



# Elizabeth I: Her Life in Letters

*Felix Pryor*

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## **Elizabeth I: Her Life in Letters** Felix Pryor

Queen Elizabeth I (1533–1603) ruled England for 45 turbulent years, and her reign has come to be seen as a golden age. She exercised supreme authority in a man's world, while remaining intensely feminine. She was Gloriana, the Virgin Queen, but is also held up as a role model for company executives in the twenty-first century. She is a near-legendary figure from a remote past who remains fascinatingly modern.

This handsome volume has been published to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Elizabeth I's death in 1603. It illustrates in color and, where possible, in actual size, sixty manuscripts—either by Elizabeth or to her. Each one is accompanied by a running commentary, explaining the document and placing it in its historical context, and selected transcriptions or, where necessary, translations from the originals.

Elizabeth was a girl of extraordinary precocity and a brilliant linguist. Her early letters, written in a beautiful italic, are to her forbidding father, Henry VIII, and to her brother and sister, Edward VI and "Bloody" Mary. The very first letter dates from when she was a child of eleven. The last, written nearly 60 years later, is a barely-legible scrawl addressed to her successor, the future James I. The letters from her in-tray are no less extraordinary. Tsar Ivan the Terrible rounds on her in a blind fury after she refuses to marry him. The Earl of Essex, young enough to be her son, pours out declarations of love: a few pages further on is to be found her signed warrant for his execution. There are letters from ministers and galley slaves, spies and traitors, coded letters, warrants for torture, speeches to parliament, and the original—only recently identified—of the most famous of all her utterances: "I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king."

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