

Edexcel A-level History

REBELLION AND DISORDER UNDER THE TUDORS

1485–1603



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My revision planner



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4 Queen takes queen? The Revolt of the Northern Earls, 1569–70

The causes of the revolt

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The Northern Rebellion used to be seen as a religious rising, but historians now question this. The rebel leaders, the Earl of Northumberland and the Earl of Westmorland, had genuine religious concerns regarding the influence of Protestantism in the Church. They were especially unhappy with the **Church Settlement** passed in 1559, which restored royal control over the Church of England. But although religion played a part in their rebellion, the earls were mainly concerned about politics and the succession.

The roots of the rebellion can be found in the politics and factions of the day. The arrival in England of the fugitive Mary, Queen of Scots, provided a focus for the discontented northern nobility.

Politics and factions

The first few years of Elizabeth's reign witnessed a period of political unity, when the regime was being established. **Sir William Cecil** was talented and imaginative and enjoyed a close working relationship with Elizabeth, who relied on him for advice. This gave Cecil unrivalled political prominence at Court and made him a target for rival factions. As Elizabeth's chief minister, Cecil was responsible for co-ordinating the implementation of most policy decisions at home and abroad.

Cecil's rivals

Cecil had rivals at Court, but they were never outright enemies determined to cause his ruin. Faction fighting at the Court of Elizabeth did not become a serious issue until later in her reign, when England went to war with Spain in 1585. Self-interest and short-term aims often pushed rival factions together. Cecil's chief rival at Court was the Queen's favourite, **Robert Dudley**, Earl of Leicester. That said, Cecil and Leicester sometimes found themselves on the same side and even when both were enemies neither wished to see the other executed, only 'cowed' or 'retired'. The Earls of Northumberland and Westmorland were excluded from high office and their influence at Court was minimal. They lent their support to another faction at Court led by Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk.

The Northern Earls

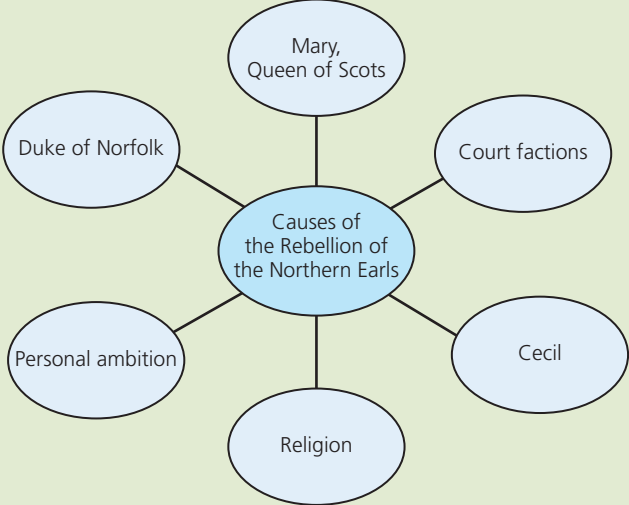
The conspiracy that led to the Northern Rebellion involved the pro-Catholic Earls of Northumberland and Westmorland. The earls, along with Lord Dacre, had been sidelined by the Elizabethan regime, which did not fully trust them. Aware of the lingering sympathy for Catholicism that existed in the north, Elizabeth opted to put men she trusted in positions of authority in the region.

- The Queen's cousin, Lord Hunsdon, was put in charge of Berwick and half of the border region.
- The Earl of Sussex was appointed President of the **Council of the North** in York.
- James Pilkington, a southerner and an enthusiastic Protestant, was appointed Bishop of Durham.

The local clergy resented being passed over for offices which they considered to be traditionally theirs by right. This resentment was turned to outright anger by Pilkington's aggressive, evangelical style of preaching Protestantism in the north.

! Mind map

Use the information on the page opposite to add detail to the mind map below to show the causes of the Rebellion of the Northern Earls.



i You're the examiner **a**

Below is a sample exam question and a paragraph written in answer to this question. Read the paragraph and the mark scheme provided on pages 111–12. Decide which level you would award the paragraph. Write the level below, along with a justification for your choice.

How accurate is it to say that the treatment of Mary, Queen of Scots, in the years 1568 and 1569 was the main cause of the Northern Rebellion?

