

SELF-LED ACTIVITY

CIVIL WAR: PARLIAMENTARIANS VS ROYALISTS



Recommended for

KS2–3 (History, English)

Learning objectives

- Learn about the different figures leading up to the English Civil War and their perspectives on the conflict.
- Understand the ideologies of the different sides in the English Civil War.
- Use historical sources to formulate a classroom debate.

Time to complete

Approx. 60 minutes



A Roundhead (left) fighting a Cavalier (right) during a re-enactment at Bolsover Castle.

SUMMARY

This activity will explore the backgrounds, beliefs and perspectives of key people in the English Civil War to help the class gain a deeper understanding of the conflict. In small groups of about three, ask students to read the points of view of the six historical figures on pages 33 and 34. They should decide whether they think each person was a Royalist or a Parliamentarian, and why; answers can be found in the Teachers' Notes on page 32. Now conduct a class discussion about the points made by each figure and allow for personal thoughts and responses. Collect these thoughts in a collaborative mind map.

Next, divide the class into 'Parliamentarians' and 'Royalists'. Using the historical figures' perspectives on pages 33 and 34, the points the class made, and the tips below, have the students prepare a speech to persuade those in the other groups to join them.

Invite two students from each side to present their arguments; after both sides have spoken, discuss how effective their arguments were. The Parliamentarians and the Royalists could not reach an agreement and so civil war broke out – is the group able to reach a compromise?

TOP TIPS FOR PERSUASIVE WRITING

Strong arguments follow a clear structure. It can be helpful to use PEEL to form your case:

Point: a short statement that makes your position clear.

Explanation: why the point is correct or important.

Evidence: illustrate the point and explanation with supporting evidence. This can be quotes or statistics.

Link: bring it back to the point.

MORE LEARNING IDEAS

Your class could take this further by looking at speeches today to consider what persuasive devices made them effective, and the evidence used to support claims made in them.

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TEACHERS' NOTES

REVEALING THE ANSWERS

After the class has discussed which side of the conflict they thought each person was on, reveal the answers with the additional information.

ROYALISTS

- Charles I – he was beheaded for treason on 30 January 1649. Although he lost the English Civil War, his son Charles II would eventually be restored as king.
- Sir Edward Hyde – it was Charles II who granted him an earldom.
- Dame Mary Bankes – after the siege of Corfe Castle, the Bankes family were stripped of their lands. Mary petitioned Parliament to have these lands restored to her and her family. The lands were restored in 1660.

PARLIAMENTARIANS

- Brilliana, Lady Harley – supported Parliament's cause, which was difficult when her neighbours supported the monarchy. Brilliana died shortly after the siege on her home was lifted.
- Sir Thomas Fairfax – he opposed the trial and execution of Charles I. His moderate views meant that he played a part in the restoration and wasn't punished.
- John Pym – when he died in 1643, he was buried in Westminster Abbey, which is a huge honour. After Charles II was restored in 1660, his body was reburied in a less prestigious site.

Read the descriptions of the people on this page – do you think they were Royalists or Parliamentarians?



HISTORICAL FIGURES FROM THE ENGLISH CIVIL WAR

CHARLES I OF ENGLAND AND SCOTLAND (1600–49)

Charles believed he was anointed by God to rule and felt that the tactics displayed by Parliament during the Short and Long Parliaments were unscrupulous and justified him trying to arrest them for treason. Charles accepted that kings were bound by law, but he felt that Parliament should only be allowed to vote on additional taxes, and only when he summoned them.

Charles was faced with open rebellion and treason, which he felt justified him fighting his own subjects. Charles saw himself as a champion of the law and tradition.



DAME MARY BANKES (1598–1661)

Dame Mary was the daughter of a wealthy landowner and the wife of Sir John Bankes, who was Lord Chief Justice. She led the defence of her home, Corfe Castle, when it was under siege for three years. She was forced to surrender to her enemies when she was betrayed by one of her staff. Her enemies treated her with honour due to her courage.

Dame Mary would have had a good understanding of the law and, being the daughter of a wealthy landowning family, would have held traditional views.



SIR THOMAS FAIRFAX (1612–71)

Sir Thomas was the son of a Yorkshire peer, and became a senior military leader in the English Civil War.

He was moderate in his views, but fought for the defence of traditional English values against what he viewed to be an un-English style of absolute government.



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BRILLIANA, LADY HARLEY (1598–1643)

Brilliana came from a family of wealthy landowners. Brilliana was a Puritan, but her neighbours were not. Brilliana lived at Brampton Bryan Castle and had to defend it during a siege while her husband, Sir Edward Conway, was away. Brilliana was a highly educated woman who knew several languages. Lots of her letters survive today.

Brilliana believed in religious freedom, which she felt was threatened. She saw it as her duty to stand up for the social and religious values she believed in.



SIR EDWARD HYDE (1609–74)

Sir Edward was a lawyer and an MP who was a chief adviser during the English Civil War. He later became Earl of Clarendon and Lord Chancellor.

Sir Edward was an intelligent and articulate man who held moderate views. His belief that overturning the natural order would lead to chaos and injustice was shared by the gentry and merchant classes.

Sir Edward wrote a book called *The History of the Great Rebellion* which became a standard account of the English Civil War.



JOHN PYM (1584–1643)

John was a lawyer and an MP who served the Crown as a tax collector. He emerged as one of the leaders in the English Civil War. John believed in monarchy and had a strong idea of what that should mean.

John was a Puritan, and opposed Catholicism as well as what he saw as an attempt at absolute rule.

