



The Pirate Queen: Queen Elizabeth I, Her Pirate Adventurers, and the Dawn of Empire

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Extravagant, whimsical, and hot-tempered, Elizabeth was the epitome of power, both feared and admired by her enemies. Dubbed the "pirate queen" by the Vatican and Spain's Philip II, she employed a network of daring merchants, brazen adventurers, astronomer philosophers, and her stalwart Privy Council to anchor her throne—and in doing so, planted the seedlings of an empire that would ultimately cover two-fifths of the world.

In 'The Pirate Queen', historian Susan Ronald offers a fresh look at Elizabeth I, relying on a wealth of historical sources and thousands of the queen's personal letters to tell the thrilling story of a visionary monarch and the swashbuckling mariners who terrorized the seas to amass great wealth for themselves and the Crown.

The Pirate Queen: Queen Elizabeth I, Her Pirate Adventurers, and the Dawn of Empire Details

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Jen says

I have to admit that I am soooooo glad this book is done. Omigod glad. I might be skipping.

I should have loved this book. I should have whisked it away on a long holiday with me and a pony ride, and bought it drinks.

But it was fine.

It was like going out on a date with the perfect guy, and finding out you like him as a friend.

The book tells the story of Elizabeth's pirate adventurers like Drake and Raleigh and such. It's pretty fun.

It starts out however with a super snarktastic comment from the author about how if you expect it to be about Elizabeth and her romances you're wrong wrong wrong and she hates you and wants you dead. Not really, but kinda.

Then the book goes into excruciatingly detailed detail about every ship that ever thought of leaving England. And with every amount of money, she explains what that would be in modern dollars and pounds--this gets old.

The book is full of information and would probably entrance a lot of people. However, I'm not one of them.

Eileen says

A well researched and densely detailed account of the economics and logistics of Queen Elizabeth I using pirates to enrich and secure her country and her rule which is told mainly through the activity of the pirates. This book would most likely be enjoyed by those with some prior familiarity with and interest in Queen Elizabeth I or England at this time. As the title and plot summary suggests, it specifically focuses on the piracy aspect of her reign. Although there were quite a few individuals to track upon their introduction and I thought the book could have used a little more direction and a few more summary statements, I found it interesting in that it demonstrated the planning and strategy of piracy which is somewhat contrary to the modern-day portrayal of the activity being more spontaneous and amateur. The book laboriously details a close view of pirate activity and would make it a good niche read for someone with a high level of interest in the topic.

Lucas says

The piratical adventurers who laid the foundations for Britain's victory over its enemies also provided her navy with a matchless knowledge of the workings of the illicit trade that underlay the European economy. In

a short period of time the British navy became peerless and directed world trade from its own shores. Queen Elizabeth used the tools at her disposal to forge an empire that was hardly foreordained. She fought for it.

Nick says

Ronald captures the "gentleman adventurers" (read: pirates, corsairs, rovers, and the like) of the Elizabethan era flawlessly! I found it quite amazing just how dependent the little island-state of England was on plunder and booty in the mid-to-late 16th century. What's even more amazing is how these adventurers teamed up not once, not twice, but three times to defeat the Spanish Armada, and lay the groundwork for what would eventually become the United States of America. Absolutely amazing--a perfect read for a snowy day off.

Melinda says

Another interesting book about this female monarch. I like it when the author takes a subject and gives it an unusual twist - for example researching and portraying the queen and her adventures and all the piracy she was involved in rather than just focusing on Queen Elizabeth as the monarch. All that said, this just reinforces the fact that I think the queen was a little crazy and indecisive and prone to childish temper tantrums.

Roderigo says

Very easy read, yet covers a lot between c.1560-1600. Essentially the story of the start of the British Navy and the very start of thoughts of Empire. I enjoyed the spread of knowledge starting with out getting bogged down. The 1588 Armada takes up a few pages. Starts with the merchant shipping expeditions that turned to plunder, to the quasi Royal assistance/acceptance of this as a means of warfare against the Spanish. It ends with the start of the East Indies Company and the birth of an Empire.

Linda Harkins says

Excellent! The Virgin Queen assumed the throne at the age of 25. Hot-tempered and intelligent, the daughter of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn declared that she would never marry after witnessing what her father had done to her mother. Instead, she focused on building an empire.

Based on primary sources, including thousands of letters between merchant adventurers and Queen Elizabeth I, this rather fresh take on the times suggests that swashbuckling English pirates had everything to do with England's advancement. Drake, Cavendish, Raleigh, and scores of others took turns as favorites of the queen. Cavendish circumnavigated the globe only eight years after Drake had done it. English adventurers terrorized the seas, defeated the Spanish armada, and established colonies in the New World while amassing great wealth for impoverished England and themselves.

Katherine says

LOVE, LOVE, LOVE! Actually finished it a few days ago, and today started to reread it. I will say though, I feel like "The Queen's Pirates" would have been a better title for it though but that is literally my only (and very minor) "complaint". I do suspect I will forever remember this book as what I was reading before/during the Great Flood as well.

Cynthia Egbert says

This book has some interesting stuff but it is extremely detailed and might bog some people down. I tried to listen to it as an audio book and found that I could not keep my attention on it and so had to move to the actual book. It does make one see Elizabeth in a new light!

