**Religion:** Westmoreland had been born a Catholic while Northumberland was converted in 1567. The North of England had hung on to the old religion despite the 5p fine charged for missing the weekly Protestant service however, the wealthy were frequently protected by the local JP. The rebels’ actions suggest there was an element of religious motivation as they restored the mass at Durham cathedral. Local insecurities caused by the new bishop of Durham who was aggressive in his assault on religious imagery and church furniture, and in his regaining full legal control over church lands. Northumberland was also pushed by his wife, a fervent catholic.

**Faction:** The Northern Earls schemed to overthrow William Cecil who they considered as too influential at court. They held him responsible for the uncertain succession and poor policy decisions. The plan involved Norfolk marrying Mary Queen of Scots but Elizabeth blocked it. The Duke of Norfolk was blocked by Elizabeth and Northumberland had many other personal grievances; she dropped him as Lieutenant of the North, took away his Warden'ship for the middle march, ignored his claim over a copper mine etc. Many of the rebels were retainers or tenants of the Earls.

**Local:** The catholic earls of Northumberland [Percy] and Westmoreland [Neville] were pushed into rebellion by their tenants and by Sussex [President of the council of the North] calling them to answer for their actions. Elizabeth had put her cousin Lord Hunsdon in charge of Berwick.

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**Why did it happen?**

Norfolk left court but was summoned back to London. This provoked the two earls to call out their followers. In November the rebels entered Durham cathedral, said mass, tore up the English bible and prayer book, and marched south to free Mary Queen of Scots and Norfolk and to restore Catholicism. Sussex was penned in York with the royal forces until the rebel forces melted away in the face of Hunsdon moving south from Newcastle and rumours of a huge royal force under Warwick being gathered in the south. After minor skirmishes, the earls fled to Scotland. A belated rising by Leonard Dacre was crushed by Hunsdon at Naworth. The plotters had been told by De Spes before it started that it was likely to fail. Norfolk and both Earls showed no courage or determination, and seemed reluctant to act. Many of the northern gentry had 'answered coldly' to rebel calls.

**What happened?**

Clifford, Earl of Cumberland, failed to act and Dacre was too late. The rebellion was in midwinter, and many rebels were freezing and starving. Elizabeth ordered severe punishments. The Puritan Earl of Huntingdon became the new president of the council of the North, and he systematically broke down the feudal links that had kept the northern Earls so powerful, and imposed much more centralised rule. De Spes and Mary were weakened, and there were calls from the 1570 Parliament for Mary to be executed, and calls for Elizabeth to get married and have an heir. Her moves towards marriage and alliance with Henri Duke of Anjou were an indirect result.

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**How much of a threat was it?**

It was a threat:
- It happened in the context where there was the threat of a general Catholic rising as a result of the religious settlement, the presence of Mary, the worsening relations with Spain in 1568-69 and the arrival of a more crusading Pope in the form of Pius V
- The religious settlement and Protestantism had failed to penetrate the North, which meant there was potential for large support

It was not a threat:
- It happened in the North, which was far from the monarch and government
- Gentry-men did not support the nobles and the nobles did not show the convincing or inspiring leadership needed for success
- It happened at the wrong time of year to be a sustained rebellion
- It enabled Elizabeth to tame the north and exert more control and prevent any future rebellions along these lines