

**The Golden Age of Francis Drake and Piracy:
The Conflict and the Compromise of the Anglo-Spanish War**

Luke Christopher Gotwald

Senior Division

Historical Paper

Paper Length: 1065 Words

The Golden Age of Francis Drake and Piracy: The Conflict and the Compromise of the Anglo-Spanish War

Sir Francis Drake, a pirate and a knight, is not like anyone in history. He raided Spanish ships taking all of their gold and was praised by the English Queen, Queen Elizabeth.¹ At this time King Philip II, the King of Spain, quarreled and fought against the English ships. Eventually, although war was not ever truly declared against England, King Philip ordered for the formation of the Spanish Armada. The Armada was a large group of ships that the king assembled to fight against England's dominating naval forces.² The conflict between the English pirate, Sir Francis Drake, and the Spanish fleets led to the grisly compromise of the Anglo-Spanish War resulting in the launch of the Spanish Armada against the English.

Francis Drake, born in a little town Tavistock in Devon, England in the 1540's, was raised and forced out of his home by religious persecutors. Drake grew up with a life surrounded by the sea and became an astounding sailor early in his life. When Francis was just thirteen he started his career at sea, being an apprentice on a barque.³ He captained his first ship in his thirties traveling to the West Indies to pirate the Spanish Main collecting as much treasure as a he could find. Drake and his men captured over twenty tons of gold and silver, so he buried the silver which was the first account ever of pirates and buried treasure. Drake then traveled around the world on different voyages and expeditions not only becoming more and more hated by the

¹ Nick, Charles. *Sir Francis Drake: Slave Trader and Pirate*. New York, Scholastic, 2010.

² "The Spanish Armada." BBC History, 2014, www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/tudors/adams_armada_01.shtml. Accessed 20 Dec. 2017.

³ "Sir Francis Drake, 1540?-1596." Princeton University Library, libweb5.princeton.edu/visual_materials/maps/websites/pacific/drake/drake.html. Accessed 13 Dec. 2017.

Spanish but more and more praised by the English and Queen Elizabeth. Throughout Drake's expeditions, Queen Elizabeth awarded him different gifts to show her appreciation for his fighting against the Spanish. On April 4, 1581, Elizabeth came to the Golden Hind, an island Drake found and used as a military base, for Drake to be knighted in the name of England. He was then known as Sir Francis Drake.⁴

Soon, all of Drake's attacks were focused on the Spanish because England and Spain, at the time, are fighting constantly and, closing in on war. Drake sailed with five other ships and a total of 165 men to the tip of South Africa. Nuno de Silva, a captain of one of the six ships, became an important asset because of his vast knowledge of the southern waters. Drake then discovered an island he called the Golden Hind. From there, he attacked and took over Spanish ships and villages. In 1578, Drake decided to go after another Spanish ship, named *Nuestra Señora de la Concepción*, and he captured it. The ship held eighty pounds of gold, a large solid gold crucifix, 26 tons of silver, a wide variety of jewels, and thirteen chests of royal plate. Throughout all of Drake's expeditions and raids, many of the men who fought with Drake died of their wounds. Although many died, Drake and his remaining men captured twenty-five thousand pesos which today is equal to ten million dollars.⁵

The war between England and Spain was never officially declared, and the exact cause of war is not clear although some believed that it was from the overthrow of the new Protestant regime. The earliest plan to invade England in the summer months of 1559 was avoided, for Philip did not want to provoke the English into fighting against him. Then, in 1560 there was a

⁴ British Legends: The Life and Legacy of Sir Francis Drake. North Charleston, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013.

⁵ British Legends: The Life and Legacy of Sir Francis Drake. North Charleston, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013.

full scale revolt in the Netherlands, and this was trouble for Spain because they would need to sail all the way from Spain to land an attack on the English. Elizabeth had a hard decision to make—for if she supported the rebels in the Netherlands, then she would make it just for Philip to support the Catholics in England. This she did not want. Now, with the Anglo-Netherlands connection being made, Spain has a lot of things to figure out; Philip needed a plan.⁶

Philip then decided, in autumn of 1585 while recovering from illness, to launch the *Empresa*, also called the *Enterprise of England*. The preparation for the Armada took over two years from when it started in early 1586. Philip's governor in the Netherlands became unhappy that an attack would be launched before there was a big enough port in the Dutch area. Philip then decided that the Armada would secure a landing on the Kentish coast. This plan was weak, though, because Philip ignored the chance that the English might successfully divert the fleet or meet them en route. The Armada was launched in the summer of 1588 and consisted of 122 ships. They met sixty-six English ships resupplying in Plymouth and chased them down the English Channel. Traveling upwards, about a third of the Armada was lost to the English including Drake, and the Armada ends in failure.⁷

Although most of the Armada returned safely, all the work put into it was wasted, and it became a complete failure. The English successfully got away from what could have been a huge loss. The Armada goes down in history for the difference between its great potential versus how poorly it performed. The Armada may have been a huge waste, but it lead into a long battle

⁶ "The Spanish Armada." BBC History, 2014, www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/tudors/adams_armada_01.shtml. Accessed 20 Dec. 2017.

