i>Edexcel GCSE (9–1) History Workbook: Early Elizabethan England, 1558–88</i> (Hodder, 2018)	Workbook designed for students to practise and perfect the knowledge and skills needed for the course.
<i>Ben Walsh History: Pearson Edexcel GCSE (9–1): Medicine in Britain, Crime and Punishment in Britain, Anglo-Saxon and Norman England and Early Elizabethan England</i> (Hodder, 2022)	Student book written for four of the options in the specification.
<i>Early Elizabethan England, 1558–88</i> (Oxford University Press, 2022)	Student book and Kerboodle digital resources written for this Edexcel GCSE option.
<i>PG Online, Clear Revise: Edexcel GCSE History 1HI0 Early Elizabethan England, 1558–88</i> (PG Online, 2023)	Illustrated revision guide matched to the specification with exam-style practice questions and practical tips.

Resource	Details
Colette Roberts, <i>Elizabethan England Student Book</i> (Heinemann, 2009)	Textbook aimed at students working on the OCR Schools History Project GCSE examination.
Andy Harmsworth, <i>Elizabethan England: an SHP Depth Study</i> (Hodder 1999)	Textbook for the Schools History Project.
David Loades, <i>The Tudors for Dummies</i> (Wiley, 2011)	Part IV, 'Ending with Elizabeth', gives a useful overview of the whole of Elizabeth's reign.
The History of Parliament http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/periods/tudors	Has some excellent material on Elizabeth, especially the religious settlement of 1559. Follow the links on the right-hand side under 'Articles'.
School History www.schoolhistory.co.uk	Several resources for KS3 study on the Making of the United Kingdom are very useful.
BBC sites Elizabeth I: Troubled child to beloved Queen: www.bbc.co.uk/timelines/ztfxtfr Elizabeth I: www.bbc.co.uk/history/people/elizabeth_i	Two pages on Elizabeth I on the BBC website, with links to other useful pages and articles. NB second webpage currently unavailable.
BBC Bitesize https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/z3k4rdm	BBC Bitesize – Elizabeth I topic links
<i>Time Traveller's Guide to Elizabethan England</i> by Ian Mortimer (book: Vintage, 2012; series: BBC2, 2013)	Useful for helping students get a sense of England in this period.
<i>The Armada: 12 Days to Save England</i> by Dan Snow (BBC2, 2015) http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b05xc107	Documentary on the Armada. The accompanying BBC website has clips and links to other useful articles. Clips can also be found on YouTube.
<i>Battelfield Britain: The Spanish Armada</i> (BBC2, 2004)	A succinct documentary detailing the various tactics used during the Armada.
<i>Elizabeth</i> (1998) and <i>Elizabeth: The Golden Age</i> (2007)	Two films, the first based on the early years of Elizabeth's reign and the second covering the later part of her reign. Note that dramatic licence is used in both films.
Horrible Histories https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbbc/shows/horrible-histories	The iconic CBBC series that brings history alive. Not all episodes are available but between iPlayer and YouTube many can be found.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=87kZSY9On7k	'Ten Minute English and British History' Brief introduction to key points in Elizabeth's reign.

Resource	Details
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UvCd6yi1Bao	Ten-minute animation on Elizabeth I. Aimed at A level students but still useful overview.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xTCb921qBR4	Short animated video: Plots to Kill Elizabeth
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WiwEwSdKh0c	Short animation on Drake's Round the World Voyage.

