



The Virgin Queen: Elizabeth I, Genius of the Golden Age

Christopher Hibbert

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A genius, a beauty, a leader, and a manipulator, Elizabeth I has fascinated and enthralled history buffs and Anglophiles for centuries. The era that bears her name was one of the most exciting and dazzling in England's history. Christopher Hibbert's masterful biography introduces a new generation of readers, aware of the challenges women face in wielding power, to perhaps history's greatest monarch.

The Virgin Queen: Elizabeth I, Genius of the Golden Age Details

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From Reader Review The Virgin Queen: Elizabeth I, Genius of the Golden Age for online ebook

Redsteve says

A decent, but not great, biography of Elizabeth I. It covers the important topics without going in-depth and is fairly readable. While I don't want to accuse the author of being sexist (I have read several of his other books and did enjoy them), his portrayal of Elizabeth seems to imply a certain amount of stereotypical "feminine weakness". Hibbert emphasized the queen's vanity even more than other biographies I have read about her. I mean, she was terribly vain, don't get me wrong; he just seems to harp on it more than most. Also, this book presents Elizabeth's evasiveness and mutability in policy as indecision and inconstancy, rather than as a deliberate political strategy. Not one of his better books.

Gary says

Hibbert provides a factual and riveting narrative on the life of Queen Elizabeth I, one of England's greatest rulers, and the last of England's Tudor rulers, with emphasis on her personal life, character and personality, and particular quirks.

The prologue summarizes the reign of Elizabeth, especially relating to Elizabeth's mother Anne Boleyn right up to Boleyn's execution.

She was brought up in various households, at different times, including that of her younger half-brother Prince, Edward the son of Jane Seymour and after King Henry's death, the household of Henry's last wife Catherine Parr.

She was heard, in later life, only to refer to her mother twice. While she proudly referred to herself as the daughter of Henry VIII, she was never ashamed to be a Boleyn and kept a ring that contained a miniature of Anne Boleyn. She also, on occasion used her mother's symbol, the falcon, a bird of prey in which the female bird is larger than the male of the species.

At the time of her mother's execution Princess Elizabeth was two years and eight months old. She was a pretty child far more closely resembling her father than her mother, with her red hair as opposed to her mother's darker colouring.

She was soon stripped of her title of princess and declared illegitimate.

Elizabeth who was an incredibly bright child, did not notice that her mother was gone but she did notice the change of her name. She apparently said to her governess. "how hap it governor, yesterday my Lady Princess, today but my Lady Elizabeth?"

Elizabeth must have grown up under great trauma, her mother executed when she was three years old, on her father's orders, all but rejected by her father and declared 'illegitimate.'

Elizabeth was well educated by her governess Kat Ashley, she was an accomplished poet and writer, she was taught several languages, spent several hours a day reading history and could play several musical instruments.

At the age of 14, living in the household of the Queen Dowager Catherine Parr, Elizabeth was seduced by the

Lord Admiral Sir Thomas Seymour, and the author describes something of the sexual games and romps between Elizabeth and Sir Thomas, sometimes involving Elizabeth's governess Kat Ashley. Elizabeth was only a child and certainly could not be held responsible for her involvement in this fling.

She chose a moderate path being a sincere and devout believer but rejecting both the fanatic Roman Catholicism of her sister Mary and the severe Puritanism of some fierce church reformers.

As monarch she was to preside over an England with greater religious tolerance than it had ever enjoyed before, with both Protestants and Catholics as her chief office bearers.

After the accession to her tyrannical older sister Mary, , who had hundreds of Protestants burned to death, hence earning her name 'Bloody Mary' Elizabeth, who was then nineteen, came under suspicion of involvement in treasonable plots and kept in a state of and was closely watched.

She was for a time imprisoned in the tower of London where she wrote "Much suspected by me
Nothing proved can be,
Quoth Elizabeth, prisoner"

Queen Mary's death, in 1558, was surely a great relief for both Elizabeth and the Protestants of England. She succeeded to the throne of an impoverished divided country, menaced by both France and Spain, and with the able assistance of William Cecil (later Lord Burghley), she overcame all her difficulties including a religious settlement, fending off England's enemies and building up England's strength including its navy. The book describes life in Elizabeth's court, and how she gained the love and adherence of her people. Elizabeth was the greatest and the best loved of all the English monarchs. The author describes how Elizabeth was intelligent, self-willed, brave and astute, but as regards her to her marriage and her foreign and religious policies she avoided decisions as long as possible.

The author describes Elizabeth's refusal to sign the warrant for the execution of her cousin Mary, Queen of Scots. To the privy council she asked "Can I put to death the bird that to escape the pursuit of the hawk has fled to my feet for protection. Honour and conscience forbid."

Mary's constant plotting made the decision inevitable and Elizabeth was practically forced by the council finally to sign Elizabeth's execution warrant, but with great anguish and remorse.

Much is described here of the Queen's court favourites who she lavished attention on, such as Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester and Robert Devereaux, Earl of Essex, but she never allowed them to influence the nation's affairs, for she kept her own council trusting no one entirely except perhaps Lord Cecil.

The author expertly describes how she rallied the nation to England's defence during the invasion by the Spanish Armada in 1588.

The book richly and beautifully details, how above all how Elizabeth possessed a dazzling personality that won men's devotion. She expressed this to herself when she said to her last parliament, as the author recounts, "This I count the chief glory of my crown , that I have resigned with your loves".

