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Defeat of the Spanish Armada

In the 16th century, Europe was becoming organized into countries as we know them today. Now, armies were larger, and the stakes were higher as countries fought each other for power and territory. A few of the large, seafaring countries fought for even larger prizes. England and Spain were two of these large countries. Both had ambitions to extend their power beyond their own borders.



At one time, Spain and England had been on friendly terms. Trade had been established between the two countries. King Philip II of Spain and Queen Elizabeth I of England had worked together at times. However, conflicting goals soon threatened any alliance between the two rulers.

Some of the problems were commercial. English privateers had attacked Spanish merchant ships and even Spanish colonies in America. These attacks fueled Spanish anger at the English.

Some of the differences were religious. Spain had been trying to put down an uprising by Protestants in the Netherlands. England, under the Protestant Queen Elizabeth, supported the rebels. This made Spain angry at England.

In 1588, Spain had troops in the Netherlands, but their leader, the Duke of Parma, feared that their safety was being threatened by England. So, Spain sent a fleet of warships, an armada, to escort them.

The meeting with Parma's troops would not be easy to coordinate. Radios had not yet been invented. The Armada, when it arrived, would have to wait beyond the small harbor for Parma's troops to come out to them. It would take time to move Parma's troops, assembled on barges, out to the fleet. In the meantime, the Armada would be vulnerable to attack. After Parma's troops came onboard, the plan was to launch an attack on England. Spain wanted to overthrow Queen Elizabeth and put an end to her support of the Protestant uprising in the Netherlands.

The Spanish Armada ran into trouble even before it met up with Parma's troops. It was spotted off the coast of England and was soon under attack by British forces led by Lord Howard.

In one battle, Lord Howard set fireships floating towards the Armada. These were old, wrecked ships that the English filled with wood, tar, and pitch. Then they set them on fire and released them to sail in the direction of the Armada. The Spanish sailors were forced to cut their own anchor chains to escape.

The next day, the two sides met in the Battle of Gravelines, France. The Spanish troops had been trained in the seize-and-grapple technique that had been used in previous sea battles. In this technique, sailors used grappling hooks to latch onto an enemy ship. Then the sailors boarded the enemy ship for hand-to-hand combat. At

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Gravelines, however, the English attacked from a distance using their new long-range cannons. The Spanish never even had a chance to fight back.

The Spanish were good soldiers and sailors, and so were the English. Both sides regrouped and prepared for another day. Battles between the two sides continued for about a week. Finally, the Spanish gave up their plans to meet Parma and set sail for home, going the long way around the north of England to avoid the enemy ships still in the English Channel.

Then, Spain was struck another blow, this time by nature itself. A huge Atlantic storm blew the ships from their formation. It drove some of the ships onto shore. Many ships were lost. Losses were even heavier than they had been in battle. Many sailors were never heard from again.

The remains of the Spanish Armada returned to Spain. For the English, it was seen as a great victory. The defeat of the Spanish navy strengthened the Protestant cause across Europe. Many people now believed that God was on the side of the Protestants.

The Spanish Armada had been defeated; however, both sides regrouped once again. The war between Spain and England continued for many more years. Spain remained a great seafaring nation, and it continued its colonization of America as well. England, too, remained a great seafaring nation. It would also begin colonizing America in the years to come.

Both nations had also learned a new lesson about warfare. They had learned that battles can be won with technology. In the defeat of the Spanish Armada, the newest technology, long range cannons, had won the day. Both sides would now enter into a new competition - the competition to have the newest and best-equipped warships on the sea.

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Questions

- _____ 1. The Spanish Armada was defeated by _____.
- A. Spain
 - B. France
 - C. Netherlands
 - D. England
- _____ 2. The battles between the English ships and the Spanish Armada occurred in the _____.
- A. English Channel
 - B. Pacific Ocean
 - C. Atlantic Ocean
 - D. English countryside

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- _____ 3. How was the Netherlands involved in the defeat of the Spanish Armada?
- A. It was the location of the major land battles.
 - B. England and Spain supported opposite sides of a religious conflict there.
 - C. Both England and Spain hoped to establish colonies there.
 - D. Spain's ships were all built in the Netherlands.
- _____ 4. The Duke of Parma was the leader of _____.
- A. The English fleet of sailing ships
 - B. Spanish troops in the Netherlands
 - C. England
 - D. Spain
- _____ 5. Fireships were _____.
- A. used to attack the Armada
 - B. Spanish ships burned by the English
 - C. ships with long range cannons
 - D. all of the above
- _____ 6. Gravelines was _____.
- A. the location of a battle
 - B. the name of a British ship
 - C. the location of a new colony
 - D. the name of a Spanish ship
- _____ 7. After the defeat of the Spanish Armada, _____.
- A. Spain once again built a strong fleet
 - B. England claimed all of Spain's ships
 - C. Spain ended its colonization of America
 - D. Spain no longer had any ships
- _____ 8. One effect of the defeat of the Spanish Armada was the new importance of _____ in warfare.
- A. metal armor
 - B. hand-to-hand combat
 - C. technology
 - D. sailing