

## GCSE History



### The Spanish Armada Elizabethan England, 1568–1603

## **GCSE History;**

### **Germany**

- |   |          |
|---|----------|
| 1. Study interpretations A and B – how do they differ?              | 4 marks  |
| 2. Study interpretations A and B – why might they differ? (Authors) | 4 marks  |
| 3. Study interpretations A and B – which is more convincing?        | 8 marks  |
| 4. Describe ...   | 4 marks  |
| 5. Explain...   | 8 marks  |
| 6. Which was the most important factor? (Evaluate)                  | 12 marks |

### **First World War**

- |  |                   |
|--|-------------------|
| 1. Source A supports/opposes _____. How do you know? | 4 marks           |
| 2. Write an account of...                            | 8 marks           |
| 3. Study Sources B and C. Which is more useful?      | 12 marks          |
| 4. Which was the most important factor? (Evaluate)   | 16 marks + 4 SPaG |

### **Medicine**

- |  |                   |
|--|-------------------|
| 1. How useful is Source A?                         | 8 marks           |
| 2. Explain the significance of...                  | 8 marks           |
| 3. Compare _____ to _____.                         | 8 marks           |
| 4. Which was the most important factor? (Evaluate) | 16 marks + 4 SPaG |

### **Elizabeth**

- |  |          |
|--|----------|
| 1. How convincing is Interpretation A? | 8 marks  |
| 2. Write an account of...              | 8 marks  |
| 3. Explain...                          | 8 marks  |
| 4. Historic Environment Question       | 16 marks |

- This booklet is needed for the final question in the GCSE - the **16 mark Elizabeth question**. You have to study a particular site. This year your question will be about the Spanish Armada.
- You need to read through this booklet and begin to memorise the key facts for the final question of the GCSE.
- It is nearly 10% of the GCSE and you know the question is about the Armada so it makes sense spending time revising this!
- Make sure you are clear about what happened? When did it happen? Why did it happen? How was the battle fought? Who led both sides? Why did the English win? How did Elizabeth use the victory for propaganda?
- Try to link this topic to the rest of the Elizabeth module i.e. how does it tie into religion etc.?

You have the ability to get an excellent grade in your History GCSE. Revising in your own time at home will make this more likely to happen. Let me know if you need any help on

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## Background information for the Spanish Armada

In May 1588, King Philip II of Spain ordered his 'invincible Armada' to set sail for England and overthrow Queen Elizabeth I. This ended a long period of friendship between Spain and England that went back to the engagement of Catherine of Aragon to Arthur, Prince of Wales in 1501. Why had it come to war which was expensive and had unpredictable results?

By 1568 Queen Elizabeth I had successfully dealt with the religious difficulties of the early years of her reign and was encouraging the Church of England to follow a moderate Protestantism. Religious wars had broken out in France after 1560. This meant that England and Spain no longer needed an unwritten alliance based on shared fear of a powerful, united France. Philip II of Spain saw himself as the champion of Catholic Europe, and religious hostility to England deepened after Pope Pius V excommunicated Elizabeth in 1570. Philip, however, was unwilling to take any immediate action against England because he had more important problems. Philip also ruled the Spanish Netherlands and in 1567 he had sent an army there to crush a Protestant rebellion. The Spanish increasingly believed that England was inspiring and supporting rebellion in the Netherlands and thought that if Elizabeth was overthrown, then the Dutch could be pacified and Philip's authority restored. This became a powerful argument for sending an Armada against England. For Elizabeth, having Philip's formidable Spanish army so close to England caused great anxiety. She could not afford to see the Netherlands crushed, so she hoped for and put forward a moderate solution to the Dutch problem. Elizabeth proposed that Philip remove his troops and keep his sovereignty but allow a degree of Dutch self-government and freedom of conscience. This compromise was unacceptable to both Philip II and the Dutch Protestants.

There was also an important economic connection to the Netherlands for England as the two countries were linked by the cloth trade. This was important for the wool producers amongst the English landed classes, the London merchant community, and Elizabeth herself who gained vital customs revenues. Philip II realised the importance of this trade and banned English traders from Antwerp – the main port for the cloth trade – twice during the 1560s to put political pressure on Elizabeth. In the early 1550s a slump in the trade had caused an English government rethink. It needed to maintain its customs revenue so it raised the tax rate on exports, restricted the trade to only English ships, and aimed to exploit aggressively new markets in the Portuguese and Spanish colonial empires. Queen Elizabeth approved of this policy. She had stated at the start of her reign that she would not be bound by the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494) in which, with the Pope's blessing, Spain and Portugal had divided the New World between themselves. Despite all of this, a thriving trade between England and Spain existed, and was important to both countries. Even the more hawkish members of Elizabeth's Privy Council, such as the Earl of Leicester, profited from it. However as relations between the two countries deteriorated, this Anglo-Spanish trade was particularly vulnerable to retaliation for the activities of English privateers. For example, in 1568 the Spanish attacked John Hawkins and Francis Drake at San Juan de Ulúa in the Caribbean where they had been trading, as the Spanish saw it, illegally.

In that same year, Mary Stuart, Queen of Scotland arrived in England. As both a claimant to the English throne and a Roman Catholic she was an immediate focus for those English Catholics, possibly with support from abroad, who wished to overthrow Elizabeth. As relations between England and Spain continued to deteriorate in the 1570s, Philip II toyed with the idea of helping to put Mary Stuart on the throne through the Ridolfi plot. In 1574 and 1575 he assembled large fleets in his northern ports, supposedly to support his army in the Spanish Netherlands but which could easily have been used against England. The first fleet was dismantled when its commander died and the second was severely battered by a storm in the English Channel. Elizabeth, recognised the threat and advised by John Hawkins, began building a fleet of new ships in the early 1570s that would be fast and manoeuvrable against lumbering Spanish galleons. These advantages Francis Drake demonstrated during his circumnavigation of the globe (1577-1580) when he sacked Valparaiso and captured a Spanish treasure ship. Drake was operating as a privateer – an unofficial pirate – and Philip II protested about his actions but Queen Elizabeth gratefully accepted part of Drake's loot and knighted him on the deck of his ship in April 1580. By doing so she sent a simple message to Philip that England was no longer at peace with Spain, even if she was not yet at war.

