

Why did Mary Queen of Scots lose her head?

Let's find out about the very eventful life of Mary Queen of Scots.



Who was Mary Queen of Scots?

Mary was the daughter of James V of Scotland and Mary of Guise, who was from France. James died just after Mary was born. She became Queen of Scotland 6 days after she was born. Mary was born in Linlithgow Palace 8th December 1542.

James V



Mary of Guise

When Mary was 5 years old, she was sent to France because she was betrothed to Francis the Dauphin, (the French heir).

She was brought up at the luxurious French court. Mary grow up to be clever, tall and elegant.

Mary married Francis in 1558. Briefly she became Queen of France. Sadly, in 1561 Francis II died of an ear infection.

Reluctantly, Mary returned to Scotland.

Mary was a Catholic but Scotland had become a Protestant country after she had left. This was going to cause lots of problems.



Her second husband was Henry, Lord Darnley who was a Protestant. This marriage was an absolute disaster as he was very weak and jealous.

Mary and Henry did however have a son who they called James.

One night, Henry, Lord Darnley died in mysterious circumstances. The house he was lodging in was blown up in February 1567.



The Earl of Bothwell was a prime suspect in the murder of Henry, Lord Darnley but when Mary married him very soon after, there was talk that Mary too might have been involved in planning her husband's murder!



Mary was brought up a strict Roman Catholic. But during her time away from her home country, lots of Scottish people had become Protestants and this meant she was not a popular Queen with many of her subjects.

Eventually the Protestant nobles rebelled, seized the castle of Edinburgh, captured Mary and on 24 July 1567 Mary was forced to give up the throne for her young son, who became James VI of Scotland. The following year Mary fled to England.

She was never to see her son or Scotland again!



Mary escapes from Scotland

Initially, Queen Elizabeth welcomed Mary but was soon forced to put her cousin under house arrest after Mary became the focus of various English Catholic and Spanish plots to overthrow Elizabeth.



Although Elizabeth and Mary were cousins, they never met.

In 1585, Mary was suspected of being involved with Anthony Babington who was plotting to kill Elizabeth so Mary could become Queen of England. Mary was tried in court, found guilty and sentenced to death.

Perhaps because the two women were family, Elizabeth took her time to sign Mary's death warrant. But eventually she did and Mary was executed at Fotheringhay Castle in Northamptonshire on 8 February 1587. She was 44 years old.




Why was Mary such a threat to Queen Elizabeth?

Mary was a threat because she had a claim to the English throne. She was the granddaughter of Henry's elder sister, Margaret Tudor.

She was also a Catholic. Although Elizabeth was Henry VIII's daughter, to Catholics she had no right to the throne of England. After all, the Pope had not allowed Henry to divorce his first wife Catherine of Aragon so his marriage to Anne Boleyn in their eyes was illegal.

The Pope also said that Catholics should get rid of Elizabeth and make Mary Queen of England.



It's all a bit tricky!

Activity

Imagine that you are involved in a plot to help Mary Queen of Scots. Your job is to decode this message from her. Good luck!

Mary used a secret code to fool her enemies.

Δ α ε ϑ Δ 17 θ α ϕ ε η α // α ϑ
ε ∇ c° ∇ ρ δ. c s ∇ ϑ ϑ Δ c λ σ α Δ σ
∇ □ ϑ s h o q 1 // 0 8 θ α ε ∇ c ε
∇ □ ∞ α ρ α .

This is the key to help you decode the letter.

O	†	λ	-	α	□	θ	∞	ι	η	δ	h	//	ϕ	∇	s	η	ρ	Δ	ε	c
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U
C	c°	7	8	9		2		3		4	≡	ϑ	∩							
V	W	X	Y	Z		AND		FOR		THAT		OF		THE		ME				REPEAT LETTER
USED TO CONFUSE: ff Γ ∟ δ □																				

Did you discover what the coded message said?

Set the six gentlemen to work.
Upon the success of the plan I
may get out of here.

Create your own message using Mary's code.

You may wish to write a reply or imagine that
you are Mary writing another coded message.

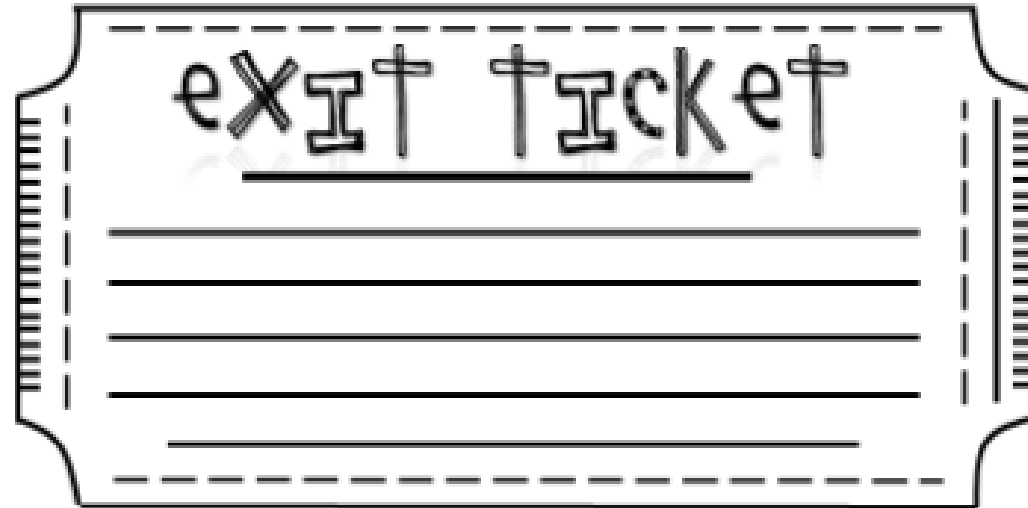
Mary was Queen of Scotland by birth and Queen of France by marriage, although she is probably more famous for being involved in plots to throw Queen Elizabeth I off the English throne

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ls0AEOGNE8E>

Watch 'The Mary Queen of Scots Report' to find out more about her life.



Plenary



Write down one reason why Mary Queen of Scots had to loose her head.