

**Lesson
Two****England and the civil
wars****Aims**

In this lesson we are going to find out about:

- what impact the civil war had on families
- how Parliament was able to win the war
- what happened after the execution of Charles I

Context

In the previous lesson, we looked at the execution of King Charles I and considered the reasons why it happened. Now we will turn our attention back to the civil wars and look in more detail at what happened and what life was like as a consequence.



Oxford Open Learning

Activity 1	Do you support a football team? Does your brother or friend support a different one? How does this make you feel? (Use your imagination if necessary!) For one minute, jot down your feelings.
	

Families divided

When civil war broke out in 1642, the country was divided. The Royalists normally came from wealthy backgrounds. They were noblemen and wealthy landowners who supported the King and many were skilled horsemen. This led them to being nicknamed 'Cavaliers' after wild Spanish horsemen of the same name. Many Catholics supported the King because of his Catholic wife and his apparent sympathy for their cause. The King found most of his support in the north and the west of the country.

Parliament's supporters were normally poorer and were often townspeople, farmers or merchants. Much of Parliament's support came from the south or east of the country. They were nicknamed 'Roundheads' because they were perceived to be rough, young common people. There were many Puritan MPs and so Puritans across the country supported the Parliamentarians.

Activity 2	Look closely at the descriptions above. If your family had lived during the civil war, what side you think you would have supported?
	

Choosing a side

Some people found it easy to work out which side they supported, but in other cases it was very difficult. The war divided families, as brothers disagreed about whether to support the King, who was the natural defender of the country, or the Parliament, who represented the people. That families should be divided reinforced many people's ideas that civil war was unnatural. Family ties were very close, yet here cousins were often on differing sides. In some cases more immediate family members were divided.

The Verneys of Buckinghamshire are an example of a family divided by the civil war. Sir Ralph was a Parliamentarian, but his father Sir Edmund stayed loyal to the King. We know about this difference in opinion and the heartache it caused the family from the letters they wrote to each other. Sir Edmund was killed in battle shortly after the civil war broke out.

The country was divided. Some people tried to stay neutral, but there were fierce battles. Many men lost their lives and some women even joined in the fighting in disguise.

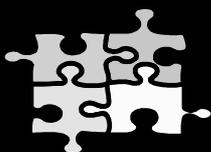
The civil war raises the question of what Parliament's role should be. Should it be to support the King? Or to represent the people against the King? How much should the King have to listen to Parliament?

Investigate!



Find out what your MP (Member of Parliament) does to represent you and your constituency today. Do they have to listen to the monarch?

Something to think about



How much power should the King have? What do you think the role of Parliament should be?

Why did Parliament win?

The Parliamentarians won the civil war because they had better weapons and better leaders. Charles I was no better a leader of an army than he was leader of the country. He was a weak and poor leader. Although his army was made up of skilled horsemen, it was poor and they had few weapons. Parliament had control of the Navy and could therefore stop the Royalists receiving supplies. The Parliamentarians had a very skilled leader in the form of Oliver Cromwell, who organised a New Model Army.

Oliver Cromwell



Oliver Cromwell was born in 1599 and studied at Cambridge. He became an MP in 1640 and quickly came to prominence as a strong and skilled leader in the civil war. He organised a New Model Army which paid its soldiers regularly and had proper training. It was unusual in allowing poor men to sometimes become captains and leaders in the army – previously this would only have been the domain of the very rich. Cromwell was a strong Puritan and he believed fiercely that God wanted a Parliamentarian victory.

Investigate!



Find out about the Battle of Naseby. How and why were the Royalists defeated?

With Cromwell's skilled leadership and with more weapons than the opposition, the New Model Army was able to ensure a Royalist defeat.

1649

By 31st January 1649, it was all over for the Royalists. Charles I was executed and many of his supporters were also killed or imprisoned. The question was: how should England be run now? Oliver Cromwell was a strong leader and quickly took charge.

Ireland

One of Cromwell's priorities was to crush the rebellion in Ireland. He had heard many reports of Irish Catholics behaving brutally towards Protestants in their country, so he took an army of 12,000 over there to overpower them. He believed very firmly that this was God's will.

In the town of Drogheda, north of Dublin, Cromwell's army stormed in and attacked the people. Hundreds of locals hid in the church, so Cromwell's army set fire to it. Hundreds were killed, including all the priests in the town. Cromwell came home feeling victorious. "God gave a new courage to our men," wrote he in a letter just after the massacre, "This is the righteous judgement of God upon these barbarous wretches."

After the massacre, Cromwell took land from the Irish Catholics and gave it to English Protestants. This meant that the native Irish became very poor and very resentful of the English. Many of the difficulties in Ireland today stem from this time.

Opposition at home

Back in England, there were a number of groups who were campaigning for change. The Levellers, The Diggers and the Quakers were all considered to be dangerous rebels.

The Levellers

- Wanted every man over 21 years to have the vote.
- Believed people should be allowed to follow any religion.
- Thought that execution should only be used if the person has been found guilty of murder.

The Quakers

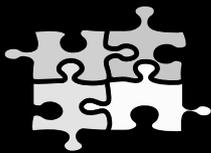
- Did not believe in the need for organised church services.
- Believed that everyone was equal and should be treated with equal amounts of respect.

The Diggers

- Believed that all land should be shared.

These rebellions also needed to be crushed, Cromwell believed. The leaders of the Levellers were shot down by a firing squad.

Something to think about



What do you think of the requests/demands from these rebel groups? How would their demands be treated today?

The MPs

After the Royalist defeat, there were fewer MPs (Members of Parliament) in Parliament because those that had supported the King could no longer attend. The Parliament that was left was called the 'Rump Parliament'. The MPs became increasingly greedy and Cromwell did not feel they were helpful. He dismissed Parliament and established a National Assembly instead. In 1653, Cromwell took on the title 'Lord Protector'. He turned down the offer to be King, although in reality he *was* King in all but name. He even had his son Richard named as his heir!

Activity 3

Imagine you are an MP from the Rump Parliament. Oliver Cromwell had just dismissed you. How do you feel? How do you feel about what has happened over the last few years, and what are your thoughts on Cromwell? Write a short diary entry explaining your beliefs.