Events in the 1580s pushed England and Spain further towards war. In 1580 Philip II added Portugal to his empire, unifying the Spanish peninsula under his rule. In 1583 Santa Cruz, Philip's leading Admiral, captured the Portuguese islands of the Azores and encouraged the King to believe that this was how a successful invasion of England could be achieved. Meanwhile in the Netherlands, the Spanish army, led by the Duke of Parma, was defeating all Dutch resistance. When in July 1584, William of Orange, the Dutch leader was assassinated, the Dutch rebellion seemed doomed. England was now the leading Protestant power in Europe. In May 1585, Philip made a fateful decision to turn against England and he seized all English and other Protestant shipping in Spanish harbours. Although he soon cancelled the order, the damage was done; his actions provoked Elizabeth's government into sending privateers against Spanish shipping in great numbers. Any opposition to this aggressive anti-Spanish stance amongst English traders and the nobility, now disappeared. The Privy Council had been split. Those who had been in favour of peace were less affected by religious enthusiasm, more conservative, and concerned about the cost of any war. The war party, led by the Earl of Leicester and Sir Francis Walsingham, did not believe in the compromise which Elizabeth favoured, and they doubted how seriously Spain would negotiate. Now, however, all were agreed that events meant Elizabeth had to respond. She sent the Earl of Leicester and 5,000 men to the Low Countries, and ordered Drake to terrorise Philip's Spanish and Caribbean territories. There could be no mistake, England and Spain were at war.

With Pope Sixtus V, offering financial and moral support, Philip decided that the invasion of England was on. In 1586 Philip ordered Santa Cruz to assemble a fleet. Philip did not want any invasion to place a pro-French Mary Stuart on the English throne so her execution in February 1587 removed another obstacle to his plans. However, Drake's attack on Cadiz in 1587 did delay the Armada preparations. Santa Cruz's efforts over the next two months to hunt down Drake and protect the treasure fleet which he thought was Drake's target, left the Admiral's Spanish galleons in need of repair and re-provisioning. Santa Cruz was further disappointed to find that his plans for the invasion had been overtaken by those of the Duke of Parma. Accordingly, Santa Cruz would now merely guard and shepherd Parma's 27 000 troops across the English Channel. Things got even worse for Santa Cruz when, on 16 November, a violent storm damaged 39 ships inside Lisbon harbour. The Admiral reported to the king on 12 December that the Spanish fleet might not be ready to sail for another month. Philip would not accept this and ordered Santa Cruz to go to sea. However fate struck on 9 February 1588, when after a short illness, Santa Cruz died. Philip quickly replaced him with the Duke of Medina Sidonia, a high-ranking and experienced naval administrator who, although not particularly welcoming the appointment, was prepared to do his duty. While Medina Sidonia, assisted by many experienced naval commanders, familiarised himself with the 'Enterprise of England', Parma prepared for the arrival of the Armada by cutting a canal from Antwerp to Bruges and built flat-bottomed boats to carry his men out to sea.

The Armada of about 130 ships, 2,431 guns, and 30,000 men finally set sail from Lisbon on 28 May, 1588 and the 'Enterprise of England' began. It probably was, as Sir John Hawkins described it, 'the greatest and strongest combination of arms that was ever gathered in all Christendom'.

## Resources

**Resource A** A map showing the route of the Spanish Armada.

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**Resource B** A modern artist's impression of the Spanish Armada heading to England under full sail.

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**Resource C** A painting of 1739 showing the Spanish Armada moving up the English Channel.

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**Resource D** A Dutch painting of 1590 showing the fire ships sent into the Spanish Armada.

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**Resource E** A painting showing the Battle of Gravelines.

page 8 The painting by Nicholas Hilliard is called, 'Elizabeth I and the Spanish Armada'. It dates from the 1600s.

**Resource F1** The 'Armada portrait' to commemorate the English victory in 1588.

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**Resource F2** The Silver Victory medal given to her admirals by Queen Elizabeth I after the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588.

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**Resource G** A map showing the Azores taken in 1583 by Santa Cruz for Spain from Portugal.

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**Resource I** An extract adapted from 'The Chief Business: the Spanish Armada, 1588', by Patrick Williams, published in 'History Review' (2009).

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An account of the battles involving the Spanish Armada.

**Resource J** An extract adapted from 'Why the Armada Failed', by Geoffrey Parker, (1988).

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An assessment of the Spanish role in the failure of the Armada.

**Resource K** An extract adapted from 'The Lurch Into War', by Simon Adams, (1988).

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An account of the Spanish Armada from the English perspective.

**Resource L** An extract adapted from 'Guns, Gales & God: Elizabeth I's 'Merchant Navy' by Ian Friel (2010).

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An account of the English Navy in the late sixteenth century.

**Resource M** An extract adapted from 'The Spanish Armada' by Robert Hutchinson, (2013).

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An account of the 'Singeing the King of Spain's beard', in 1587.

## The Spanish Armada resources

**Resource A** A map showing the route of the Spanish Armada.



**Resource B** A modern artist's impression of the Spanish Armada heading to England under full sail.





**Resource C** A painting of 1739 showing the Spanish Armada moving up the English Channel.



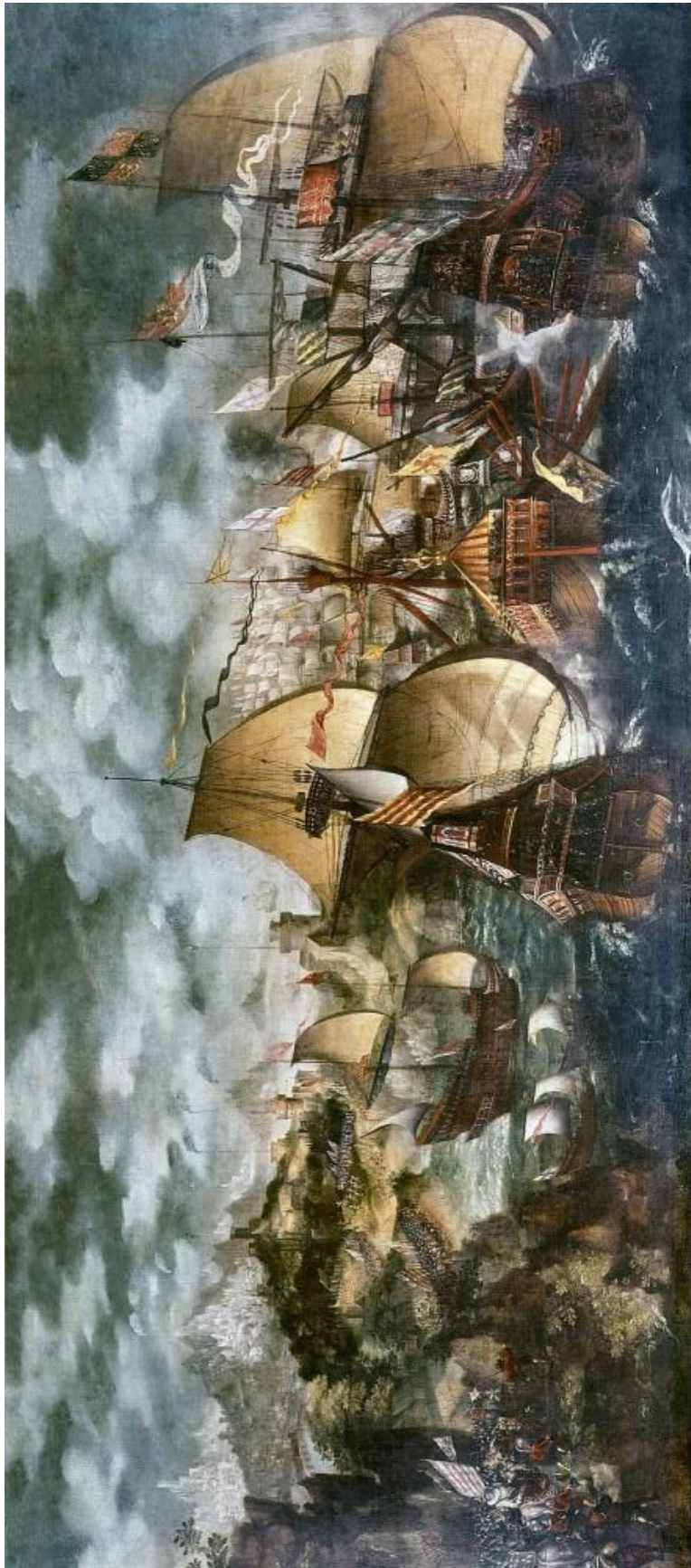
**Resource D** A Dutch painting of 1590 showing the fire ships sent into the Spanish Armada.



