



## **Elizabethan England Lecture Notes**

**The era is named for Queen Elizabeth I of England because she created the economic and political situation that allowed the Renaissance to spread from mainland Europe to England. Elizabeth ruled England from 1558 until 1603.**

**Queen Elizabeth I was nicknamed the Virgin Queen because she never married in order to protect England from outside control. (Royalty married royalty and Elizabeth did not want to give control of England to a foreign king. King Philip of Spain in particular wanted to marry Elizabeth in order to gain control of England.) The U.S. state of Virginia is named for Elizabeth.**

**Since people did not need to worry about political or economic problems (e.g. war or hunger), they were able to focus on more enjoyable pursuits. As a result, the arts began to flourish during Elizabeth's reign. She particularly liked the theater.**

**Most "regular" people of this time period were illiterate, which is why plays were so important. This was their only form of entertainment. Theatrical troupes traveled from town to town performing wherever space was available. Actual theaters were eventually established in London. The Globe Theater was established by Shakespeare and others around 1599.**

**In order to capture the attention of audiences who were mostly uneducated, plays contained "low" humor and a lot of physical activity.**

**English royalty/nobility also attended plays; therefore, the plays also contained intellectual humor (plays on words) and themes of interest to an educated audience.**