

0. MARY DEFENDS HERSELF - Story Preface

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Mary stood trial at a time when divisions between Catholics and Protestants, in England and Scotland, were deeply divisive. Most of the plots against Elizabeth stemmed from those divisions.

Elizabeth was Protestant; Mary was Catholic. That fact provided a backdrop for the trial.

Mary's prosecutors began their case on the 12th of October, 1586. While Elizabeth was not present, she had sent a letter which she intended Mary to hear during the trial's opening moments.

Writing in French, the Queen said (in translation):

You have in various ways and manners attempted to take my life and to bring my kingdom to destruction by bloodshed. I have never proceeded so harshly against you, but have, on the contrary, protected and maintained you like myself. These treasons will be proved to you and all made manifest. Yet it is my will, that you answer the nobles and peers of the kingdom as if I were myself present. I therefore require, charge, and command that you make answer for I have been well informed of your arrogance.

Act plainly without reserve, and you will sooner be able to obtain favour of me.

Elizabeth

If Mary had a lawyer, he would have stressed:

- Mary's 19-years of house arrest;
- Her desire to escape confinement without a pending charge;
- The reasonableness of her efforts to engineer an escape.

Instead ... speaking on her own behalf ... Mary expressed disgust with the proceedings, in general, and with the conduct of the trial, in particular:

I do not recognize the laws of England nor do I understand them, as I have often asserted. I am alone without counsel or anyone to speak on my behalf. My papers and notes have been taken from me, so that I am destitute of all aid, taken at a disadvantage.

By October 25th, the ten-day trial was over. No one was surprised by the "guilty" verdict.

Now it was time for Elizabeth to personally act. Only a Queen could condemn another Queen to death.

Delaying for months, Henry VIII's daughter resisted signing an execution warrant condemning her cousin. Feeling the pressure from her secretary, Walsingham, and others, Elizabeth finally picked-up her pen.

She signed Mary's death warrant on February 1, 1587.

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

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/MARY-DEFENDS-HERSELF-Mary-Queen-of-Scots>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/MARY-DEFENDS-HERSELF-Mary-Queen-of-Scots>