Turn over ►



**Resource E** A painting showing the Battle of Gravelines.





**Resource F1 The 'Armada portrait' to commemorate the English victory in 1588.**



Turn over ►



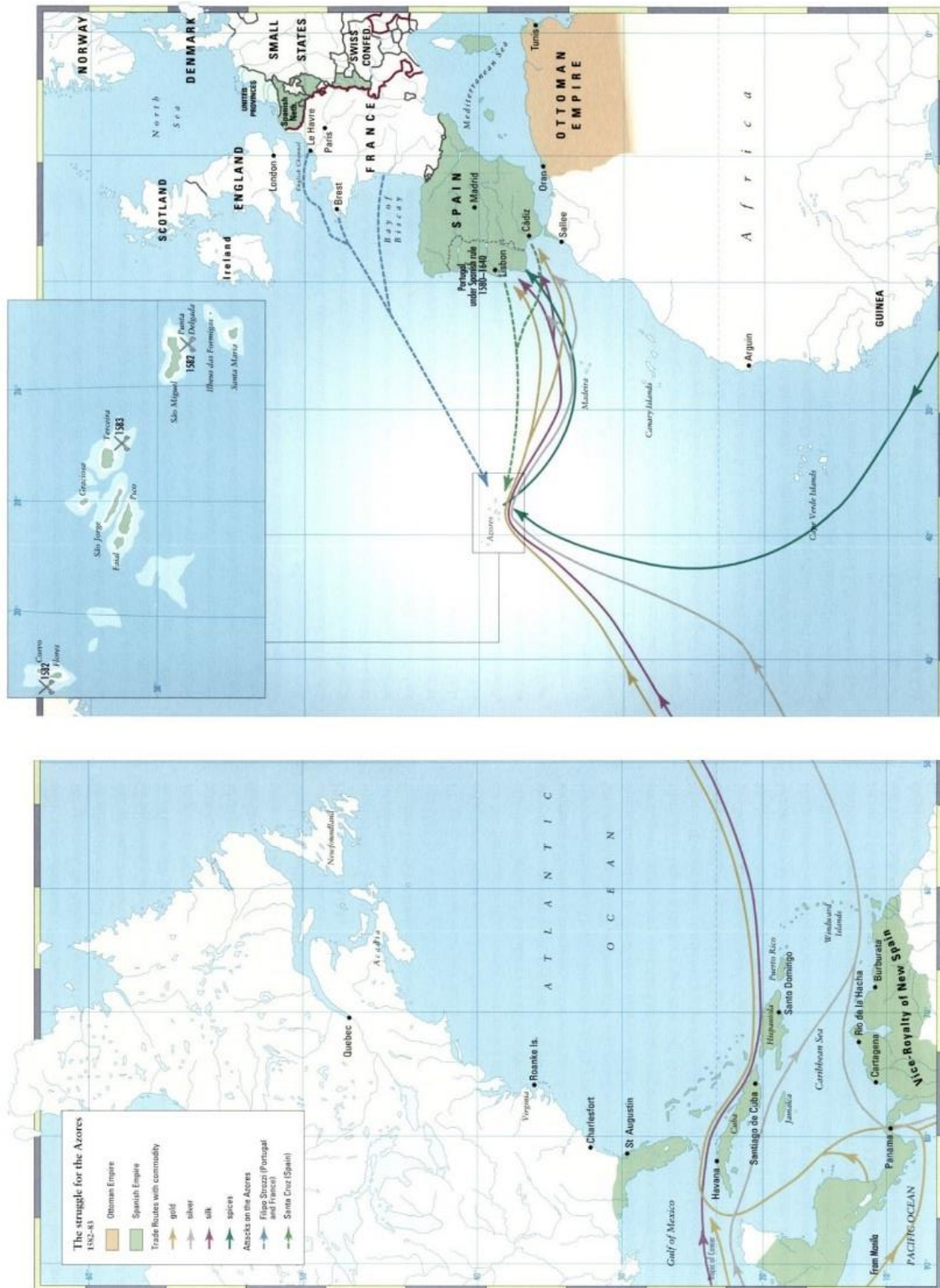
**Resource F2 The Silver Victory medal given to her admirals by Queen Elizabeth I after the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588.**

The caption around the image says, 'God blew and they (the Spanish fleet) were scattered'.