The Northern Revolt was the most serious rebellion faced by Elizabeth during her reign. It was instigated, organised and led by two disgruntled Earls, Westmorland and Northumberland. These Earls had long been powerful in the north and respected at Court but they were increasingly being sidelined by Elizabeth. The Queen did not trust them because of their adherence to the Catholic faith and she disliked their arrogance in assuming that she would reappoint them to positions of power in the north. However, the spark that brought this rebellion to life was the detention and treatment of Mary, Queen of Scots. Defeated in the civil war north of the border, Mary had fled south in search of safety and when she arrived she sought political asylum. The Earls believed that Elizabeth's detention of her Scottish cousin was unfair and unjustified. They also shared Mary's religion and much preferred her as queen to the Protestant Elizabeth. Being northern landowners, the Earls were familiar with Scottish affairs and were known to Mary. They saw this as the perfect opportunity to challenge Elizabeth because they now had an alternative queen to put on the throne.

Level:

Mark:

Reason for choosing this level and this mark:

Mary, Queen of Scots

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Mary Stuart's claim to the English throne

Mary Stuart was directly descended from Henry VII and, as such, was Elizabeth's closest living relative. Mary had been married three times and had a son and heir. Elizabeth was reluctant to recognise her cousin as her heir because she might yet marry and have a son of her own. So long as Mary remained in Scotland, she could be largely ignored by Elizabeth and her councillors.

However, while Elizabeth remained unmarried she was vulnerable, a fact made clear in the succession crisis of 1562, when she contracted smallpox. Without a named successor, her death might have plunged the nation into conflict – it was only her recovery from the disease that averted the crisis. Her natural successor, Mary, Queen of Scots, was viewed with suspicion because she was a devout Roman Catholic with strong ties to France. Mary's succession would not only imperil the religious settlement and the establishment of the Anglican Church but would likely be opposed by the largely Protestant nobility.

Mary's arrival in England

This changed in 1568, when Mary was forced to abdicate her throne and flee south to England in search of shelter and protection. Mary's rule in Scotland had been a disaster and her arrival on English soil began a political crisis that would not be resolved for nearly 20 years.

She was considered a dangerous threat to Elizabeth and the Tudor regime. English Catholics who distrusted Elizabeth and opposed her Protestant reform of the Church saw Mary as a realistic candidate for the English Crown. The detention and subsequent treatment of Mary, Queen of Scots, on her arrival in England acted as a catalyst for rebellion.

Plots and rebellion

Mary's captivity in England after 1568 enabled plots against Elizabeth to be woven around the Scottish Queen. The most serious were those involving the Duke of Norfolk and the Earls of Northumberland and Westmorland.

The Norfolk plot

The highly ambitious but indiscreet Duke of Norfolk resented Elizabeth's patronage of and trust in Sir William Cecil. Norfolk believed that he should be among Elizabeth's leading privy councillors. Norfolk's plan to secure control of the Crown by marrying Mary, Queen of Scots, led to his arrest for treason and the collapse of his faction at Court.

Economic and religious insecurities of the northern nobility

The north of England, which was religiously conservative and economically disadvantaged compared to the south, witnessed one of the most serious rebellions of Elizabeth's reign. The Northern Rebellion (also known as the Rebellion of the Northern Earls) was motivated by political and religious frustrations. The Earls resented being marginalised at Court and had never truly accepted the Church Settlement of 1559, which they regarded as being too Protestant.



Moving from assertion to argument

a

Below are a sample exam question and a series of assertions. Read the exam question and then add a justification to each of the assertions to turn it into an argument.

How far was the detention of Mary, Queen of Scots, in 1568 responsible for causing the Northern Rebellion?

The detention of Mary, Queen of Scots, in 1568 contributed to the outbreak of the Northern Rebellion because

Mary, Queen of Scots' detention by Elizabeth I in 1568 caused some Catholic nobles to rebel in the north of England because

Mary, Queen of Scots' detention by Elizabeth I in 1568 was only partially responsible for the outbreak of rebellion in the north of England because there were other equally significant factors that must be considered, such as

In many ways the detention of Mary, Queen of Scots, in 1568 was simply an excuse for already disaffected Catholic noblemen to vent their anger and frustration with the government by means of an armed insurrection



Recommended reading

Below is a list of suggested further reading on this topic.

