

Paper 2, Question 5b

Explain why Philip II launched the Armada against England in 1588. (12 marks)

Strong answer

Although Philip II launched the Armada in 1588, he decided to attack England in 1585 after years of worsening relations with Elizabeth I. Both English involvement in the Netherlands (the Treaty of Nonsuch) and raids on Spanish colonies were important reasons. However, Philip II's religious beliefs also explain his decision.

The Treaty of Nonsuch was signed by Elizabeth I in 1585. It promised to finance 7,400 soldiers to help the Dutch Protestant rebels fight the Spanish. Elizabeth sent an army to the Netherlands under the Earl of Leicester. The Netherlands belonged to Spain so this meant that England and Spain were effectively at war. Philip II was even angrier when Leicester accepted the title of Governor General of the Netherlands. Philip II saw it as Elizabeth I trying to depose him. This was unacceptable and he could not ignore it. So the Treaty of Nonsuch was important in contributing to his decision to attack England.

Elizabeth I also sent Drake to raid Spain and Spanish settlements in America in October 1585. These were part of a series of English raids against Spain. Earlier, in 1577, when Drake began his circumnavigation of the globe, Elizabeth I ordered him to attack Spanish settlements. When Drake returned, she knighted him, but Philip II saw Drake as a pirate. It was after the 1585 raids that Philip II told the pope he intended to invade England. Drake's raids triggered Philip II's decision.

Philip II's religious beliefs did not directly lead to the Armada, but were important. The pope wanted Catholics to overthrow Elizabeth I and replace her with Mary, Queen of Scots. When Philip decided to invade England in 1585, Mary was still alive. In 1586, he supported the Babington plot to put her on the throne. After Mary was executed, the Armada was even more important if Elizabeth was to be overthrown. Philip II's religious beliefs also link to the Netherlands. He wanted to crush Protestantism there. Elizabeth I feared he would turn his army against England and so supported Dutch Protestant rebels.

It was Drake's raids in 1585 that triggered Philip II's decision to launch the Armada, especially because they followed the Treaty of Nonsuch. However, there had been a long-term build-up of tensions and Philip II had become increasingly angry at Elizabeth I because of his strong Catholic beliefs.

Verdict

This is a strong answer because:

- the answer is well planned and structured, while the question is focused on throughout
- historical evidence is precise and has been carefully selected to support the points made
- a clear line of reasoning how cause and events combined to lead to the launch of the Armada.



The wording of the question has been used and Philip II is the focus. This will help focus the answer that follows. Another cause is also identified, not covered by the stimulus bullets.

Here, there is some well-chosen historical evidence that explains why the Treaty helped lead Philip II to attack England.

Knowledge and understanding of historical events is precise and accurate. This answer shows how events combined to lead to Philip II's decision to invade England.

This points out that religious beliefs linked to the conflict between Spain and England in the Netherlands.

This is quite a brief conclusion but it answers the question directly and shows that Philip II's decision to launch the Armada was the result of a combination of causes.