**Resource G** A map showing the Azores taken in 1583 by Santa Cruz for Spain from Portugal.



Turn over ►





<b>SAILS</b>		<b>MASTS</b>		<b>ANCHOR</b>		<b>HALF-DECK</b>		<b>UPPER GUN-DECK</b>		<b>LOWER GUN-DECK</b>		<b>ORLOP DECK</b>		<b>General stores</b>	
1	Fore top-gallant	10	Fore	18	Anchor	27	Lockers	32	Officers' cabins	39	Break in deck	47	Tiller	53	Ladder to upper gun-deck
2	Fore topsail	11	Main	20	Lower gun-deck	28	Master (shown giving instructions)	33	Helmsmen	40	Night's head	48	Gunnery's store	57	Lazaretto
3	Fore course	12	Mizzen	21	Orlop deck			34	Whipstaff	41	Boats stowed	50	Break in deck	58	Beer store
4	Fore bonnet			22	Keel			35	Main staircase (from half-deck)	42	Great hatch	51	Crew's space	59	Magazine
5	Spritsail			23	Rudder	29	Great skylight	36	Main staircase (from half-deck)	43	Jeer capstan	55	Base of peer capstan	60	Protected
6	Main topsail	13	Figurehead	24	Quarter gallery	30	Officers	44	Members of ship's crew	49	Break in deck	61	Young crew carrying powder	<b>HOLD</b>	
7	Main course	14	Beak	25	Half (or quarter) deck	31	Demolition (from main)	45	Galleys (blue-pipe)	50	Crew's space	65	Flour	66	Fresh water in barrels
8	Main boom	15	Bowsprit					46	Galley (blue-pipe)	51	Lower main capstan	69	Ribs and main timbers	70	Cross (or athwartship) timbers
								47	Galley (blue-pipe)	52	Members of crew	71	Ballast	72	Outer planking

**Resource I An extract adapted from ‘The Chief Business: the Spanish Armada, 1588’, by Patrick Williams, published in ‘History Review’ (2009).**

Elizabeth’s advisers were deeply divided over the Armada. Drake and Hawkins urged the queen to destroy the Armada in Lisbon but her political advisers insisted that the English fleet had to remain in home waters at a time of national peril and it was to these men that Elizabeth listened. She, like Philip, chose a leading nobleman, Charles Howard, Lord of Effingham, to control her argumentative sailors. Drake, who terrified his colleagues almost as much as he did the Spanish, was fobbed off with the position of Vice-admiral. By 3 June, Howard and the main fleet were stationed at Plymouth while Lord Henry Seymour guarded the Strait of Dover<sup>1</sup>.

On 9 May, Medina Sidonia gathered his men and sealed his fleet in Lisbon harbour (not least so that no one could flee from it) but it was still not ready to sail for another three weeks, so its men continued to use up provisions and to put up with worsening sanitary conditions. When on 30 May the Armada at last edged out to sea, it consisted of 141 ships and 26 961 men (7 666 seamen and 19,295 soldiers). The weather would not let up, however, and Medina Sidonia decided to re-provision at Corunna where the fleet was struck on 19 June by a powerful storm that threw many ships into the Atlantic and Bay of Biscay. This was the last straw for Medina Sidonia who urged Philip to abandon the enterprise and negotiate an honourable settlement with Elizabeth. Outraged, Philip ordered him to sail at once. On 21–22 July, ten weeks after the last men had gone on board, the Armada set sail again. It now consisted of 127 ships – 20 galleons and four fighting galleys, 44 armed merchantmen, 38 auxiliaries and 21 supply ships.

### **Victory and Defeat**

At about 4.00 pm on 29 July the Armada sighted England. Some commanders urged Medina Sidonia to attack the English fleet in Plymouth Sound but he insisted on pressing ahead to the Strait of Dover. Unknown to him, in the late afternoon the English had sailed out of Plymouth against the prevailing wind and sailed around the Armada to take up position to the windward giving it a crucial advantage. The Armada was now in a crescent formation to protect its fighting galleons in the centre but the formation had the disadvantages of preventing it from using most of its guns and of making it more likely that ships could collide with each other.

At 9.00 am on 31 July the English opened fire with the *San Juan de Portugal* receiving over 300 rounds. At about 5.00 pm the *San Salvador* was disabled by an explosion and captured by the English. Shortly afterwards, Medina Sidonia reluctantly abandoned the *Nuestra Señora del Rosario*, which had been damaged in a collision. Drake sneaked up on her during the night and claimed her as his prize. Taking the two ships would have encouraged the English who realised that the men on the enemy fleet were enduring dreadful hardship and squalor.

On 2 August, Howard launched the first full assault, attacking Medina Sidonia’s own galleon, the *San Martín*, for ten hours. This action convinced the English commanders that although they could not easily sink Spanish galleons they had little to fear from the long-range guns of the Armada because while the English fired over 500 cannon balls, the *San Martín* had responded with only 80 shots, and all of them were from one side. As a result Howard decided to save his ammunition for the decisive battle in the Strait, although there was some heavy fighting off the Isle of Wight, as the English made sure that the Spanish could not land there. Despite the Armada not being attacked for three days, all this time it was using up its valuable (and rotting) supplies and water.

By about 4.00 pm on 6 August, the Armada was close to Calais where Medina Sidonia received the shattering news that Parma would not be able to join him for at least a week, even assuming that he could escape the Dutch ships barricading the coast. Anxious about the situation, Medina Sidonia now gave the fatal order to anchor 35 kilometres from Dunkirk. Lord Seymour now joined Howard and the

combined English fleet of 160 ships took up position facing the Armada. As the sun went down the Spanish were terrified to see eight fire ships being towed towards them and believing that they were packed with explosives and incendiaries, Medina Sidonia ordered his fleet to disperse and regroup after the danger had passed. In fact, the fire ships were not laden with bombs and did hardly any damage, but their appearance broke the formation of the Spanish fleet, something which the English commanders had been unable to do. As panic spread through the Armada, some captains even cut their anchors which would have a dreadful effect in the hours and weeks to come.

At dawn on 8 August, the English, with the wind and currents in their favour, launched a ferocious and relentless attack on the Armada. This Battle of Gravelines, involving a score or so fighting galleons on either side, lasted for nine hours. Much of the battle was fought at such close-quarters that sailors could hurl abuse at each other, though the English were careful not to allow the Spanish to come close enough to use grappling irons. The wisdom of Howard's decision to save his ammunition now became clear as the firepower of the Armada was only three-quarters of that of the English. The Spanish ships had less than one-third of the long-range guns that the English had (172:497) and fewer of the heavy and medium guns (165:251). Worse still, the Spanish heavy guns could not be reloaded and fired quickly, and since many of them had been acquired from across Europe, the ships often did not have the correct cannon balls to use in them. As a result the Battle of Gravelines was desperately uneven.

Medina Sidonia's *San Martin*, was isolated with only four galleons to protect it, and was struck by over 200 cannon balls and lost about 40 men but the Spanish rallied to their commander and fought with a courage that deeply impressed the English. Only one ship was sunk in the battle but others were captured or ran aground. Of the 2636 men who were lost from the Armada in battle, probably 1000 died (and a further 800 were wounded) at Gravelines.

