

**The Actions and Legacies of Elizabeth I:
The Woman Who Gave Birth to an Empire**

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Process Paper:

National History Day provides an opportunity to explore one's heritage. I chose to explore my English heritage for two reasons. First, I am eagerly anticipating University, hopefully in Britain. Second, to a girl with an English mother, awaiting a career and independence, feisty, powerful women such as Anne Boleyn and her daughter Elizabeth I are irresistible subjects. I was intrigued by the fact that, though their actions and legacies are so inextricably linked, many members of my extended family in England did not immediately connect the two women.

I conducted my research chronologically, forming a foundation of knowledge about Anne Boleyn, and then linking back my discoveries about Elizabeth I. I also read general books on the period, which were essential to grasping the culture and events that influenced these women. I then worked at crafting my thesis:

As queen, Elizabeth I calculated every action to create her legacy as the beloved "Good Queen Bess" and disentangle herself from the disgraced legacy of her mother, Anne Boleyn. The actions and legacies of these two women inspired a new level of patriotism in British society.

Armed with my thesis, I went about finding primary sources and possible interviews to support it. I also had the opportunity at this time to visit the Tower of London, and interview Yeomen Warders there, an invaluable experience and the source of the quill and ink pot used in my performance.

The events involving the Tudor dynasty are so rich in human drama that they lend themselves to performance. In particular, the conflict between Elizabeth I and Mary Stuart seemed to portray perfectly the irony of women ruling patriarchal societies at this time. Indeed, Elizabeth I was so very aware of her own legacy as a living icon that portraying her seemed the most dynamic choice. In writing my performance, I returned to the specific areas of my research that supported my thesis. The scene I chose

to portray shows Queen Elizabeth I struggling with her personal emotions as opposed to her duty as Monarch concerning whether to sign a death warrant for her cousin Mary Queen of Scots who has been charged with plotting to assassinate and overthrow her. I use a copy of the death warrant signed by Elizabeth I in my performance with the permission of the British National Archives. I used my thesis as a filter to par-down my performance to its essential elements. I use quotes in my performance to ensure that I portray Elizabeth I's voice authentically but the vast majority of my performance, I wrote myself.

My thesis forms the foundation of my project, to which I have added evidence and analysis of my own to describe the theme, *The Individual in History: Actions and Legacies*. Anne Boleyn and Elizabeth I are arguably the two most influential figures in English history. By implementing the new ideas of the Religious Reformation and the Enlightenment into public policy, and entrenching the ideas in English society, these two women changed the course of English history. Their actions gave England its religion, its prosperity, its political power, and collectively its national identity.