Why Spain Attacked England with the Armada in 1588

KS4 HISTORY Ages 11-14 ⏰ 3 min read

What Was the Spanish Armada?

In **1588**, **Spain** sent around **130 ships** with over **30,000 soldiers and sailors** to attack **England**. This enormous fleet was called the **Spanish Armada** (armada means fleet in Spanish). It was supposed to invade England and capture the English throne, but it failed. Understanding why Spain tried this risky attack helps us learn about religious conflict, power, and international rivalry during the **Renaissance** period.

Religion Was a Major Reason

King Philip II of Spain was a devoted **Catholic** and saw himself as the defender of the Catholic Church. **Queen Elizabeth I** of England was **Protestant**, and under her rule, England had broken away from the Catholic Church. Philip believed it was his duty to bring England back to Catholicism. He also wanted to stop English support for Protestant rebels fighting against Spanish rule in the **Netherlands**.

Think of it like two families that split up over a disagreement. One family (Spain) was so upset about how the other family (England) was doing things that they decided to force them to change and rejoin.

Money and Power

Spain was incredibly wealthy and powerful during this time, mainly from gold and silver stolen from the **Americas**. King Philip II thought Spain was strong enough to control even more of the world. England, meanwhile, was growing stronger and starting to become a rival. Spanish leaders saw English ships attacking Spanish treasure fleets in the Atlantic Ocean.

Think of it like two popular kids in school who both want to be the most important. Spain was used to being in charge and didn't like that England was becoming powerful and popular too.

A Personal Grudge

There was also bad blood between the countries. Queen Elizabeth I had rejected marriage proposals from Spanish princes, and England had secretly helped Spanish enemies. English ship captain **Sir Francis Drake** raided Spanish ships and settlements, which made Philip furious. Finally, Elizabeth approved the execution of **Mary, Queen of Scots** in **1587**, a Catholic who Spain supported. This was the final straw for Philip.

The Attack Failed

Despite Spain's power and huge fleet, the Armada failed. English ships were faster and more skilled, and a terrible storm scattered the Spanish vessels. This defeat changed history. Spain never recovered its power, and England became stronger and eventually more important than Spain in world affairs.

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