On 9 August, as Medina Sidonia consulted his commanders as to whether he could fight his way back into the Channel, fierce winds – 'Protestant winds' as the English called them – forced the Armada into the North Sea. The Duke decided that he must now head for home by sailing north around Scotland subjecting those who had survived the hardships of the voyage and the battle of Gravelines to an even worse ordeal. The English chased the Armada for two days but turned back as it neared Scotland.

Of the 127 ships that had left Corunna in July, 92 returned home but only half were fit to be used again. 13 399 men reached Spain – 3834 sailors and 9565 soldiers – but even then hundreds died before they could be taken ashore. The Armada had failed. Philip did not blame Medina Sidonia for the disaster, accepting – like Elizabeth – that God's winds had blown against his fleet.

1 The narrowest part of the English Channel.



**Resource J An extract adapted from 'Why the Armada Failed', by Geoffrey Parker, (1988).**

In the autumn of 1585 reports poured into the Spanish court concerning both the build-up of English forces in the Netherlands and the trail of destruction left by Drake and his ships. The king responded by asking his two most senior serving officers, the Marquis of Santa Cruz and the Duke of Parma, to devise a strategy for the rapid conquest of England. In March 1586 Santa Cruz proposed launching a full-scale invasion from Spain the following summer using overwhelming force. He would strike in southern Ireland to draw Elizabeth's forces away and then mount a surprise attack on the south coast of England. Philip was impressed, and in April 1586 orders went out to start collecting the 286 ships, 60 000 men, supplies, and heavy artillery envisaged by Santa Cruz. But then, late in June, the Duke of Parma submitted another plan which proposed a lightning attack by some 30 000 troops from Flanders. This Spanish army led by Parma would land in secret on the Kent coast and march on London to capture the queen and her ministers. Since Parma thought the crossing could be achieved in twelve hours, and the march on London within a week, there was no part in his plan for a fleet from Spain except to cover their retreat if things went badly wrong.

Which of these plans would the king choose?

Only someone with no military experience could have done what Philip did and attempt both strategies at the same time! In July 1586, Philip decided to continue gathering an enormous fleet in Spain, which would sail up the English Channel and shepherd Parma's army in barges across the Channel to land in Kent. This expedition was expected to capture London almost at once and set up a temporary government of occupation under Cardinal Allen, leader of the English Catholic exiles.

By April 1587, the plans were well advanced. Parma had organised a strong build-up of forces in the Netherlands, while at Lisbon Santa Cruz had a strike-force of fifty fighting ships, plus a few supply vessels, with a large convoy of auxiliaries and transports, guarded by the galleons of the American treasure fleet at Cadiz. These preparations were known about in England where Elizabeth's government received regular intelligence reports both from Portuguese exiles in London with links in Lisbon, and from English spies abroad, particularly in Italy, where Philip looked for financial support from the Pope.

Acting on this information, Elizabeth launched a pre-emptive strike by authorising Drake to make his famous raid on Cadiz in April 1587, commonly known as 'the singeing of the king of Spain's beard'. This was not as damaging as was once thought. Despite the loss of twenty-four ships, the destruction of some supplies, and the annoyance to Spain of the disrupted shipping between Andalusia and Lisbon for six weeks, it was not critical. The real damage resulted from Drake's departure to the Azores afterwards. He aimed to intercept and capture the rich treasure ships returning from India and America, and it was that possibility which forced Santa Cruz to lead the Lisbon fleet in pursuit. Drake's menacing presence in mid-Atlantic forced Santa Cruz to stay at sea until September 25, despite storm damage to his vessels and serious losses of men and munitions, as he tried to stop the English from capturing or destroying more Spanish shipping. When the battered royal fleet finally returned to Lisbon, it brought the treasure ships home safely but it was obvious that the Armada could not now sail against England in 1587. Drake had given his country one more year to prepare.

Philip II, realising that a surprise attack was no longer possible, had to devise a new invasion strategy. He decided to drop any diversionary attack on Ireland and his Armada would now sail in a single, unwieldy, but overwhelmingly powerful fleet directly to the Channel to join forces with Parma and his army.

In February 1588 Santa Cruz, died from typhus and the task of implementing the new strategy fell to his replacement, the Duke of Medina Sidonia. Medina Sidonia was remarkably successful in supervising the vast work of assembling more ships, troops and munitions than had ever been collected

in a European port before. Only three months after the Duke took command, everything was ready. On May 28th, 1588, the Armada put to sea but before long rations were being used up faster than they could be replaced and the daily allowance was cut by a third. Furthermore, some of the guns, powder and stores produced in the spring of 1588 turned out to be unfit for use. Nevertheless this was not what caused failure. If the Armada had landed successfully in Kent, there would have been enough of everything to secure the Spanish position. Philip II failed to conquer England, not because of defective supplies, but through unsound strategy and faulty tactics.

The Duke of Parma has taken much of the blame for the failure of 'the Enterprise of England', because, it is said, his forces were not ready to join the Spanish fleet when it arrived. Records show, however, that enough boats to transport his army were ready from September 1587 until August 31 1588. Ready, that is, except for final departure because the boats were too small for either men or stores to be left on board for long. Parma repeatedly told the king that his little ships could only transport troops, not fight and that, 'four warships could sink every boat we have'. Although ready, Parma's men and ships were confined to port until the Armada could make the seas safe. In the end, as a result of the thorough drills which Parma had insisted on, the final embarkation of his troops took just 48 hours.

The problem was that, when the Armada finally reached the Narrow Seas, Parma did not have 48 hours. Philip II underestimated the problems of co-ordinating two huge military undertakings separated by one thousand miles of water. Medina Sidonia's messages informing Parma of his progress, took days to arrive so the courier he sent on August 6th did not arrive until the evening of the 7th. But unfortunately for the two dukes, on August 6th, the Armada was already waiting at Calais, and by the evening of the 7th it was facing attack by English fire ships. It was already too late by the time Parma knew for certain that the fleet had arrived.

But why was it too late? Why could the Armada not wait? Despite enjoying ideal weather, the Armada could only travel as fast as the slowest ship (roughly the speed of a rowing boat). It is to Medina Sidonia's credit that his fleet's tight formation and excellent discipline brought it to Calais with only three losses, but anchored in the powerful tides off the port, he lost strategic control of the situation. Medina Sidonia simply did not know what to do next. He waited there for a day and two nights, not realising that Parma did not know that he had arrived. It was also here that the Armada campaign fell apart. Philip II's masterplan now depended on the Spanish having command of the sea but the English navy had not been decisively defeated. Philip II had never considered this, and the English were not simply going to wait patiently for the Duke of Parma to embark his troops.

