

### Teaching notes

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The following activity is designed to cover the causes and the attempted solutions for the issue of the poor in Elizabethan England.

#### Activity one: Why were there more poor people?

Students should read the information on the 'Causes of poverty' here: [bbc.co.uk/history/british/tudors/poverty\\_01.shtml](http://bbc.co.uk/history/british/tudors/poverty_01.shtml). Several reasons are identified in the text for why there was an increase in the number of poor people in Elizabethan times. Students should read, highlight and then pick out the 5 different causes. They can then explain the issues using the grid on p.2.

#### Activity two: What did Elizabeth do about the poor?

Students should read the information on the different acts passed under Elizabeth, culminating in the 1601 Poor Law, on p.3. Their task is to summarise each act into a storyboard and a sentence of explanation, with a maximum of 12 words for each one, using the template on p.4.

#### Activity three: Exam question

Taken from the specimen paper for the unit:

Explain what was important about the problem of poverty in Elizabethan England. (8 marks)

Students should look to write a complete answer to the question. The focus of the higher level for the answer is for students to offer extended analysis of what the problem was and the potential for further problems. There is a writing frame exercise on p.5 to allow students to frame their answers successfully.

## How did Elizabeth deal with the poor?

Read the 'Causes of poverty' section here: [bbc.co.uk/history/british/tudors/poverty\\_01.shtml](http://bbc.co.uk/history/british/tudors/poverty_01.shtml) and summarise what you find in the table below.

Reason	Evidence from the text	Why was this serious?	Was it the government's fault?
Increased population			
Poor harvests			
High prices			
Low wages			
Lack of jobs			

### What did Elizabeth do about the poor?

#### 1572 Act

In 1572 the first compulsory poor law tax was imposed at a local level making poverty a local responsibility. Each Parish was responsible to provide for its own aged, sick and poor. The JP for each parish was allowed to collect a tax from those who owned land. This was called the Poor Rate. The law stated that charity for the relief of the poor should be collected weekly by assigned collectors. The money was used to help the 'deserving poor' – anyone refusing to pay was imprisoned.

#### 1576 Act

In the 1576 Act each town was required to provide work for the unemployed. Institutions were set up which became known as 'workhouses'. Each town was also required to provide work for the unemployed, supplying raw material such as wool for them to work on. In this way the poor were given practical assistance whilst fulfilling a useful role for the community.

#### 1597 Act

A new position of 'Overseer of the Poor' was created. Their role was to:

- calculate the amount of 'poor rate' required for the parish
- collect the poor rate from property owners
- dispense money, clothes or food
- supervise the parish poor house.

#### 1601 Poor Law

This created a national system that was to be followed for the next 230 years. It stated that each parish should:

- levy a compulsory poor rate
- provide working materials
- provide work or apprenticeships for children who were orphaned or whose parents were unable to support them
- offer relief to the 'deserving poor'
- collect a poor relief rate from property owners
- ensure parents and children were responsible for each other, so poor elderly parents were expected to live with their children.

## How did Elizabeth deal with the poor?

Legislation	1572	1576
Illustration showing the main points of the reform		
12 word summary of the legislation		
Legislation	1597	1601
Illustration showing the main points of the reform		
12 word summary of the legislation		

Exam question

*Explain what was important about the problem of poverty in Elizabethan England (8 marks)*

**Introductory sentence - address the question and explain the importance of the problem in summary:**

*The problem of poverty in Elizabethan England was that, due to several circumstances, it was dramatically on the increase. This meant the Elizabethan government had to take drastic action to address it before it could pose a serious threat to the country.*

**Factor one: it was on the rise**

*The amount of poverty in Elizabethan England had dramatically increased over time ...*

*(Now explain 3 key reasons why poverty was increasing.)*

*This shows how important the issue of poverty was because it was ...*

**Factor two: the government was forced to act**

*What was also important about the problem of poverty was what the government did about it.*

*(Now explain 3 specific examples of how the government took action - reference the dates and the measures introduced.)*

*This shows how important the problem was because the government ...*

**Factor three: it might lead to further problems**

*This is where you need to consider another reason for its importance to Elizabeth - what might have happened if the problem wasn't solved? What further problems can you think of?*