

0. EYEWITNESS REPORTS a BEHEADING - Story Preface

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**9. EYEWITNESS REPORTS a BEHEADING**

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Mary had only seconds to live. The executioner, whom she had forgiven with the words quoted at the beginning of this story, raised his axe. Perhaps because he was killing a queen, his aim was off.

Even her execution did not go well for Mary. As the eyewitness records it:

*Then she, lying very still upon the block, one of the executioners holding her slightly with one of his hands, she endured two strokes of the other executioner with an axe, she making very small noise or none at all, and not stirring any part of her from the place where she lay: and so the executioner cut off her head, saving one little gristle, which being cut assunder, he lift up her head to the view of all assembled and bade God save the Queen [that is, Elizabeth].*

It took three strokes of the axe to cut off Mary's head. But, to the horror of all in the room, her body began to move once her head was gone. Unknown to the executioners, Mary's little dog had hidden itself under her petticoat. The movement was not Mary but her dog who refused to eat once he was removed from his mistress.

All the clothes that Mary, Queen of Scots had worn to her execution were burned. Elizabeth and her courtiers wanted nothing to remain. No relics would be permitted. Mary's heart and organs were removed from her body and buried in an unknown place at Fotheringhay Castle. Her body was embalmed and placed in a leaden coffin. It remained unburied for months until July 30, 1587 when it was taken to Peterborough Cathedral.

Mary's son, James VI, eventually ordered that his mother's coffin be brought to Westminster Abbey in London. He was not able to make that order until 1603, when he was also King James I of England. Mary's son had succeeded Elizabeth I as Britain's next monarch.

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

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/EYEWITNESS-REPORTS-a-BEHEADING-Mary-Queen-of-Scots>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/EYEWITNESS-REPORTS-a-BEHEADING-Mary-Queen-of-Scots>



## Fotheringhay Castle

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## Peterborough Cathedral

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## James VI

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