It as a very smooth read that remains interesting throughout and brings colour and excitement to a very exciting time in England's history.

Yeongbae K says

I have read a few books about the subject. Christopher Hibbert's is one of the best. I am partial to the writing style of English authors. The book was well organized.

Lindsey Smith says

Interesting read, but it often feels like Hibbert goes into great detail about matters that are ultimately unimportant to Queen Elizabeth's story. A very thorough account of Elizabeth's life and affairs.

Nikola says

I found the writing a little dry, but the information was very interesting. I love Elizabeth anyways; she was such an amazing person to rule at that time as both a woman and an unmarried one. Women were absolutely nothing back then and for her to be a queen at the time is very remarkable all in its own. Especially from her father's mad desire for a son to be king after him.

She was a very crafty woman; she knew how to play the game. She let the public believe that she was what they imagined a woman to be - submissive, weak, unopinionated, but still revered as the Virgin Queen almost like the Virgin Mary. Everyone in court found her to be very much like a man in the sense that she didn't just take things. She was very aggressive in her reign and didn't like to be told no.

If I were to go back in time and meet anyone, I think I would choose her just to see what she thought of a woman's role at the time and how she dealt with ignorant men who thought she wasn't in her place.

Studvet says

Very enjoyable and interesting as far as historical biographies go. Got a little bogged down in the ever - appearing different titled people but really easy to read.

Erik Graff says

This is a serviceable, sympathetic introductory biography of Queen Elizabeth I, requiring only general background knowledge of England during the 16th to early 17th century period. No great attempt is made to get at the larger sociological, economic, theological or cultural issues of those times, but the author does do a creditable job of maintaining distinctions between individuals of the aristocracy despite their often confusingly complex names and changing titles. What little humor there is in the text mostly comes out of Elizabeth herself, the author being rather dry and matter of fact.

Lezley says

An interesting read. I'd recommend this book as an introduction to Elizabeth I. I've read a lot of books about Elizabeth, so very little information was new and informative. It was thorough and well written.

Andy Casey says

Andy's review

Downloaded this as part of my Prime Reading feature as I am interested in the Tudor dynasty. I enjoyed it immensely, & found the chapter on the Queen's progresses particularly interesting.

Emily says

Well, I had to do this for an English project that's due next week.

Honestly, I don't think I could've chosen a worse person to do the biography essay on. I mean, not that Queen Elizabeth isn't interesting, but the way he describes her life in this book.... I just lose interest. I don't retain any of the facts except how many pages I have left to read. And I have to write an essay on it that's due next Wednesday....

If nothing else, then it is quite informational and contains about everything I need for said essay. Now all I have to do is write it.... o.o

Dalia says

The book went quickly, lots of details and tidbits where the author scoured letters to get a picture of things as they were happening, chronologically. Hibbert gives you a sense of what Elizabeth was like from an outsider's view, including her likes, psychological complexes, strengths, how she got things done, her scapegoating, and many other interesting characteristics, including what seems like her preference to remain unattached, maritally. The queen was definitely not dull.

booklady says

After having read *Come Rack! Come Rope!* I wanted to get a secular view of the Elizabethan era, as a basis of comparison.

Christopher Hibbert is a matter-of-fact writer. He describes Elizabeth in all her wild, glorious and maddening foibles. She was very much monarch while loving the limelight of femme fatale. She was vain; incredibly intelligent—proud of being multilingual; crafty; alternately tyrant/indecisive to suit her purpose; at times fearless yet paranoid all her life concerning death plots. Her religion was England, the throne, and herself (not necessarily in that order). The Protestant/Catholic/Puritan struggles concerned her insofar as they related to her safety, political alliances and proper decorum. In other words, she was practical to an extreme. One could almost imagine her attempting to organize eternity.

This book seems to be the basis for the mini-series *Elizabeth R* which I remember watching many years ago.

It was quite good as I recall. Anyway, the book and the series seemed to track.

As to my purpose for reading the book, Elizabeth, as a monarch – the methods of punishment she condoned and in some cases even *insisted* on against the advice of her advisers – were every bit as violent as indicated by Robert Hugh Benson in the book mentioned above.

David Case read this audio book and he is one of my husband's and my favorites.

Michael Walker says

Enjoyable bio of Elizabeth Boleyn, Queen of England, etc. 1558-1603. The era includes the Protestant queen's relations with her Catholic cousin, Mary Queen of Scots, the defeat of the Spanish Armada, her teasing flirtations with Lord Robert Dudley and, later, the impudent Robert Devereaux, 2nd Earl of Essex, and her parsimonious, lengthy reign.

Melissa says

I love history books, especially about british monarchs. My favorite time period, by far, is the Tudor reign. So much drama! This book was a great historical account of Elizabeth I. It was a book I read for AP European History.

Chantay says

I wanted to give it five stars, but in certain parts of her history that made her, they rush through and certain events; like her sister's accession to the throne and how she allowed an inquisition to kill of half the populace while enforcing Catholicism. How those years in jail at home and in the tower really affected her. And the speculation over her mother's looks is the same old, that she had a sixth finger. The author should have known that in those times they were condemning her as a witch. There has been no proof of this sixth finger or twisted nail or mole for that matter. The author glosses over the relationship between Anne and Henry. I love anything to do with Anne Boleyn and her daughter, but this fell a little flat for me. It's great for someone just starting to read up on Elizabeth I and her legacy. I wouldn't recommend this to hardcore Elizabethan loyalists.