⁷ "The Spanish Armada." BBC History, 2014, www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/tudors/adams_armada_01.shtml. Accessed 20 Dec. 2017.

lasting over a decade. Also the losses from the Armada were still great. The Spanish lost fifty ships and more than five thousand men while the English lost just one hundred men.⁸

Together, Drake along with the Armada were just parts of the grisly Anglo-Spanish War that lasted years. Drake created the conflict, starting the war and became a key factor for the English. The Spanish Armada, as well created more opportunities for the English. The compromise of the war was tough for both sides, but it needed to be done to solve all the fighting between the two nations.⁹

⁸ "The Anglo-Spanish War: The Spanish Armada." Thought Co., www.thoughtco.com/anglo-spanish-war-the-spanish-armada-2360738. Accessed 5 Jan. 2018.

⁹ "The Spanish Armada." BBC History, 2014, www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/tudors/adams_armada_01.shtml. Accessed 20 Dec. 2017.

Appendix I



This portrait shows Francis Drake with a map of what was thought to be the map of the Earth at the time. He is depicted with his coat of arms above him along with a few tools used to make the map, for Francis's discoveries were key to creating the map.¹⁰

¹⁰ "Sir Francis Drake, 1540?-1596." Princeton University Library, libweb5.princeton.edu/visual_materials/maps/websites/pacific/drake/drake.html. Accessed 13 Dec. 2017.

Appendix II



A painting depicts The Spanish Armada facing off against Drake and his army. Drake raids the opposition taking over their ships and gathering any loot left.¹¹

¹¹ "The Anglo-Spanish War: The Spanish Armada." Thought Co., www.thoughtco.com/anglo-spanish-war-the-spanish-armada-2360738. Accessed 5 Jan. 2018.

Annotated Bibliography

Secondary Sources:

British Legends: The Life and Legacy of Sir Francis Drake. North Charleston, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013.

This book gave clear information on the life of Francis Drake leading up to the to the Anglo- Spanish War explaining many of his adventures in which he became a more popular hero to the English and a more hated criminal to the Spanish. They provide key visuals and quotes that give the reader a clear understanding of how Drake lived his life. It was overall a useful source that I used mostly for the early life of Drake.

Nick, Charles. Sir Francis Drake: Slave Trader and Pirate. New York, Scholastic, 2010.

This source was very basic and didn't explain things into great detail, but it gave grounding information that is useful for key statements in my paper. It gave me information that was easy to interpret and use. Overall, it was useful but was made for someone younger or less advanced.

"Sir Francis Drake." Five Star Schools, sites.google.com/a/fivestarschools.org/sir-francis-drake/. Accessed 14 Dec. 2017.

This source was very basic, but it gave key information that I could use throughout my paper. It used basic vocabulary and short sentences that gave me main facts for my paper. The source summarized the life of Drake in a short manner. I used it to talk about the different voyages Francis Drake had.

"Sir Francis Drake, 1540?-1596." Princeton University Library, libweb5.princeton.edu/visual_materials/maps/websites/pacific/drake/drake.html. Accessed 13 Dec. 2017.

This source was not used too much for information, but it gave visuals of a lot of things discovered with Drake. The source gave me my first appendix as well as some information on the photo that helped me write it. This source was a little confusing and didn't explain Drake's life as well as the other sources did, but it was still useful.

"The Spanish Armada." BBC History, 2014, www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/tudors/adams_armada_01.shtml. Accessed 20 Dec. 2017.

This source was greatly useful when I wrote specifically about the Spanish Armada and the Anglo-Spanish War. It lacked information on Drake, but it explained in good detail what went on in the war as well as who was involved with the war and how the war started. It was a well put together source and probably one of the most useful sources I had.

"The Anglo-Spanish War: The Spanish Armada." Thought Co., www.thoughtco.com/anglo-spanish-war-the-spanish-armada-2360738. Accessed 5 Jan. 2018.

This source was mostly used for its picture on the site, but it also reinforced the information I had gathered in other sources was accurate. The picture that was used on this site was used in my Appendix II, and it depicted the Spanish Armada while in battle with English ship.