

Enquiry Question: Did everyone experience an Elizabethan 'Golden Age'?

1558 - Elizabeth is crowned Queen.	1559 - Religious Settlement passed which makes a 'middle way'	1576: The First Purpose-Built Theatre was built in London.	1597: The First Performance of "Romeo and Juliet"	1600: Queen Elizabeth's Speech at Oxford University emphasising the importance of education.	1601: The Poor Law was introduced reflecting societal concerns about poverty.
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Key Words	Definitions
Golden Age	A period of great success, prosperity, and achievement in various fields like art, literature, and exploration.
Hierarchy/Class	A system that organises people into different groups or classes based on their social status or importance.
Great Chain of Being	An Elizabethan belief that all living things and elements are connected in a hierarchical order, from the lowest to the highest, reflecting their importance.
Nobility	People belonging to the highest social class, often with titles like dukes, earls, and lords.
Gentry	The social class just below the nobility, often wealthy landowners, who are still considered part of the upper class.
Urban	Relating to cities or towns.
Rural	Relating to the countryside.
Religious Settlement 1559	The agreement and laws created in 1559 to establish the Church of England (Protestantism) as the main religion and maintain peace between different religious groups - including Catholics and Protestants.
Toleration	Allowing people to have their own religious beliefs without persecution or discrimination.
Flourishing	Thriving, growing, and doing very well.
Culture	The way of life, beliefs, customs, arts, and achievements of a particular group of people.
Grammar School	A type of school opened in the Elizabethan Era for sons of the gentry. Students would learn subjects like Latin, Greek, and literature to prepare for higher education.
Exploration	The act of traveling to new, unknown places, often for adventure or to discover new lands and resources.

What do I need to know? (Linked to PLC statements)	
Golden Age	The Elizabethan era is often called a "golden age," but not everyone experienced it that way. This topic explores different aspects of Elizabethan society to reveal diverse experiences during this period. A 'golden age' is defined by historians as a time when the country experiences great success, growth, and advancements in various areas, often marked by flourishing literature, arts, and exploration.
Great Chain of Being	Elizabethan society followed a hierarchical structure called the Great Chain of Being. The upper classes benefited more from the golden age, while those lower in the social order had limited access to its advantages. The hierarchy included: nobility, gentry (middle class), yeoman (farmers who owned more land), urban poor (who lived in towns) and rural poor (who lived in the countryside).
Religion	Religion played a crucial role in Elizabethan England as when Elizabeth came to the throne, there had been a 'religious rollercoaster' between Catholic and Protestant monarchs. Elizabeth passed the Religious Settlement which gave some toleration to Catholics and was called a 'middle way'. However, Catholic plots meant Elizabeth had to introduce harsher penalties. Catholics faced discrimination, preventing their participation in the golden age, while Protestants enjoyed greater benefits.
Education and Culture	Education and cultural advancements thrived in the Elizabethan era. New grammar schools were opened which allowed sons of the gentry to access education. The number of grammar schools in England increased significantly, from around 50 in the early 16th century to more than 200 by the end of Elizabeth's reign. Theatre thrived, with playwrights such as Shakespeare and Marlowe. All classes had access to the Theatre, as tickets could be bought for as cheap as 6 pence for 'groundlings' who stood up to watch. Merrymaking involved playing football and dancing around the Maypole on May Day although some richer members of society tried to ban these activities. There was new music by composers like Thomas Tallis but the lower classes had limited access to this type of culture.
Exploration and minorities	Exploration and colonisation efforts contributed to the golden age perception. While some benefited from the wealth and resources brought by exploration, not everyone shared in the rewards. Around 6% of the population of London had been born outside of England, demonstrating there had been migrants from diverse backgrounds. For instance, Hector Nunes, a Jewish man from Portugal, fled to England after persecution by the Inquisition.

How historians work: Similarity and Difference



When analysing past societies, historians recognise that we should be careful not to make **generalisations** about the past. Historians strive to include **multiple perspectives** in their analysis. They consider different viewpoints, experiences, and voices within the society under study. This helps to provide a more comprehensive understanding of similarities and differences from various social, cultural, and individual perspectives. It is also important to recognise that there are some traditions and cultures that would unite people in each era.