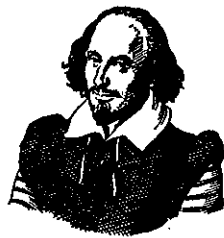


35 Elizabeth and Friends

The word **court** has many different meanings. There is a basketball court, a law court, and a royal court. A royal court usually consists of a king or queen and his or her advisers and servants. It can also be the king and queen's home.

Shakespeare's Globe Theatre looks round like a globe (though it is actually shaped like a polygon). It still stands in England (it's been rebuilt), where you can visit it. Did you notice the *re* on the end of *theater*? That's the way the word is spelled in England, where they pronounce some words strangely, too. (Of course, they think we spell and pronounce words strangely.)



One of the plays that William Shakespeare (above) wrote was *The Tempest*. Caliban, a character in the play, was a kind of monster, based on explorers' descriptions of the Patagonians.

And now, back to the late 16th century—to the time of Menendez and Ribaut, to the Elizabethan Age.

As you know, Elizabeth became queen of England in 1558, when Bloody Mary died. She turned out to be amazing, perhaps the best monarch England ever had. She was smart, tough, and energetic. She was a musician and a poet. She spoke French, Spanish, and Italian, and could read and write Greek and Latin. She filled her court with people who were intelligent and witty and got things done. The Elizabethan Age was the greatest of times in England.

It was then that Shakespeare wrote his plays and English developed into a language of richness and beauty. It was an age when people

wanted to act like knights and be chivalrous. Sir Philip Sidney was an Elizabethan poet and a knight whom everyone admired. When he was wounded on a battlefield, he passed his cup of water to a dying soldier, saying, "Thy need is yet greater than mine."

Sir Walter Raleigh was another of the great men of his day. He wrote poetry, fought pirates, and had adventures. One day, while Queen Elizabeth was out walking, she came to a huge puddle (or so they say). There was no way around it. Sir Walter saw she would dirty her feet, so he whipped off his cloak, spread it out over the mud, and let her walk across it. That was chivalry! (Even if it wasn't true.)

Good manners make you feel good about yourself. Most English people felt very good about themselves and their country during the Elizabethan Age. For those with ambition, energy, and luck, there were new opportunities.

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For some, life was becoming elegant. Horse-drawn carriages were introduced into England from the Netherlands. Forks were being used at the French court, and a few Englishmen actually tried them. (But most people still ate with only a knife and their fingers.) Before the end of the century some people would put heels on their shoes. And picture this marvel of technology: a toilet, called a "water closet," was installed in the queen's palace.

The Elizabethans ate heartily. Those who could afford them downed meat, fish, bread, wine, and sweets, all at the same meal. They didn't eat vegetables. Vegetables were eaten only by the poor, who grew them in gardens. The rich sometimes got painful joint ailments. Vegetables might have prevented them. Many people, even Queen Elizabeth, had teeth blackened by decay. Elizabeth's teeth were painful as well as ugly. She tried to clean them the way the experts advised: by brushing them with sugar!

The Elizabethan Age was a time of excess. Some people ate too much, drank too much, and spent too much money on clothes and partying. The English people also began to create a great empire that would one day stretch around the world. The queen seemed to infect the nation with her taste and energy. That energy would change America, but not in the 16th century.

It was Spain that England had on her mind in the 16th century. Spain was a greater power than England. The English wanted their nation to be the world's greatest. The French and the Dutch wanted the same thing for their nations. Spain would fight to hold on to her exalted position. That duel for first place between the great European powers seemed much more important to most people than anything that might develop in the wilds of a distant continent.

England did try to plant colonies in the New World during Elizabeth's reign. She just didn't seem to have much luck.



Not long before the queen died, she said: "I count the glory of my crown that I have reigned with your loves...and though you have had, and may have, many mightier and wiser princes sitting in this seat, yet you never had nor shall have, any that will love you better."