- John Guy, *My Heart is My Own: The Life of Mary Queen of Scots* (2004)
- Jane Dunn, *Elizabeth and Mary: Cousins, Rivals, Queens* (2004)
- John Hale, *Mary Queen of Scots* (2015)

What to do with Mary: Elizabeth's options

Elizabeth had two main options on what to do with Mary, Queen of Scots.

- If Mary was released, Elizabeth could either send her back to Scotland or help her get to France. The dangers posed to England by a civil war in Scotland or a French-led military expedition in support of Mary meant that release was not a realistic option.
- If Mary remained under house arrest in England, she could be watched and her movements controlled. The danger was the possibility of plots being laid to free her or the Catholic powers uniting against Elizabeth to demand Mary's freedom.

Although the second option was not without its dangers, it was the one chosen by Elizabeth and her ministers.

Some of her leading advisers, Sir William Cecil and especially Sir Francis Walsingham, preferred a third option – Mary's execution. However, Elizabeth was reluctant to execute an anointed queen because it would have set a very bad example. According to the Great Chain of Being, monarchs were chosen by God, which is why Elizabeth was keen to confine, rather than condemn, Mary. Legally, Mary could not be condemned as a traitor because she was not Elizabeth's subject.

The Norfolk marriage plan

The northern earls – Westmorland and Northumberland – drew up a plan whereby the Duke of Norfolk would be encouraged to marry Mary, Queen of Scots (see page 50). Part of the arrangement was the elimination of Cecil as a political force. He would be replaced by pro-Catholic sympathisers and the traditional friendship with Spain and its King, Philip II, would be renewed.

The plan fails

The plan failed because rumours of it reached Elizabeth. Norfolk panicked and left the Court without permission. Elizabeth feared he might rebel. Norfolk's supporters in the north, his brother-in-law, Charles Neville, Earl of Westmorland, and Thomas Percy, Earl of Northumberland, waited to see what he would do. Westmorland was fully prepared to rise in support of Norfolk, but Northumberland was unwilling. Eventually, Norfolk broke down under the strain. He wrote to Westmorland, advising him not to rebel, after which he submitted to Elizabeth. Norfolk was promptly put in the Tower.

The Northern Earls rebel

Fearing they might be arrested, the Earls of Westmorland and Northumberland rose in rebellion in the winter of 1569. They failed in their aim to put Mary on the throne, but the shock of rebellion frightened Elizabeth and her ministers. The northern rising acted as a timely reminder to Elizabeth and her government that there were distant regions of the kingdom that had not fully embraced her rule or the changes in religion enacted in the Church Settlement.

Although the rebellion had failed (see page 54), it had set an example for others to follow and the threat to Elizabeth continued for much of the rest of her reign. After 1569, at least half a dozen plots were hatched to either remove or assassinate Elizabeth.



Develop the detail

a

Below are a sample exam question and a paragraph written in answer to this question. The paragraph contains a limited amount of detail. Annotate the paragraph to add additional detail to the answer.

'Elizabeth's treatment of Mary, Queen of Scots in the years after 1568 was fundamentally mistaken.' How far do you agree with this statement?

Elizabeth was faced with an almost impossible decision when confronted with the reality of Mary Stuart's arrival on English soil: what should she do? Ignoring Mary was not an option, as the Scottish queen was now a resident in England and, as a former head of state, had to be dealt with according to her status. There were a number of options available to Elizabeth, all of which had been drawn up by her closest advisers. The first priority was to ensure Elizabeth's safety, followed by a careful assessment of the threat posed by Mary.



The flaw in the argument

Below are a sample exam question and a paragraph written in answer to this question. The paragraph contains an argument which attempts to answer the question. However, there is an error in the argument. Use your knowledge of this topic to identify the flaw in the argument.

How accurate is it to say that Mary, Queen of Scots, posed a serious threat to Elizabeth in the years after 1568?

Mary certainly posed a threat to Elizabeth because she was her heir apparent, but to suggest that she was a serious threat is going too far. Mary never intended to kill Elizabeth but simply remove her from the throne. Mary believed that the majority of English people would support her because they were reluctant Protestants forced to embrace this new religion by means of the Church Settlement. Norfolk's support for Mary was crucial to her success, for without it she was unlikely to recruit the majority of the English nobility to her cause. Elizabeth's detention of Mary simply added fuel to the fire and forced at least two members of the English nobility to rebel.