4.4 Resources for teachers

Resource	Details
Alison Weir, <i>Elizabeth the Queen</i> (Vintage, 2009)	Good introduction, and overview, on the years 1558–1603.
John Warren: <i>Elizabeth I, meeting the challenge</i> (Hodder, 2008)	Aimed at A Level students, and strongly focused on religion and foreign affairs.
Christopher Haigh: <i>Elizabeth I</i> (Routledge, 2013)	A popular and accessible text.
Helen Castor, <i>Elizabeth I: A Study in Insecurity</i> (Penguin, 2019)	A short book that is part of the new Penguin Monarchs series.
Derrick Murphy: <i>England, 1485–1603</i> (Harper Collins, 2013)	A Level textbook. Chapter 10 covers religious matters. Chapter 12 is very useful and detailed on social, economic and cultural matters.
Barbara Mervyn: <i>The reign of Elizabeth</i> (Hodder, 2001)	An A Level SHP text. Very detailed on all aspects of Elizabeth's reign. A number of exercises might be adapted for GCSE students.
Andy Harmsworth: <i>Elizabethan England Teacher's Book</i> (Hodder, 1999)	Now out of print and difficult to get hold of, but useful if old copies can be found. Published for the SHP course on Elizabethan England, it contains many invaluable lesson plans.
John Guy, <i>The Tudors: A Very Short Introduction</i> (OUP, 2013)	Oxford University Press, A Very Short Introduction Series An interesting and well-written series covering a wide variety of topics that serve as an excellent overview.
'Elizabeth I: Gender, Power and Politics', <i>History Today</i> (May 2003) (£)	Interesting article on how Elizabeth responded to the challenge of ruling in a men's world. Subscription required to access online.
'Poverty in Elizabethan England', <i>History Today</i> (October 1984) (£)	Good overview of government attitudes towards, and treatment of, the poor. Subscription required to access online.

Resource	Details
Caroline Dodds Pennock, <i>On Savage Shores: How Indigenous Americans Discovered Europe</i> (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2022)	Highly readable scholarship on the experiences of Indigenous Americans in Europe, including Elizabethan England.
History on the Net https://www.historyonthenet.com/category/tudors	Much useful content on social issues, including entertainment and the theatre.
Tudor History www.tudorhistory.org	Information on the Elizabeth I, daily life and entertainment etc., as well as links to other sites on Elizabethan England.
Elizabeth I www.elizabethi.org/	Website dedicated to the life and reign of Elizabeth I.
The National Archives https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/god-blew-they-were-scattered/ https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/tudor-entertainment/ https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/elizabeth-monarchy/	Work on sources from the Spanish Armada. Sources exploring documents relating to theatres and plays in Tudor England. Link to sources linked to the reign of Elizabeth I.
National Portrait Gallery Queen Elizabeth I Francis Drake Mary, Queen of Scots	A range of National Portrait Gallery resources, introducing key figures and guiding students step-by-step through analysing their portraits as historical sources.
National Portrait Gallery Tudor portraits: Queen Elizabeth I, power and symbolism Tudor portraits: global connections Illuminating the global in Tudor and early Stuart portraits	Discover what portraits can reveal about Tudor Britain's growing connections to the wider world, and some of the important stories hidden behind Elizabeth I's ambitions for global power with these student-focused resources from the National Portrait Gallery.
National Portrait Gallery Indigenous peoples: early English colonisation of America	Discover what portraits can reveal about the early English colonists in America, and the impact on Indigenous people, with this student-focused resource from the National Portrait Gallery.
School History website http://www.schoolhistory.co.uk	A very comprehensive website with resources for teaching history. GCSE resources are arranged by exam board and cover most modules. Some resources are free but to get the full range available there is a subscription payment.
Teachit History website https://www.teachithistory.co.uk/british-studies/elizabethan-england/tags/3735	Teachit History website. A collection of resources for teaching Elizabethan England.

Resource	Details
https://www.tes.com/teaching-resources/hub/secondary	A comprehensive bank of resources for teachers, some free, some paid-for.
The British Library, 'Exploration and Trade in Elizabethan England' https://www.bl.uk/shakespeare/articles/exploration-and-trade-in-elizabethan-england	Article by Lisa Picard about Elizabethan explorers and the consequences of their expeditions: overseas colonies, imported goods and the slave trade.
Podcast series Historical Association , free to members The Rest Is History Dan Snow's History Hit History Extra You're Dead to Me	There are lots of History podcast series available these days through various platforms. We have listed here a few well-known ones, and you can search for relevant episodes. There are also revision podcasts available. Please check they are suitable before sharing with students.

