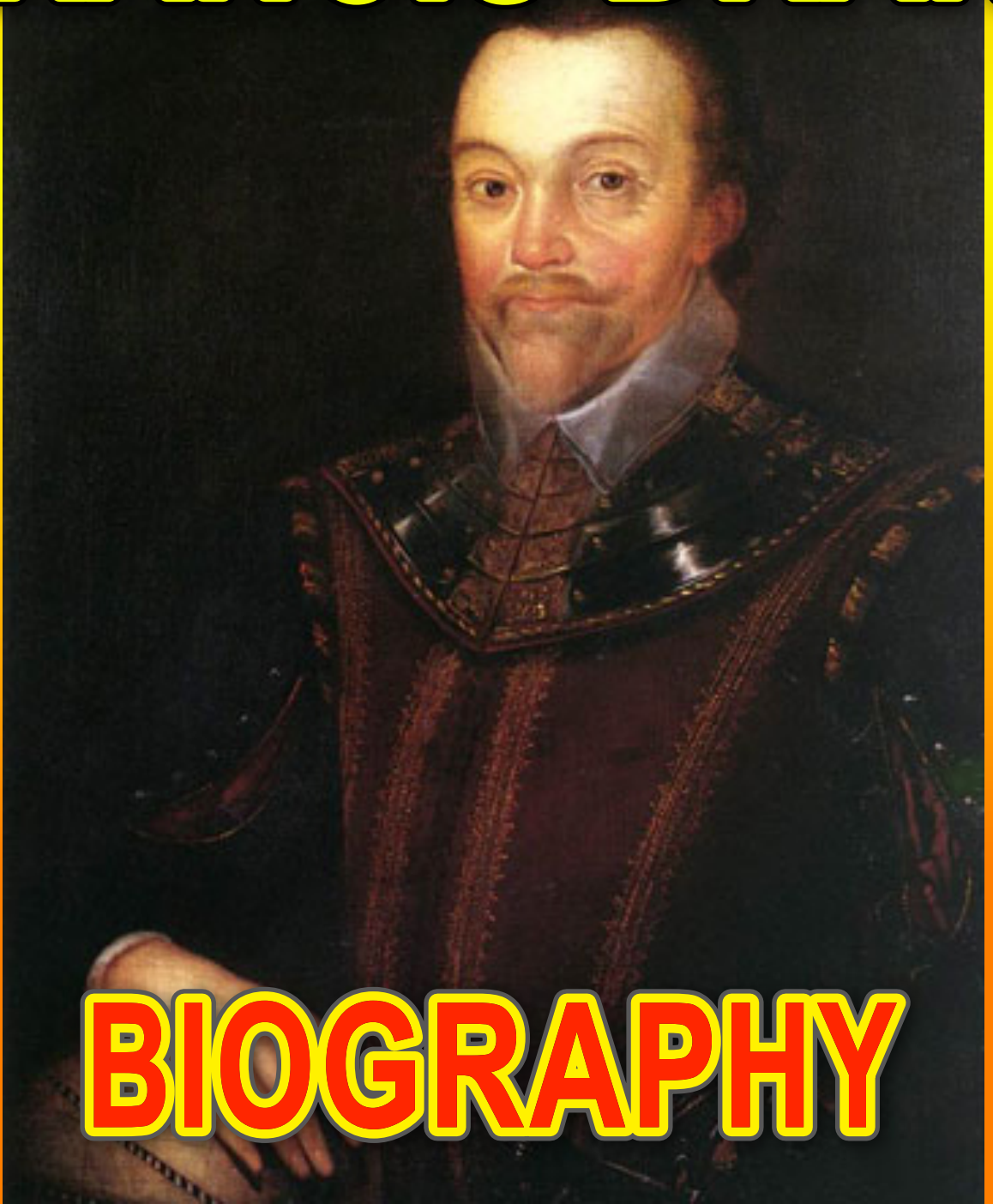


FRANCIS DRAKE



BIOGRAPHY

SIR FRANCIS DRAKE

Sir Francis Drake was born in Devon in 1540 and died 55 years later, having done things that many people would have needed several lifetimes to achieve. He was so many things – a sea captain, a pirate working for Queen Elizabeth (known as a privateer), he was a slave trader, an amazing explorer and navigator, and he was able to defeat the Spanish Armada.