Tina says

Love reading anything & everything about Queen Elizabeth I. She was a trailblazer before it became posh. Fiercely loyal, uncompromising when it came to religion, herself, or the pressure to marry and produce an heir, she lead her people with an iron fist and a good heart. She was a total badass ruling knowing so many wanted to dethrone and kill her.

Annie Brady says

This book assumed too much prior knowledge on the subject of economics. For instance, in one chapter, Elizabeth stabilized the runaway inflation by recalling the old currency and minting new coins. As I read it, I kept nodding, saying to myself, "Oh, so that's how you do it." I don't know enough about economics to know whether Elizabeth's strategy was brilliant or routine, risky or sure. When I read that chapter, I merely read a list of Elizabeth's actions, without being able to put them into the proper context or learn from them.

Carolina Casas says

The book explores the "adventure-explorers" of the Elizabethan age. For everyone who has an image of the golden age being the age of an empire, the author deconstructs this myth and says that it wasn't so, what Elizabeth did begin however (thanks to those before her like grandfather Henry VII) was set the stage for the future British Empire. Everyone wanted to cash in on the colonies back then, it was the dream of every European country to have a settlement in the Americas, of course the country that got the most land was Spain but this did not stop Elizabeth from making her own luck and attacking Spanish galleons and financing explorations, looking for fertile land that England could settle on. What emerges from this book is a narrative of many brave and ambitious men, some who had nothing to lose, others who wanted to prove themselves to the queen and make a name for themselves in this foreign land, however the author doesn't shy away from the violence these men inflicted on the natives or the slave trade England engaged in as so many other countries back then. My one nitpick was that it lessened England's participation, often making excuses for its

actions while condemning other countries. For everyone who has studied this period, you know it doesn't matter what country they speak of, every country that engaged in the slave trade was just as brutal, England was no different.

Nerine Dorman says

I've needed a book detailing the kind of socio-political-economic environment that would support piracy, and *The Pirate Queen* gave me exactly the kind of background I needed for my research. As background reading to inform my own writing, this volume provides a rough history of Elizabethan times written in such a way that one isn't too overwhelmed with an info-dump of names, places and famous battles. In other words, it's perfect for someone like me who needed a basic introduction to European history *other* than having watched a handful of historical movies.

Obviously Elizabeth I is the focus of this novel, and she's revealed as both shrewd ruler and a woman who's prone to the flattery of her gentleman adventurers. The dynamics at court, in a traditionally patriarchal society must have had quite a shake-up when she steadfastly refused to marry and give up her sovereignty as ruler. But oh, what a queen she was. Yes, she had her good and bad sides, and the situation with Ireland was definitely a bad side, but honours go to her for strengthening a nation in the face of the massive adversity thanks to Spain.

Up until now, the name Francis Drake meant very little to me, something about voyages around the globe, but Susan Ronald hammers home the conditions in which these gentleman explorers like him had to work in order to succeed in their monumental voyages. Their ships were fragile, wooden things, often at the mercy of the elements. Sickness and privation were spectres that loomed constantly, and if not that mutiny among the crew posed yet more threats.

We take our maps and GPS for granted nowadays. Back then these brave and hardy souls navigated unknown and often hostile territory. Not all the natives they encountered were friendly, and often Spanish colonists were less than welcoming. Ronald touches on the slave trade as well, and how folks like John Hawkins had a hand in this terrible aspect of life during this era. The conditions aboard the slavers must have been hellish, and the fates of those poor souls terrible once they arrived in the New World.

All in all, *The Pirate Queen* offers a rough sketch illustrating how early plunderers, merchant and pirates gave rise to British maritime strength and set the stage for the British Empire that was to follow. I came away with a better understanding of the murky politics in the English court and how Elizabeth I's reign shaped European history. Overall, I feel like I've had a great starting point for further reading.

Jacko says

What a spectacular read! I honestly just picked this up for random reads but I was totally blown away by the clear and illustrious descriptions of 17th century England, the cunning and brave Queen Elizabeth and of course, her raving parties of corsairs and adventurers. I have not known anything about the incredible queen until I read this marvelous book, I have learned so much and if possible I'd like a movie or series to be based off this work of excitement! 5 stars man! Whhhoooooooooooo

jillian says

This is an amazing book, researched in great detail, describing the reign of Elizabeth I through her foreign policy, especially when it came to her privateers. Elizabeth needed money to defend a vulnerable England against Catholic Spain, while aiding and abetting the Protestants in Spanish-owned Low Countries. Only through her relationships with Europe's Protestants could England maintain trade across the Channel. Where better to take the money than from Spanish treasure ships? This book describes the journeys of Elizabeth's pet pirates, like Drake and Frobisher (who I seriously thought only ever discovered the Arctic, and had no idea had also been on slave-stealing trips to Africa), from the ships and how they were supplied, to the reactions of the Spanish as they were raided. It covers the lost Virginia colonies, which were not so much lost as left to their own devices in between privateering raids and defense against the Armada. "Pirate Queen" covers every step of Elizabeth's path through history, and how she used every single tool at her disposal, including her privateers, to keep her country defended. A truly outstanding and fascinating read for anyone even remotely interested in the subject matter.
