

Teaching notes

The following activity is designed to cover the challenge posed by Puritans under Elizabeth.

The Puritans were committed Protestants whose theological views did not differ much from that of the Elizabethan Church and they acknowledged the Royal Supremacy. However they believed they were 'the godly' and wanted to purify the Elizabethan Church of England by purging what they considered to be the remaining elements of Catholicism.

The persecution of Protestants during Mary's reign caused many to flee to the Protestant bases of Europe such as Geneva so when Elizabeth came to the throne, within the first year of her reign many, many Puritans returned in the hope of a strong Protestant religious settlement.

Activity 1: Actions of the Puritans

Using p.2, categorise the six Puritan 'actions' into those from 'Within the Church' and those from 'Outside of the Church'.

Extension question

Why did Elizabeth block every attempt at reform?

Activity 2: Heads and Tails - how significant were the Puritans?

Using pp.2-4, match each card that details why the Puritans were a threat with its counter argument. Summarise each argument into a two sentence brief.

Vestments

Vestments are the clothing that priests wear in church. Puritan priests rejected what Elizabeth's settlement instructed them to wear as they said it was too similar to Catholic dress. Elizabeth ordered her Archbishop of Canterbury, Matthew Parker to ensure that surplices were being worn properly. Thirty seven of the clergy were dismissed from their posts for refusing to conform.

Prophesying

Some Puritan clergy started organising prayer gatherings. In these meetings Puritans took a liberal approach to prayer and did not follow what Elizabeth had specified. She was concerned ideas might spread that challenged her Settlement. It was encouraged by Elizabeth's second Archbishop of Canterbury, Edmund Grindal who despite Elizabeth's instruction, failed to stop the practice. He was placed under house arrest and replaced as Archbishop.

Admonition to parliament

This can be seen as the Puritan manifesto, issued in 1572 and written by John Field and Thomas Wilcox. It demanded that Elizabeth I restore the 'purity' of New Testament worship and eliminate the remaining Catholic elements from the Church. The authors were imprisoned or forced to flee.

The actions of Peter Wentworth MP

Elizabeth had told Parliament that controversial issues were not to be discussed and these were to remain 'her prerogative'. Some Puritan members of parliament wanted to be able to discuss such matters, including further religious reform. In 1576 one MP, Peter Wentworth, argued that members of parliament had the right to discuss any subject they wanted. Elizabeth responded by ordering him to be sent to the Tower of London.

The Martin Marprelate Tracts of 1589

The Tracts were Puritan propaganda in the form of pamphlets which criticised the working and practices of Elizabeth's church. Created by Puritans and made using secret presses they attacked the episcopacy as 'profane, proud, paltry, popish, pestilent, pernicious, presumptuous prelates'. The tracts which were deeply insulting were countered by government propaganda and also through the destruction of printing presses.

Actions of Separatists

Some Puritans decided to opt out of Elizabeth's Church, believing a new start was needed. They attempted to form their own church, where worship and doctrine would be purged of all 'superstition'. Henry Barrow and John Greenwood, founded a separatist congregation in London in 1592. They were executed in 1593.

The Puritan challenge was really significant:

<p>The Martin Marprelate Tracts of 1588-1589 were highly critical pamphlets published by the Puritan movement that highlighted what it saw as inequality in the Church, as well as attacking church abuses and a perception that they were corrupt.</p>	<p>The historian John Neale states that as early as 1559, Elizabeth faced pressure and organised opposition from the 'Puritan Choir' in the House of Commons which forced her into a more Protestant settlement than she had originally intended which shows the strength of the Puritans.</p>
<p>In 1563 the bishops petitioned Convocation to remove Catholic elements such as holy days, the sign of the cross during the baptism ceremony, accompanying organ music and that individuals could use their own discretion when kneeling for communion, ministers could read services facing their congregation and the surplice could be accepted as sufficient for most services. This petition was only defeated by one vote which shows the strength of Puritan views in the Church of England.</p>	<p>The Puritan challenge in parliament was also sustained throughout the 1570s and 1580s and shows the strength of Puritanism in the House of Commons. For example in 1571, Walter Strickland introduced a bill to reform the Book of Common Prayer to remove Catholic practises, in 1572 the Admonition to Parliament was published which criticised the Church's structure, doctrine and continuation of Catholic practises with its sequel published in 1573. Peter Wentworth also led a Puritan attack on clerical abuses in 1576 and argued for the right to discuss religious matters in 1587 alongside Antony Cope's move to introduce Turner's 'Bill and Book'.</p>
<p>Prophesying was used by Puritans in the 1570s to preach and put forward their views but Elizabeth thought they had the potential to cause uprising and rebellion. When she asked Archbishop Grindal to suppress the Prophesying he refused on the grounds that they were had a useful purpose which increased the Puritan threat as they were permitted to continue to spread their ideology.</p>	<p>Separatism was an extreme form of Puritanism; Separatists wanted to break away from the Church of England and create a new church which eliminated all Popish and superstitious practices.</p>

The Puritan challenge was not significant:

<p>The Historian Geoffrey Elton states that the pressure and debate over the Religious Settlement in 1559 that came from the 'Puritan Choir' was not unusual for the parliaments of the Tudor period.</p>	<p>Although the petition of 1563 showed the strength of Puritan views in the Church of England, it was still defeated and therefore ineffective and posed no threat to Elizabeth.</p>
<p>Those Puritans such as Wentworth that challenged religion in parliament were dealt with through imprisonment or loss of their office so that they could no longer be a threat. This punishment also meant that they would not become Puritan martyrs whereas if they had been executed, the Puritan threat may only have increased through sympathy.</p>	<p>The Act against Seditious Sectaries in 1593 was in response to the Marprelate Tracts imposed severe penalties such as the execution of the Separatist leaders Henry Barrow and John Greenwood in 1593. Many had seen the tracts as subversive in a time of national unity against Spain and led the Puritans to disgrace themselves rather than threaten the Elizabethan Church of England.</p>
<p>John Whitgift's appointment as Archbishop of Canterbury in 1583 resulted in the decline of Puritanism. He was the first Archbishop under Elizabeth to have grown up with the Religious Settlement of 1559 and so his religious views matched those of the Queen and he therefore acknowledged Puritanism as a threat. He enforced Elizabeth's policy of religious uniformity and tackled Classical Presbyterianism by issuing his Three Articles which specifically attacked Puritans and either forced them to conform or deprived them of their living. Between 300 and 400 clergy were removed from their office and eventually his policies meant that Puritanism became an underground movement.</p>	<p>The Separatist movement did not generate much force as the original leader Robert Browne went into exile and on his return, submitted to Whitgift. Under Henry Barrow and John Greenwood Separatist activity in London increased in the late 1580s however numbers were so small the movement and their threat were insignificant.</p>