

The Marriage Game.

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From the moment Elizabeth I became Queen, there was one question that everyone was asking-who will the Queen marry? Most people believed it would be one of the first things Elizabeth would do. They expected her to select a husband to help her run the country, and more importantly, to get her pregnant so that there would be an heir to succeed her.



Elizabeth was young and there were high hopes that soon England would have a royal family again. If Elizabeth died without having a child the future would be uncertain. Many feared that the rivalry for the crown would lead to civil war. In the early weeks of her reign there were many suitors for Elizabeth's hand. Elizabeth was the most sought after woman in Europe. She received offers of marriage from Kings, Princes and Dukes but whom should she marry?

Choosing a Husband. Making the right choice

of husband would not be so easy. Elizabeth did not want to repeat her sister's mistake by marrying a man who would be unpopular with her people.

What did Elizabeth need to think about when choosing a suitable husband?

Checklist for a suitable Husband.

- ◆ *It would please her Protestant subjects if her was a Protestant and make them angry if he was a Catholic.*
- ◆ *He should not be too powerful (a foreign King was no good) Englishmen did not want foreigners interfering in England's business.*
- ◆ *He must be of a suitable rank to marry the Queen any old peasant would not do!*
- ◆ *If she married an Englishmen she must make sure not to make other Englishmen jealous. If they were jealous they might rebel against her.*
- ◆ *She must ensure that the marriage brought an alliance that was good for England.*

As you can see Elizabeth had many things to discover when looking for a husband, but who should she chose?

The candidates

1. King Philip II of Spain.

Philip was a powerful Catholic. He had been married to Elizabeth's half sister Mary. That marriage was so unpopular it had caused a rebellion.

2. King Eric of Sweden

Eric of Sweden was given a lot of thought by Elizabeth and her Ministers. Eric was a Protestant, he was also popular in the country, and when it was rumoured that Elizabeth had accepted his proposal, medals were made in London with a picture of Elizabeth and Eric on them. But Eric was not rich and a marriage to him was of little benefit to England, as it did not give England a strong European ally.



3. Robert Dudley.

Elizabeth was believed to have fallen in love with one of her own subjects, Lord Robert Dudley. Lord Robert was Elizabeth's Master of Horse. They had been friends when they were children and he was one of the few men Elizabeth thought wanted her for herself not because she was Queen. Lord Robert was Protestant and English.

But he was not of equal rank and would not give England a Foreign ally. There was also another problem. He was already married! He married a girl called Amy Robsart when he was Seventeen. If this wasn't bad enough he was the son of a traitor and the grandson of a traitor. Treason seemed to run in the family. Many English men believed he could not be trusted.

Things became worse when Lord Robert's wife died in mysterious circumstances and there were rumours she had been murdered. Some even said that the queen had been involved in her death!

4. Archduke Charles

The Archduke Charles was also a serious candidate and marriage to him remained a possibility for several years. But the Archduke was a Catholic, and as a Catholic, his suit was not popular with the Protestants on Elizabeth's Council.

5. Francis, Duke of Alencon, later Anjou.

The only other serious contender for Elizabeth's hand in marriage was Francis, Duke of Alencon, later Duke of Anjou. He was the son of Catherine de Medici, Queen Mother of France, and a brother to the French King. He was a lot younger than Elizabeth but marriage to him would bring England a good alliance. The French were Catholic, but did not appear to be as hostile to English Protestantism as the

Spanish were. Alencon himself was also known to have sympathy with the French Protestants and did not mind marrying a Protestant Queen. This was the most serious foreign courtship of Elizabeth's reign, and it seemed that Elizabeth would marry him. Francis even came to England for Elizabeth to meet him. The Queen quite liked the Frenchman, who she called her "frog", even though he was not good looking and had been scared by an attack of the small pox. Elizabeth announced before some of her courtiers that she would marry him, kissed him, and gave him a ring.

Activities

1. Make a summary of the checklist for a suitable husband.
2. Using a table like the one below and your summary, give each candidate a score out of ten. Then explain your rating in each case give all the advantages and disadvantages of Elizabeth's marriage to this man. Explain your reasons in as much detail as possible.

Name	score	reason
Philip II of Spain		
Eric of Sweden		
Lord Robert Dudley		
Archduke Charles		
Duke of Alencon		

3. In your own words explain why you think Elizabeth never married.

Glossary

heir	Person who will become the next King or Queen
rivalry	competition
Civil war	A war between people in same country of the same nationality.
suitor	Someone who wants to marry you or go out with you.
alliance	A friendship between two or more countries.