

How did relations between Elizabeth I and Mary Queen of Scots change over time?

Task sheet

The following activity covers the arrival of Mary, Queen of Scots and her claim to the throne.

Activity one

Living graph: for each of the events detailing relations between Mary and Elizabeth, mark on the graph how strong relations between the two monarchs were.

Activity two

Match the quotes with the events from activity one.

Activity three

Why Was Mary a threat to Elizabeth? Explain your answer fully

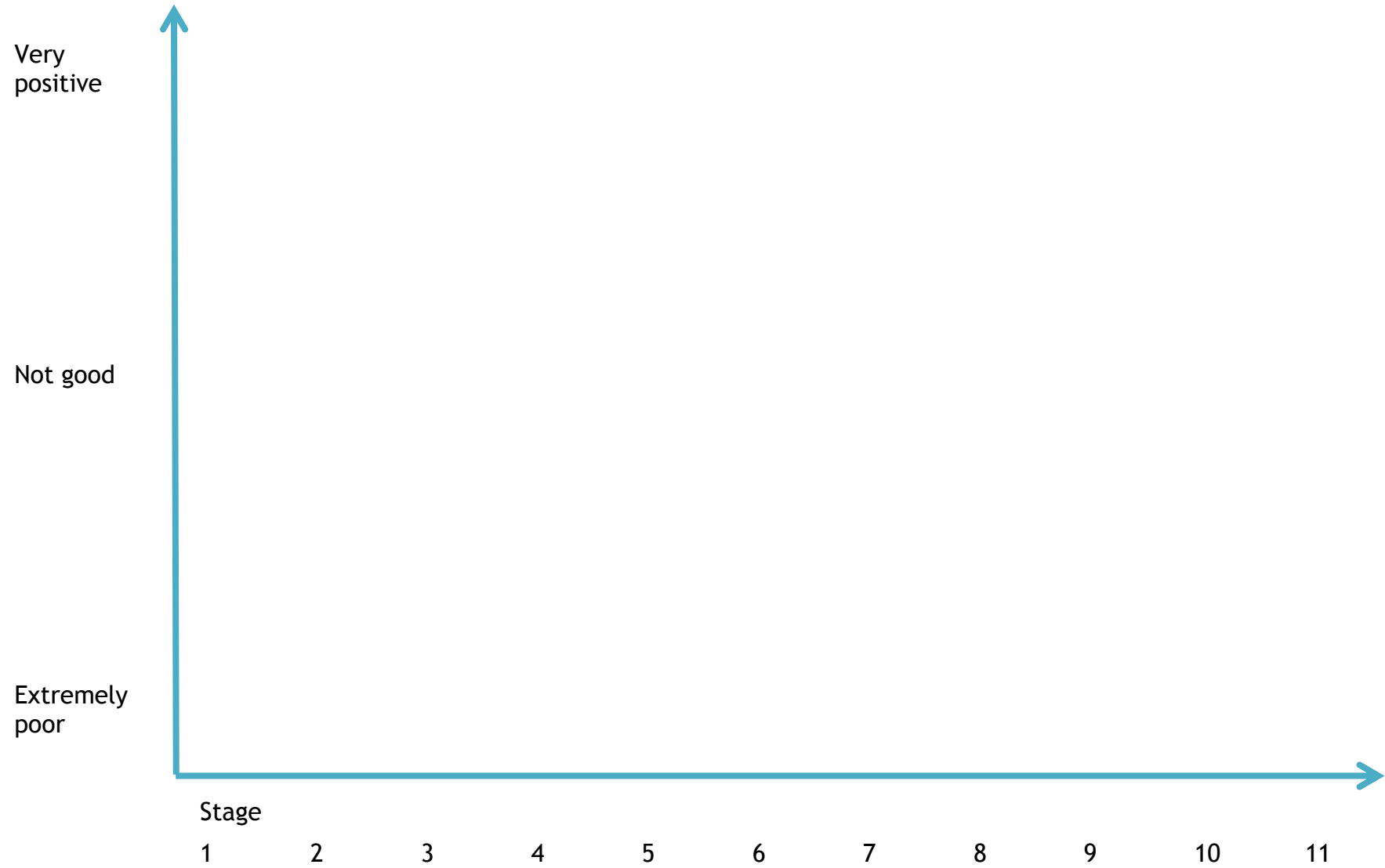
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Relations between Mary and Elizabeth

1. On 17 November 1558 Elizabeth I acceded to the throne of England having been acknowledged as Henry VIII's heir in her father's will and testament. Yet for many Catholics in England and abroad, Elizabeth was illegitimate. They saw Mary Stuart, queen of Scotland and legitimate granddaughter of Henry's sister Margaret Tudor, as the rightful queen of England.
2. When Mary's French husband died in 1560, she returned to Scotland to rule. With Elizabeth and Mary now neighbouring queens, relations were positive.
3. Within days of her arrival in Scotland she sent a representative to England to ask Elizabeth to acknowledge her as her heir. Elizabeth refused.
4. In early 1562, arrangements were made for the two queens to meet in Nottingham in the autumn, but this was cancelled in March after the massacre of French Protestants in France.
5. Mary married Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley. Darnley was a grandchild of Margaret Tudor so had a strong claim to the English throne. Their marriage on 29 July 1565 left Mary and Elizabeth's relationship in a poor condition.
6. Mary gave birth to James in June 1566, giving her a son and heir, and an even greater claim to the English throne.
7. On 10 February 1567 there was an explosion where Lord Darnley had been staying. He was killed. When James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell, whom some believed Mary was having an affair with, emerged as the chief suspect for Darnley's murder, Mary too fell under suspicion. Elizabeth was horrified and in a letter to Mary explained how, Elizabeth urged Mary to distance herself from the scandal in order to protect her reputation.
8. On 15 May 1567 Mary married the Earl of Bothwell. The marriage proved to be deeply unpopular and many people, including Elizabeth, were shocked at the fact that Mary could marry the man accused of murdering her previous husband.
9. Twenty six Scottish peers, known as the confederate lords, turned against Mary and Bothwell, and in July Mary was forced to sign deeds of abdication. Her son James was to become king with the Earl of Moray as regent.
10. Elizabeth aligned herself with Mary. She believed what the lords had done was abhorrent. They had imprisoned and deposed an anointed queen, a crime against God that was even greater than Darnley's assassination months earlier.
11. In 1568 Mary escaped from Lochleven Castle where she had been imprisoned, fleeing south to England to seek refuge and her cousin's support in order to regain the Scottish throne.

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Graph of relations between Elizabeth and Mary



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A

'Both in one isle, both of one language, the nearest kinswoman that each other had, and both queens.' Written by Mary.

B

'All their sisterly familiarity was ceased, and instead thereof nothing but jealousies, suspicions and hatred.' wrote the Scottish diplomat Sir James Melville.

C

'I treat you as my daughter, and assure you that if I had one, I could wish for her nothing better than I desire for you.' Written by Elizabeth.

D

'My ears have been so deafened and my understanding so grieved and my heart so affrighted to hear the dreadful news of the abominable murder of your mad husband and my killed cousin that I scarcely have the wits to write about it.'
Written by Elizabeth.

