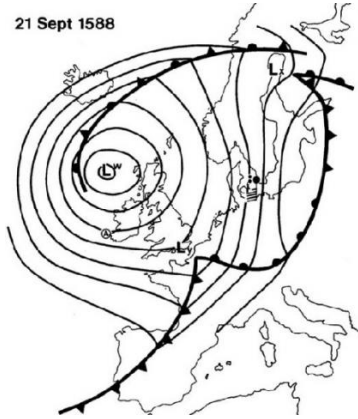




0. SPANISH SHIPS on IRISH ROCKS - Story Preface

1. PRINCESS ELIZABETH

2. PHILIP II: KING CONSORT of BRITAIN

3. ELIZABETH BECOMES QUEEN

4. THE TROUBLE WITH MARY

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19. MISERY IN IRELAND

20. CELEBRATING THE VICTORY

21. THE DEATH OF RALEIGH

22. THE GOLDEN AGE

While the Armada's ships were returning home, along the western coast of Ireland, a tremendous gale developed on September 21, 1588. This weather map depicts the gale. Eyewitness accounts tell us what the men saw: "...there sprang up so great a storm on our beam with a sea up to the heavens so that the cables could not hold..." Sixteen Armada ships were wrecked in the storm. Map image from the Climatic Research Unit, University of East Anglia, included in "Navigation: The Key to the Armada Disaster," by Ken Douglas (published in the August 2003 issue of *Journal for Maritime Research*).

When the battles were over, the defeated Armada had to return to Spain. The wind - which had previously favored the British, even though their cannons were mostly ineffective against the Spanish - had pushed the Armada's ships into the North Sea.

As the British fire ships had previously damaged the Armada, now the wind insured there would be no backtracking through the English Channel. The voyage home, for the Spaniards, would be long and arduous. The only way back was to pass by Scotland and Ireland.

People in Britain (including the Queen) wondered how the Scottish king (James VI) would interact with the Spaniards. Elizabeth, after all, had signed his mother's death warrant. Mary, Queen of Scots - Elizabeth's cousin and heir - had lost her head because she was a perceived threat. Could anyone blame James if he assisted the Spanish fleet?

Recognizing it would be helpful to herself, and to her country, if she befriended her cousin's son, Elizabeth sent emissaries to Scotland. One could say they came with royal bribes:

*For some there were which feared least they would have recourse to the King of Scotts, who was already exasperated for his mothers death. Certainly, Ashley the Queenes Embassadour in Scotland, to pacifie his minde, offered him this moneth large conditions, to weete, the title of a Dukedome in England, a yearely pension of 5000 pounds, a guard to bee maintayned at the Queenes charge, and other matters ... (Camden, Annales Rerum Angliae et Hiberniae Regnante Elizabetha, 1588, Section 31)*

She needn't have worried. James must have known that if he did not make friends in wrong places, he would ultimately be Elizabeth's heir. The Spanish fleet sailed around Scotland without being a further problem for Britain.

People aboard the ships were the ones who faced serious problems. They knew it would take a long time before they reached Spain. As the North Sea weather worsened, so must have the spirits of the sailors. Camden's story continues:

*But the Spanyards, now casting away all hope of returning, and seeking to save themselves by no other meanes by flight, stayed in no place.*

*And thus the Armado, which had beene full three yeares in rigging and preparing with infinite expence, was within one moneth many times assailed, and at the length defeated with the slaughter of many men; not an hundred of the English being lacking, nor one small shippe lost, save only that of Cock's (for all the shott out of the tall Spanish shippes flew quite over the English shippes), and after it [the Armada] had been driven round about all Britaine, by Scotland, the Orcades, and Ireland, most grievously tossed, and very much distressed and wasted by stormes, wrackes, and all kind of miseries ... (Camden, Annales Rerum Angliae et Hiberniae Regnante Elizabetha, 1588, Section 32)*

It is difficult to comprehend the extent of suffering the Spaniards would have endured as they simply tried to return home. But some of the men, whose ships were ruined along the Irish shore, would soon face misery of the worst possible kind.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

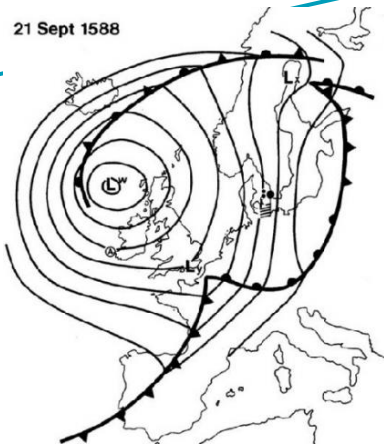
<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/SPANISH-SHIPS-on-IRISH-ROCKS-Elizabeth-I-The-Golden-Age>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/SPANISH-SHIPS-on-IRISH-ROCKS-Elizabeth-I-The-Golden-Age>

## Media Stream

21 Sept 1588



### SPANISH SHIPS on IRISH ROCKS

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/>

## Spanish Armada - British Cannon Ineffective

Because English ships could not easily penetrate the Spanish crescent formation, the Brits had to use different tactics to attack the Armada.

With easier-to-maneuver ships, which were smaller than the Spanish galleons, the Brits had a chance. It would not be easy, however. To help their position, Howard had his men use a line-astern formation.

With their sails fully hoisted, and the wind directly behind them, the British ships were ready to attack. About a quarter-mile away from the Spanish crescent, Howard gave the order to "Fire!"



For Englishmen on the gun decks, the scene was cramped and extremely loud. Marked by their own sweat, the gunners fired broadside after broadside - about one round per minute. They kept going until they were ordered to stop.

After expending a huge amount of effort, and firing hundreds cannonballs, the British were unable to harm the Spanish fleet in any meaningful way. No ship was sunk; no ship was severely damaged.

After seven hours of fighting, the Spanish Armada was still intact and still extremely powerful. England's men had done nothing to even put a dent into King Philip's invasion plan.

Clip from "Battlefield Britain," an [8-episode series](#) (produced by Danielle Peck) and distributed by the BBC. This clip is from Episode 4, "The Spanish Armada," which originally aired on 27 August 2004.

Presented by Peter and Dan Snow; produced and directed by Nathan Willians.

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## Spanish Armada - British Fire Ships

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