AWESOME stories

- 0. THE BABINGTON PLOT Story Preface
- 1. PRINCESS ELIZABETH
- 2. PHILIP II: KING CONSORT of BRITAIN
- 3. ELIZABETH BECOMES QUEEN
- 4. THE TROUBLE WITH MARY
- 5. THE BABINGTON PLOT
- 6. A QUEEN LOSES HER HEAD
- 7. SIR WALTER RALEIGH
- 8. PHILIP II and the ARMADA
- 9. THE ARMADA SAILS
- **10. NEGOTIATIONS FAIL**
- 11. BRITISH SHIPS
- 12. THE FLEETS ENGAGE
- 13. FIRE SHIPS and the BATTLE OF GRAVELINES
- 14. PARMA'S NO-SHOW
- 15. PUSHED TO THE NORTH SEA
- 16. ELIZABETH'S SPEECH to her PEOPLE
- 17. SAILING HOME by a NORTHERN ROUTE
- 18. SPANISH SHIPS on IRISH ROCKS
- 19. MISERY IN IRELAND
- 20. CELEBRATING THE VICTORY
- 21. THE DEATH OF RALEIGH
- 22. THE GOLDEN AGE

Antony Babington (1561-1586) and his accomplices met a very bad end after their plot to "dispatch the usurper" unraveled. In this illustration, included in "A Thankful Rembrance of Gods Mercie" (by George Garleton and published in 1630), we see Babington with St. Giles' Field (in London) in the background.

For every day of her long reign, Elizabeth's advisors worried that she might be assassinated by Catholics viewing her as an illegitimate Queen. An entire network of spies, working to insure Her Majesty's safety, made sure that plots were uncovered and would-be perpetrators executed.

At first, <u>William Cecil</u> (later known as Lord Burghley) assessed whatever intelligence came to light. But after <u>Mary Queen of Scots</u> crossed the border into England, Elizabeth's advisors were alarmed. With her own claim to the British throne, the Queen's cousin would likely be a magnet for every Catholic conspiracy which could be imagined.

Looking for someone he could trust to serve as spy master, Cecil turned to <u>Sir Francis Walsingham</u>, a staunch Protestant.

Since 1568, Walsingham had served as Elizabeth's Secretary of State. From spies which he sent to other countries, he could assess attitudes toward <u>Britain's Queen</u>. From intelligence-gatherers in England, he could judge the pulse of the people toward their monarch.

Knowing conspirators communicate by code, Sir Francis arranged for his spies to be schooled in <u>their ways</u>. If a plot were in the works, Elizabeth's protectors needed to unravel it.

As time went on, Mary Queen of Scots increasingly pressed to go home. There was always a reason why her English captors would not let her go. The main, unstated reason was clear. Elizabeth and her advisors continued to view Mary - the heir - as a threat to the security of <u>Her Majesty's throne</u>.

THE BABINGTON PLOT



Walsingham allowed Mary to be moved - from place to place to place - but only inside Britain.

Elizabeth's men were not alone in thinking about Mary. Many ardent Catholics still thought that she - now quite ill with various ailments, including rheumatism - should be queen of both Scotland and England.

Walsingham decided to concoct a scheme that would implicate Mary once and for all.

Using Sir Anthony Babington (an unsuspecting Catholic) as his pawn, <u>Sir Francis</u> allowed Mary to secretly correspond with Babington (who wanted to help Mary escape). Mary's two secretaries <u>coded</u> all messages, but Walsingham knew <u>the cipher</u>. Anxious to be free, and relieved someone was finally talking about escape, Mary responded to Babington's letters.

If <u>the letters</u> had just talked about escape, Walsingham's efforts would have come to nothing. But in one letter Babington went much farther than the subject of escape. He could not resist a reference to <u>Elizabeth</u>. Babington wanted to know if Mary would reward him and his compatriots "For the dispatch of the usurper." (Follow this link to read <u>Babington's letter</u>.)

Once again ignoring the advice of her counselors, who were concerned about the veiled reference to a plot against Queen Elizabeth, <u>Mary wrote</u> to Babington.

While she said nothing at all about Elizabeth, Mary did agree to Babington's proposed plans for her escape. Her signature was on the letter. Someone else forged a postscript, asking for information about the conspirators. Babington dutifully <u>responded</u>, thereby insuring the <u>ultimate deaths</u> of himself and his colleagues.

When Walsingham read Mary's response for the first time, he must have muttered, "I've got her." It is said he drew a picture of the gallows on the incriminating, <u>intercepted evidence</u>.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/THE-BABINGTON-PLOT-Elizabeth-I-The-Golden-Age

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/THE-BABINGTON-PLOT-Elizabeth-I-The-Golden-Age

Media Stream



<u>William Cecil</u>

Image online, courtesy the <u>National Portrait Gallery</u> website. View this asset at: <u>http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/William-Cecil</u>



<u>Sir Francis Walsingham</u> Image online, courtesy the <u>National Portrait Gallery</u> website. View this asset at: <u>http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Sir-Francis-Walsingham0</u>



Queen Elizabeth I

Image online, courtesy the <u>luminarium.org</u> website. PD

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Her Majesty's Throne - 1572 Scroll Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons. PD View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Her-Majesty-s-Throne-1572-Scroll

<u>Elizabeth I's Advisor - Sir Francis Walsingham</u> Image online, courtesy the <u>National Portrait Gallery</u> website. View this asset at: <u>http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Elizabeth-I-s-Advisor-Sir-Francis-Walsingham</u>



Portrait of Elizabeth I Image online, courtesy the <u>National Portrait Gallery</u> website. View this asset at: <u>http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Portrait-of-Elizabeth-I</u>

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Cipher Codes - Babington Plot

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Babington's Coded Response

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THE BABINGTON PLOT

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