Why were the English victorious in the battle that followed? John Hawkins's achievement in rebuilding or laying down a fleet of 'race-built' warships was important as they were probably the best warships anywhere in the world. By 1588, however, only twenty-four galleons out of a fleet of over 135 were of the new design. Perhaps the number of older vessels explains the cautious reaction of the English fleet as it failed to prevent the Armada's orderly progress up the Channel. After an initial skirmish off the Isle of Wight on August 3rd/4th, they did not attack again until four days later, off Gravelines.

This attack showed that the English had got the measure of the enemy. They launched an aggressive and devastating close-range cannon assault on the Spanish fleet. Surprisingly in this battle the Queen's ships, unlike the Spanish, sustained no substantial structural damage, only some minor damage to spars and ship's boats. Why was this, when we know that, at close range, the Spanish guns should have been at their most destructive?

Medina Sidonia said that the Armada at Gravelines had almost completely run out of shot, particularly of the heavier type. But we know that this was not true as many ships which survived the fight had substantial stocks of round shot and powder still on board, including of the 'ship-smashing' calibre. Accounts of the battle show that a Spanish ship fired one or two rounds a day, so why couldn't the Armada fire more frequently and effectively? Spanish guns were always kept loaded and a ship was expected to fire its close-range cannonade just before it rammed and boarded its enemy. The Spanish

did not expect to have to fire a second round, so both their training and equipment were unsuited for reloading during a battle such as Gravelines where the English delivered a close range continuous bombardment.

This was because there were only two ways to reload muzzle-loading guns at sea in the sixteenth century. The guns could either be untied and dragged inboard and reloaded within the ship, or they could be left in the fully run-out position and loaded outboard. Outboard loading was awkward and dangerous because the loader had to uncomfortably straddle the hot barrel outside the gun's porthole and carry out the reloading from this exposed and difficult position, all within small-arms range of the enemy. It was equally impractical for cannon to be loaded inboard while a ship was closely engaged with the enemy due to a lack of working space on Spanish gun decks and the inefficient design of their gun carriages. Therefore, once close action began, most Spanish ships only managed to fire their previously prepared salvo, and were never able to apply a continuous close range cannonade against the enemy. Although smaller weapons could still be used, they would not sink ships.

It was not an inequality of guns that explains Spain's defeat at Gravelines, so much as the four small wheels on the English gun carriages, which can be seen as England's decisive secret weapon in 1588. These small wheels meant that the gun muzzles could protrude much further through the gun-ports, with no awkward wide wheels to obstruct the sides or rear. This contrasted with the clumsy and inefficient Spanish gun mountings, which made reloading in action virtually impossible. As a result English broadsides could be delivered consecutively during the course of a fight with the range of fire being dictated by the superior sailing qualities of the English ships.

Philip II had realised this danger and warned Medina-Sidonia that 'the enemy's objective will be to fight at long distance, to get the advantage of his guns, so our fleet should attack and get close to them, ready for hand-to-hand combat.' Unfortunately Philip chose a strategy that made his fleet a sitting target for tactics known to favour the English. Although he had maps and reports, he never met his senior commanders to discuss the best way to carry out the grand design, nor did he let them question the strategy he intended to force upon them. Instead, he did everything he could to silence their criticisms. None of Philip's plans followed the proposals they had made and the final version depended for success upon a tactical edge which Spain's ships did not possess. Most of the blame for the failure of the Spanish Armada should go, not to Parma or Medina Sidonia, but to Philip II. The king had created the Armada, and the king destroyed it.



**Resource K An extract adapted from 'The Lurch into War', by Simon Adams, (1988).**

The arrival of the Armada took the English by surprise because by the end of July 1588 they had decided that it would not sail so late in summer. The purpose of the fleet at Plymouth had been offensive rather than defensive as they intended to intercept the Armada in Spanish waters. Only the bad weather that drove the English fleet back to Plymouth in June and July prevented it from doing so. The surprise arrival of the Armada caused many English ships to leave Plymouth to engage the Spanish where they did not intend to, and before they could take on board adequate supplies of food and ammunition. Therefore the running battle up the Channel was both unplanned and unexpected.

Instead, the English fleet was preparing to leave for the Azores to intercept the expected annual silver fleet from the Spanish Americas. This suggests that an offensive war against Spain was more widely supported than historians have previously thought. Why did England go to war with Spain in the first place? War was never formally declared before the peace treaty of 1604 but hostilities had broken out in 1585 when a small English army was sent to help the Netherlands, followed by Drake's raid on the West Indies in the winter of 1585-86. These provocative actions led Philip II to decide that the 'Enterprise of England' was both necessary and justified.

The sea war and the English Netherlands intervention formed a combined strategy of 'self-sustained war', in which military expeditions in Europe would be financed by the profits of maritime raiding in the Spanish empire. This strategy had first been outlined a decade earlier when Drake's return from his circumnavigation voyage and the Spanish occupation of Portugal added a new dimension to the potential confrontation with Spain. Drake's success showed the vulnerability of the Spanish empire, the vast profits to be gained, and the apparent superiority of English ships and mariners. This self-sustaining war now seemed a practical way to correct the inequality of resources between England and Spain. The central scheme involved intercepting the annual silver fleet from Spanish America at the Azores, where it would have to stop to take in supplies of water. Alternatively the West Indies could be attacked directly. Drake also discovered that the Portuguese empire in the East Indies was vulnerable to English commerce because although the Spanish conquest of Portugal had dramatically increased Philip's resources, it also extended the area that he would have to defend. English support for Dom Antonio, a claimant to the Portuguese throne who was exiled in England, could lead to the capture of the Azores, trade with the Portuguese Indies, and even a revolt in Portugal itself.

English intervention in the Netherlands was caused by the assassination of William of Orange in July 1584. The Privy Council believed that the Netherlands was close to complete political breakdown leading to a total Spanish victory. This limited intervention was not aimed at defeating Parma's army but to create a military stalemate which would persuade Philip to accept Elizabeth's compromise settlement. This remained the aim of her policy and she saw no conflict between providing limited military assistance to the Dutch and continuing to put forward peace proposals. Since it was doubtful that Philip would be forced to negotiate just by English military intervention in the Netherlands, Elizabeth had no alternative but to apply pressure at sea. Philip's seizure of English shipping in May 1585 worked in her favour, for it allowed her to justify not only the issuing of privateering commissions, but also a widespread counter-embargo on trade with Spain. Yet this blockade was almost impossible to enforce and only a more direct form of naval attack would be effective.