Drake was a natural sailor and commander. He was 22 when he got his first ship and at 23 he made his first voyage to North America. Like all commanders of the time, Drake was happy to take slaves from Africa to America as well as plunder the Spanish treasure ships. On one occasion he was trapped by the Spanish and only just escaped. He then vowed revenge on the Spanish by capturing as much Spanish treasure as he could.

On one of his early trips he went inland into Mexico and captured so much gold and silver that he could not carry it all and so some was buried. This may have been the origin of the many stories of pirates and buried treasure. The Spanish called him El Draque and put a price of about £4 mill (in modern money) on his head – dead or alive.

His daring became so well known that, in 1577 Queen Elizabeth partly paid his expenses to make a journey to raid the Pacific coast of South America. This is the time he commanded the Pelican, which was renamed the Golden Hind during the journey. Off the coast of Peru, he captured Spanish ships full of gold and silver. He continued north along the coast as far as what is now San Francisco in California and named the area Nova Albion (New England).

From there he headed across the Pacific to the Spice Islands and got back to England in September 1580, some three years after setting out. He had a hold full of gold, silver and spices. It was worth a fortune and he was knighted for his success.

In 1580 Drake bought the manor house called Buckland Abbey (now a National Trust house) and lived there when he was not away on his adventures. In 1581, Drake became the Mayor of Plymouth and a Member of Parliament.

In 1585 war with Spain began and Drake went to the Caribbean to destroy the Spanish towns. The Spanish king began to plan for an invasion. But Drake stopped the plan by sailing into Spanish ports and destroying their ships. This delayed the invasion attempt by a year.

By the time the Armada was rebuilt and ready, Drake was Vice Admiral of the English fleet. He already had a plan, and when he was told of the approaching Spanish fleet, he calmly went on playing bowls in Plymouth.

Drake continued to attack Spanish ports until his death in the Caribbean from an infection. He was buried at sea in full armour.

Understanding words

Before we can understand a story we have to know what all of the words mean. Let's try one...

a Write the sentence in which you found the word 'fortune'.

b From that sentence, suggest what 'fortune' means.

c Write a new sentence using the word 'fortune'.

d Use a dictionary to find words with a similar meaning (synonyms) to 'fortune'.

e Draw a small picture showing what you think 'fortune' means.

Try this for other words, too. 

Finding key words

Next, we need to find the key words that tell us what the story is about...

Read the story and underline the key words. Write the most important of these key words in a list like the one below. Write next to it a word that means a similar thing (a synonym). You don't have to use all the spaces, but you should not use more.

Key word	Synonym (similar word)
Example: voyage	trip

Sequencing

Sequencing means getting the events in the right order. Write these sentences in the correct order, so they make sense.

Drake died while fighting in the Caribbean. He was buried at sea in full armour.

Drake was born in Devon. He was a natural leader and sailor.

Elizabeth helped to fund the journey around the world.

Drake was a privateer, taking treasure from Spanish ships.

Drake was Vice-Admiral when the English fleet defeated the Armada.

The Spanish put a price on Drake's head – dead or alive!

Drake got so much treasure in Mexico, he had to bury some of it.

Get to the facts

1 When was Drake born?

2 Which part of England was he born in?

3 What did the Spanish call Drake?

4 What were the two names for the ship in which Drake went around the world?

5 How was Drake buried?

Make a story...

When you read a description it often gives you ideas about how the event might be described differently.

Treasure ship ahoy!

You are Sir Francis Drake in the Golden Hind. You are off the coast of Peru and you spot a Spanish treasure ship ahead. It spots you and begins to flee, but you are faster... (now complete the story)

Below is a plain text version for printing:

Understanding words:

- a Write the sentence in which you found the word 'fortune'.
- b From that sentence, suggest what 'fortune' means.
- c Write a new sentence using the word 'fortune'.
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For example:

Key word – voyage

Synonym – trip

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Sir Francis Drake

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