

# Primary and Secondary Sources Activity

The logo for 'networks' features the word 'networks' in a bold, lowercase sans-serif font. A stylized graphic of intersecting lines forms a starburst or network pattern behind the letter 'o'.

## Conflict and Absolutism in Europe

### Speeches of Queen Elizabeth I

#### Background

In midsummer 1588, the Spanish Armada of 130 ships approached the English Channel. Spain's plan was to launch an invasion of England from the Flemish coast. The Duke of Parma—King Philip II's regent in the Netherlands—was to provide reinforcements. In early August, Queen Elizabeth decided to address the English land troops. She traveled down the Thames River from London to Tilbury, located in present-day Essex. Wearing steel armor over a white velvet dress, she appeared on a white horse. She then dismounted and addressed her soldiers. When she gave this historic speech, Elizabeth I had been queen for nearly thirty years.

In late 1601, the queen had barely more than a year to live. In a speech to Parliament, she confronted the members' growing anger about the issue of monopolies. These royal grants gave their holders the exclusive right to sell various consumer goods such as salt, starch, tobacco, and various wines. Elizabeth realized that she had to change her policies. Her address on this occasion became known as "The Golden Speech."

**Directions:** Read the selections from "Speech to the Troops at Tilbury" and "The Golden Speech." Then answer the questions that follow.

My loving people,

We have been persuaded by some that are careful of our safety, to take heed how we commit our selves to armed multitudes, for fear of treachery; but I assure you I do not desire to live to distrust my faithful and loving people. Let tyrants fear, I have always so behaved myself that, under God, I have placed my chiefest strength and safeguard in the loyal hearts and good-will of my subjects; and therefore I am come amongst you, as you see, at this time, not for my recreation and disport, but being resolved, in the midst and heat of the battle, to live and die amongst you all; to lay down for my God, and for my kingdom, and my people, my honour and my blood, even in the dust. I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman; but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too, and think foul scorn that Parma or Spain, or any prince of Europe, should dare to invade the borders of my realm; to which rather than any dishonour shall grow by me, I myself will take up arms, I myself will be your general, judge, and rewarder of every one of your virtues in the field.

—Queen Elizabeth I, from "Speech to the Troops at Tilbury," 1588

# Primary and Secondary Sources

## Activity *Cont.*



### Conflict and Absolutism in Europe

There is no jewel, be it of never so rich a price, which I set before this jewel: I mean your love. For I do esteem it more than any treasure of riches; for that we know how to prize, but love and thanks I count invaluable. . . . I have ever used to set the Last Judgement Day before mine eyes and so to rule as I shall be judged to answer before a higher judge, and now if my kingly bounties have been abused and my grants turned to the hurt of my people contrary to my will and meaning, and if any in authority under me have neglected or perverted what I have committed to them, I hope God will not lay their culps [wrongs] and offenses in my charge. I know the title of a King is a glorious title, but assure yourself that the shining glory of princely authority hath not so dazzled the eyes of our understanding, but that we well know and remember that we also are to yield an account of our actions before the great judge. . . . For myself I was never so much enticed with the glorious name of a King or royal authority of a Queen as delighted that God hath made me his instrument to maintain his truth and glory and to defend his kingdom as I said from peril, dishonour, tyranny, and oppression. There will never Queen sit in my seat with more zeal to my country, care to my subjects and that will sooner with willingness venture her life for your good and safety than myself. For it is my desire to live nor reign no longer than my life and reign shall be for your good. And though you have had, and may have, many princes more mighty and wise sitting in this seat, yet you never had nor shall have, any that will be more careful and loving.

—Queen Elizabeth I, from “The Golden Speech,” 1601

- Analyzing Information** In “Speech to the Troops at Tilbury,” what qualities of leadership do you think Queen Elizabeth I displays?

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- Analyzing Information** How does Elizabeth assert her royal authority in this speech? How did Elizabeth’s choice of clothing underscore her declarations?

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# Primary and Secondary Sources Activity *Cont.*



## Conflict and Absolutism in Europe

3. **Drawing Conclusions** How did the defeat of the Spanish Armada help solidify England's position as leader of European Protestant nations?

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4. **Interpreting Significance** In "The Golden Speech" to Parliament, why do you think Elizabeth begins with the metaphor of the jewel?

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5. **Identifying Central Issues** How do Elizabeth's references to God serve her purpose in this speech?

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