The evolution of such a direct naval strategy is unclear, however, and although Drake left England in September 1585 clearly intending to raid the West Indies, it is debateable how much Elizabeth and her councillors knew about it. In the spring of 1586 a larger Anglo-Dutch naval attack on Spain was discussed but nothing came of it except for a little-publicised attempt by Hawkins to intercept the silver fleet that summer. In fact the naval war of 1586 was anything but a success as Drake's West Indies voyage failed even to pay for itself. The original purpose of the Cadiz voyage also remains unclear. All that survives of Drake's instructions is the order of 19 April 1587 (which Drake never received) telling him not to enter a Spanish port, since Elizabeth believed that Philip was willing to enter into serious

peace talks. It seems that Elizabeth's main aim was the destruction of the shipping that Philip was reportedly assembling for the Armada, and Cadiz may not have been identified as a specific target. Unlike the West Indies voyage, however, the Cadiz expedition was a dramatic success. Drake caught the Spaniards assembling the Armada, and their widely dispersed fleet was unable to combine to oppose him. Although he missed the silver fleet, Drake returned to England very impressed by the possibilities for a future invasion of Portugal – something more substantial than merely 'singeing the King of Spain's beard'.

Drake's fleet was kept at Plymouth during the winter of 1587–1588, so it could mount a major expedition in 1588. By October 1587, the threat of the Armada had to be taken seriously but the English were, perhaps, over confident. Not only did they underestimate the number and effectiveness of the Armada's ships, but it did not seem possible that the Spanish would attempt to sail up the Channel and rendezvous with Parma. He had a well-deserved reputation for deception so a more devious plan seemed likely, one that involved Ireland and Scotland, where the Armada would be difficult to intercept. It is, therefore, not surprising that at the beginning of 1588 offensive measures for the English looked more attractive than remaining on the defensive. Burghley proposed two expeditions, one to the Azores to intercept the silver fleet in the summer, while Drake proposed intercepting the Armada off Lisbon. As a result Howard was instructed to assemble the majority of the fleet at Plymouth in May. As in 1587, Elizabeth's main aim was to destroy Spanish shipping as the threat to Ireland or Scotland made it too risky to wait for the Armada to arrive in home waters. The ships at Plymouth made up the largest fleet the Elizabethan government had ever assembled but supplying it was extremely difficult, and a combination of organisational delays and bad weather prevented the offensive campaign from taking place. Instead, it was the Armada that made its way safely to the Channel and forced an encounter in home waters.

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**Resource L An extract adapted from ‘Guns, Gales & God: Elizabeth I’s ‘Merchant Navy’ by Ian Friel (2010).**

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Between 1585 and 1603 England and Spain waged a bitter maritime war that England survived rather than won. This was due to Spanish errors, bad weather and the problems of staging long-range seaborne invasions. The English ability at sea also played an important part in fending off invasion and carrying the war to the Spanish empire.

Elizabeth I’s royal fleet was never large and had no permanent officers or sailors. As a result, it relied on men and ships from the merchant community to supply extra warships, storage vessels and troop transports. Of the 226 or so English ships that faced the Armada only 34 were Elizabeth’s, the rest belonged to her subjects. The merchant fleet itself was not very big in the early 1580s with only 177 ships having a capacity of 100 tons or over which made them officially capable of fighting. The fleet did grow considerably from the later 16th century as the government paid grants to private owners to build ships of 100 tons or more and subsidies were given for just over 500 ships between 1560 and 1610. Most were probably built in England, but some vessels were acquired from abroad by purchase, capture or legal seizure.

Towards the end of the century more of the larger vessels with a capacity of over 200 tons were built which reflected a growing demand for larger trading ships on long-distance routes or as privateers. In the first half of the 16th century the English maritime economy was dominated by the cloth trade between London and Antwerp but the decline and eventual collapse of the Antwerp market in the 1550s and 1560s prompted merchants to start looking further afield. From the 1550s a series of voyages to more distant parts of Europe, as well as growing numbers of transoceanic expeditions, aimed to open up new markets and gain access to exotic, high-value goods. Ship owners were mainly merchants, but the gentry and aristocracy also invested in vessels and there was some financial involvement from lower down the social scale. Ships were expensive to build and maintain so part-ownership and Joint Stock companies were common because it helped spread the risk of financial loss resulting from shipwreck or capture. Sea trading was hazardous but could offer high returns on the initial investment, with cargoes often being over fifty times more valuable than the ships that carried them, which explained why owners and investors risked their money.

Shipboard facilities were primitive. Cabins were few and limited to senior officers while sleeping arrangements for ordinary sailors were haphazard and basic. Hammocks were used in some Elizabethan warships but may not have been common in merchant ships. The ship’s kitchen was also basic, and often deep in the unhealthiest part of the ship. Boiled food was common, although there is evidence that some cooks were able to toast, grill or fry food at sea. Fresh provisions were sometimes available on shorter voyages, but normal shipboard food - salted beef, pork and fish, cheese, and biscuit - was made to last. Beer was the usual drink because it could be stored for longer than water without becoming contaminated. A sailor’s rations could have provided enough calories for heavy work in wet and cold conditions but the food was not good for long-term health due to its high salt content, poor quality and lack of vitamins. Scurvy, a deadly disease caused by vitamin C deficiency, was first encountered by Elizabethan sailors on long-distance voyages. Some seafarers knew that fresh fruit and vegetables could prevent scurvy, but it took centuries for this knowledge to change the sailor’s diet significantly. Rats, fleas and other vermin were common despite efforts to keep ships clean and the filth that built up could produce a stench throughout the vessel. Crowded conditions meant that disease could spread rapidly and although there were surgeons on board, there was little they could do to fight food poisoning or major epidemics.

The Elizabethan world was class conscious with a strict social hierarchy but ordinary sailors had some personal freedom and status. Professional ability and personal qualities were more important than birth or social position. This status meant that ordinary sailors were consulted by their commanders on major courses of action – a shipboard ‘democracy’ at odds with the way the rest of society operated and which contributed to the reputation of seamen as being difficult to control. However, consultation was

less common on voyages of exploration and virtually non-existent in naval vessels. Sailors learned their craft at sea, many started out at a very young age as ships' boys. Most stayed as ordinary seaman although a few gained apprenticeships (often through family connections), which could lead to officer status. Merchant sailors normally negotiated their own wages and signed up for just one voyage. The casual nature of this employment was the source of the seaman's relative freedom, but it could also be the freedom to starve. Work was often uncertain and, if a ship was lost, any survivors were paid nothing. Many sailors were highly skilled, but they worked in difficult, dangerous and frequently violent conditions and they often behaved accordingly. They were constantly at risk from shipwreck, attack, drowning and shipboard accidents and while some were incredibly ruthless, others showed mercy to their enemies or risked their lives to save shipmates. Religion was a constant presence at sea, with services held once or twice a day aboard most ships. Also, it was not unknown for sailors, whose standards of literacy seem to have been higher than those of the general population, to possess religious texts.

