

0. DEATHS of RIZZIO and DARNLEY - Story Preface

1. ENGAGED, MARRIED and WIDOWED

**2. DEATHS of RIZZIO and DARNLEY**

3. BAD JUDGMENT and ABDICATION

4. ESCAPE from LOCH LEVEN

5. "SAFELY KEPT and GUARDED"

6. IMPACT of the BABINGTON PLOT

7. MARY DEFENDS HERSELF

8. "FOR the CAUSE of the TRUE RELIGION"

9. EYEWITNESS REPORTS a BEHEADING

10. THE CASE of the BLACK PEARLS

11. MORE BACKGROUND on MARY

Mary, Queen of Scots was not the only monarch who had reason to worry about her personal well-being. Elizabeth - *The Virgin Queen* - knew that many people believed she had no right to the throne.

Although Elizabeth was the daughter of Henry VIII, most Catholics thought she was not the rightful heir. As the daughter of the discredited, beheaded Anne Boleyn, Elizabeth was thought to be illegitimate.

To strengthen her claim to the English throne, Mary - now back in Scotland for several years and still refusing to ratify the Treaty of Edinburgh - decided to marry Lord Darnley (who was younger than she). Also known by his birth name (Henry Stewart / Stuart), Darnley himself (as Mary's first-cousin) could make a claim for the throne.

Mary and Darnley married. (Part of their marriage certificate survives.) It was not just a strategic alliance, at least for the Queen, since she appeared to love her second husband.

Darnley, however, seemed to change after the wedding. Becoming more self-centered, he began to alienate both his wife and her advisors. The marriage was becoming a royal disaster.

Notwithstanding his own scheming and philandering, Darnley was a jealous husband. When he thought Mary was having an affair with her secretary, David Rizzio (sometimes spelled "Riccio"), Darnley was caught-up in a murder plot. Storming into Mary's private quarters at Holyroodhouse, Darnley's compatriots mercilessly stabbed Rizzio in the Queen's presence (and in the presence of her husband).

Even though Mary was expecting Darnley's child - their son, James - the marriage may have been doomed from that point forward. Perhaps it had been doomed all along.

Two years later, Darnley was recovering from an illness (likely smallpox) at Kirk o'Fields (a residence outside Edinburgh). Although she had spent the day with him, the Queen returned to Holyroodhouse for the wedding of her page. Planning to return to Darnley, later that night, Mary stayed in Edinburgh. Her advisors had recommended that she remain at Holyrood since Darnley was coming back to the palace the next day.

Hours later - at about 2 AM - Kirk O'Fields was rocked by a tremendous explosion. Had the Queen been sleeping there, with her husband, she would likely have died. As it happened, Darnley's body was found in the garden. His remains showed death-by-stangulation (not death-by-explosion).

Was the Queen involved in a plot to kill her husband? Is that why she really left Kirk O'Fields? Or ... had someone else's plot - to kill both Mary and Henry - backfired when she decided to honor the promise to her page?

Why murder Darnley? Did Mary have a motive to kill her husband? Since her current paramour - James Hepburn, the 4th Earl of Bothwell - was accused of planning Darnley's death, circumstantial evidence against Mary seemed strong (at least initially).

But as the investigation continued, there was no solid evidence against the Queen of Scots. Not - that is - until someone found a small, silver casket containing letters apparently written by Mary. Those letters seemed to point a guilty finger at her.

Although the letters were alleged to be forgeries, many people still believed she had ordered Darnley's death. And ... even after a trial formally cleared Bothwell ... most folks continued to believe he was the one behind Darnley's murder.

What did all of this mean for Scotland's Queen?

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

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/DEATHS-of-RIZZIO-and-DARNLEY-Mary-Queen-of-Scots>

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See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/DEATHS-of-RIZZIO-and-DARNLEY-Mary-Queen-of-Scots>

## Media Stream



### Mary, Queen of Scots

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### Henry Stuart

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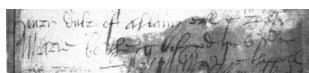
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### Mary and Darnley

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### Marriage Certificate

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### David Rizzio

Image online courtesy the [reformation.org](#) website.

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### Mary's Bedroom at Holyrood

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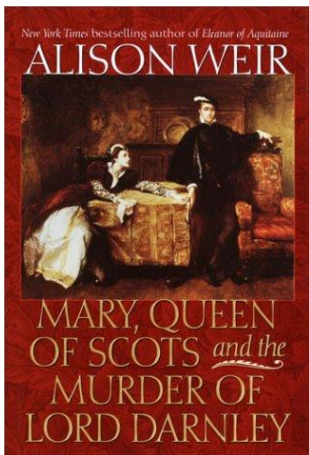
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### Mary's Audience Chamber at Holyrood

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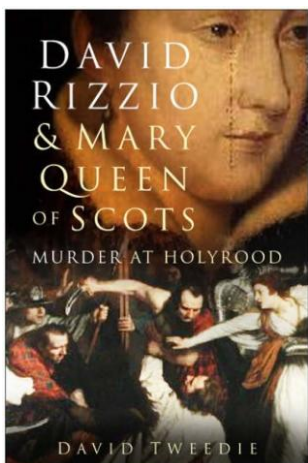


### Mary, Queen of Scots and the Murder of Lord Darnley - by A. Weir

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### David Rizzio and Mary, Queen of Scots - by David Tweedie

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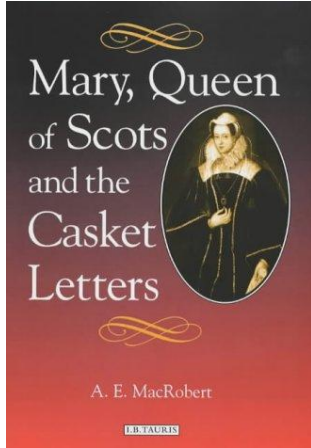
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### James Hepburn

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### Mary, Queen of Scots and the Casket Letters - by A.E. MacRobert

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### Silver Casket

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