Educational Recording Agency

Transform History Teaching with Multimedia Resources from the Educational Recording Agency (ERA)

[The ERA Licence](#) provides seamless access to television and radio recordings, offering a single point of clearance for the rights needed to create and use authentic media resources in your classroom. With [ERA's free video streaming platform](#), licensed institutions can explore a rich library of curriculum-mapped TV and radio clips tailored to GCSE, AS, and A-level teaching.

Engage your learners with curated clips, full-length documentaries, and programmes that bring historical contexts to life. The platform also includes exclusive access to the **BBC Shakespeare** and **Literary Archives**, offering unique cross-curricular opportunities to enrich your lessons with impactful media—perfect for both homework and classroom activities.

To access this free resource [registration is required](#) - but is quick and simple. State schools in England are licensed under a central agreement with the DfE and the vast majority of independent schools also hold a current ERA Licence.

Some of the recordings available for Early Elizabethan England include:

Queen, government and religion, 1558–69

[Jane, Mary and Elizabeth | She Wolves: England's Early Queens, BBC Four](#)

[From the Prison to the Palace | David Starkey's Elizabeth, Channel Four](#)

[The Virgin Queen | David Starkey's Elizabeth, Channel Four](#)

Challenges to Elizabeth at home and abroad, 1569–88

[Heart of a King | David Starkey's Elizabeth, Channel Four](#)

[Elizabeth I | Queens that Changed the World, Channel Four](#)

[Elizabeth I's Secret Agents, BBC Two](#)

[Day One | Armada: 12 Days to Save England, BBC Two](#)

[The Battle for England | Armada: 12 Days to Save England, BBC Two](#)

Elizabethan society in the Age of Exploration, 1558–88

[The Common People | Time Traveller's Guide to Elizabethan England, BBC Two](#)

[The Rich | Time Traveller's Guide to Elizabethan England, BBC Two](#)

[Brave New World | Time Traveller's Guide to Elizabethan England, BBC Two](#)

[Queens, Feuds and Faith | Art that Made Us, BBC Two](#)

[The Renaissance Arrives | A Very British Renaissance](#)

[Gloriana | David Starkey's Elizabeth, Channel Four](#)

Our Migration Story

Our Migration Story (<https://www.ourmigrationstory.org.uk/>) has been designed with teachers in mind to support opportunities for teaching students to understand and appreciate the range of peoples, from all places, who have journeyed to and helped to shape the British Isles. It is a free, online resource, created and curated by academics to share source evidence of real individuals and their experiences of migration.

This range of stories and supporting sources will be of most value to teachers delivering our new *Migrants in Britain* thematic study; in addition we have identified *Our Migration Story* resources that could be used whilst teaching other topics on the GCSE (9–1) History specification, some of direct value, some more tangential. They are an interesting way to open up discussion, or to offer different perspectives on the history that you are teaching. More information on the resources and how to deliver them can be found at: <https://www.ourmigrationstory.org.uk/information-for-teachers/>.

For this topic, you might wish to consider:

- Romani Gypsies in sixteenth-century Britain

<https://www.ourmigrationstory.org.uk/oms/romani-gypsies-in-16th-century-britain>.

This resource looks at the migration of Romani Gypsies, called 'Egyptians' in the period, and how the context of growing poverty and vagabondage affected attitudes to Romani Gypsies in Britain.

- African Freedom in Tudor England

<https://www.ourmigrationstory.org.uk/oms/african-freedom-in-tudor-england-dr-hector-nuness-request>.

This resource addresses the impact of exploration and imperialism in leading to migration to Britain, for example the African man in the source who likely arrived in England as a result of Drake's explorations and conflict with the Spanish Empire.

- African Freedom in Tudor England

<https://www.ourmigrationstory.org.uk/oms/african-freedom-in-tudor-england-dr-hector-nuness-request>.

Below the section focused on the African aspect of migration is a subheading on 'Portuguese Jews in Tudor England'. This addresses the experience of the small Jewish population in Tudor England despite the legal ban on Judaism in England, and how they could worship in private but risked death for openly worshipping.