Given its discomforts and dangers, why did men go to sea? Family tradition or the prospect of freedom motivated some, but most became sailors because it gave them the chance to escape poverty and perhaps even get rich. Working on a merchant ship provided a poor man with wages, accommodation and regular meals, while privateer and pirate crews received shares in the ships and cargoes they captured. The profit motive ran through the seafaring community from top to bottom and the prospect of loot even led Drake to desert his station temporarily during the 1588 Armada campaign to pursue a disabled Spanish warship.

Piracy was widespread in the 16th century and many merchant ships were armed. The war with Spain turned privateering into a major industry with between 100 and 200 (and sometimes more) English ships a year engaged in privateering and piracy during the conflict. Over half the ships seized by the High Court of Admiralty between 1579 and 1590 had weapons of some kind, although few merchantmen could match the firepower of the Queen's warships with their many cannon. However, in trying to tackle piracy, the Elizabethan government faced a problem as the most successful pirates were often the people most needed to defend the country at sea.

England was a much more significant force in trade and conflict at sea when Elizabeth I died in 1603 than it had been in the 1550s. Before her reign, England had been little more than a northwest European maritime power but the voyages of trade, privateering, piracy and exploration made English ships a regular presence from northern Russia to the Mediterranean, as well as in parts of the Americas, Africa and Asia. However, it was not the superpower that later myth has made it, nor were its sailors always the stuff of legend, motivated as they were, more by poverty or greed, than by a desire for glory. Yet without the sailors and ships of the merchant fleet, it is unlikely that the royal navy could have kept the country free from a Spanish invasion. The fleet allowed England to 'punch above its weight' in the conflict at a time when the country's growing merchant navy and experienced seafaring community enabled England to move onto the world stage for the first time.



**Resource M An extract adapted from 'The Spanish Armada' by Robert Hutchinson, (2013).**

It was obvious that England could not just sit back and wait meekly to be defeated by the invading Armada. John Hawkins, now treasurer of the Navy, wrote to Walsingham on 1 February 1587 calling for a naval reconnaissance expedition of six warships to disrupt Spanish preparations for war by imposing a blockade on their ports. Drake also argued for urgent action, believing that a pre-emptive strike on the Spanish fleet was vital to allow time for England's land and sea defences to be strengthened. After much characteristic dithering and without much enthusiasm Elizabeth agreed to Drake's mission on 25 March, but would only allow four of her own warships and two smaller vessels to take part. The rest of Drake's fleet of twenty five ships would be fitted out and paid for by nineteen London merchants who hoped to benefit from rich pickings and plunder gained during the expedition. Elizabeth's government was very careful to hide preparations for the expedition and its purpose was kept secret from all but its most senior officers. Speed was essential not just for the element of surprise, but because Drake rightly feared that his assault on Spain could be halted even before it had sailed, by fresh orders from Elizabeth. Stocked up with food, water and munitions, Drake left Plymouth on 12 April and sighted the Spanish coast three days later. Meanwhile Elizabeth was having second thoughts about Drake's expedition as reports reached her that preparations for a Spanish invasion were slowing and that the Duke of Parma had sent an envoy with tempting promises of peace. Nine days after Drake had left, Elizabeth sent urgent instructions that he was not to attack any Spanish ports or towns but he could attack Spanish ships.

From personal experience, Drake understood that the Spanish fleet could not operate effectively without adequate stores of food, water and ammunition so instead of striking at heavily defended Lisbon where the Armada ships were gathering, he planned to attack their main supply base at Cadiz. There was only one entrance channel for large ships, which had to pass under the guns of the city walls. Drake's second in command, privately and forcibly argued against an immediate attack on the Spanish but Drake dismissed his concerns.

Drake's fleet arrived outside Cadiz about one hour before sunset under strict orders to fly no flags until the very last moment to confuse the lookouts on the city walls. It was a warm spring evening, Cadiz's central square was packed with spectators watching an acrobat, as the first English cannon shots boomed across the bay. There were 32 large ships in the port, loaded with supplies for the Spanish fleet. Over the next two days Drake's fleet set them alight while under constant fire themselves from onshore cannon although these did little damage to the English ships. Spanish galleys<sup>1</sup> attacked Drake's ships but they were no match for the English heavily armoured warships and when the Spanish used smaller vessels as fire ships they were towed away by English sailors and harmlessly run aground in shallow waters. Although the arrival of the Duke of Medina Sidonia with 6000 local militia prevented the English from landing on the inner harbour, Drake still restocked his ships with Spanish wine, oil, biscuit and dried fruits, while around 500 tons of bread were set alight, along with 40 tonnes of wheat. Most important was the destruction of a year's supply of iron hoops and wooden staves used to make barrels. This was to be a disaster for the Armada as food and water had to be stored in unseasoned, leaky casks which resulted in depleted water supplies and quickly rotting food.

Overall the Spanish had lost 24 ships valued at more than £750 000 (£137 000 000 at today's prices) which horrified Philip when he heard the news in Madrid. Drake and his English ships sailed off westwards leaving behind them confusion and panic stricken messages sent hastily around Spain and Portugal warning of the danger that Drake still posed. Medina Sidonia also sent a ship to the West Indies ordering the treasure fleet to stay in Cuba until it was known that Drake was safely back in England. Meanwhile Drake was receiving information about shipping movements and one piece of information must have made his eyes light up. The *San Felipe*, laden with expensive exotic spices, silks and precious stones worth £108 000, was shortly to arrive from the East Indies and was duly captured on 18 June making a handsome profit for those merchants who had invested in Drake's expedition. All Elizabeth's doubts about the expedition had now disappeared and she was able to boast of its success to an astonished and disbelieving French ambassador in May. One of Walsingham's agents also reported the fear as well as the damage that Drake's expedition had caused to the Spanish.

The English expedition arrived back in Plymouth with the *San Felipe* on 26 June 1587 to an outburst of national hero-worship for 'singeing the King of Spain's beard', as government propaganda described it. Drake had destroyed over 10,000 tons of Spanish shipping, much of the Armada's supplies, and had delayed it from sailing for at least 12 months.

- 1 A galley was a small warship propelled by rowing.

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