

Knowledge Organiser – Causes of the English Civil Wars

1640-42

Key points

- Charles I became King of England in 1625.
- He fell out with the English Parliament for several reasons.
- The disputes escalated into a civil war in 1642.

King James I

James' attitude toward Parliament was clear. He commented in 1614 that he was surprised his ancestors "should have permitted such an institution to come into existence.

James believed in the Divine Right of Kings. This was the belief that he had been put in charge of the country by God, so therefore did not need assistance from Parliament in order to make decisions.

Charles' early reign

Charles I became King of England in 1625 following the death of his father, James I. He married a French princess, Henrietta Maria. This caused concern among some MPs, who believed Charles had plans to make England a Catholic country again.

Charles also believed in the Divine Right of Kings. In 1625, one of Charles' closest advisors, the Duke of Buckingham, led a failed naval battle against the Spanish at Cadiz. Charles refused to criticise Buckingham, which angered some in Parliament.

In 1629, Parliament became increasingly critical of Charles' decision making and policies. Charles decided to dissolve Parliament and rule without them. Parliament did not sit again until 1640.

1629 - 1640

Without Parliament, Charles was not allowed to raise new taxes. To get around this, Charles introduced ship money (An old tax) in 1634. This was extremely unpopular, as this tax had only ever been raised during times of war and the country wasn't at war now.

In 1633, Charles had appointed William Laud as Archbishop of Canterbury. This was an unpopular appointment, as Laud had some controversial ideas. For example, he ordered churches to have stone altars, rather than wooden communion tables. Stone altars were a feature of Catholic churches, so this added to some people's fears that Charles intended to make England a Catholic country again.

In 1637, Charles ordered the use of a new prayer book in Scotland, which angered Scottish Puritans. They believed that the Church needed to become more Protestant, and that the Church should be 'purified' of all traces of Catholic practice. People rioted when clergy used the prayer book in church services.

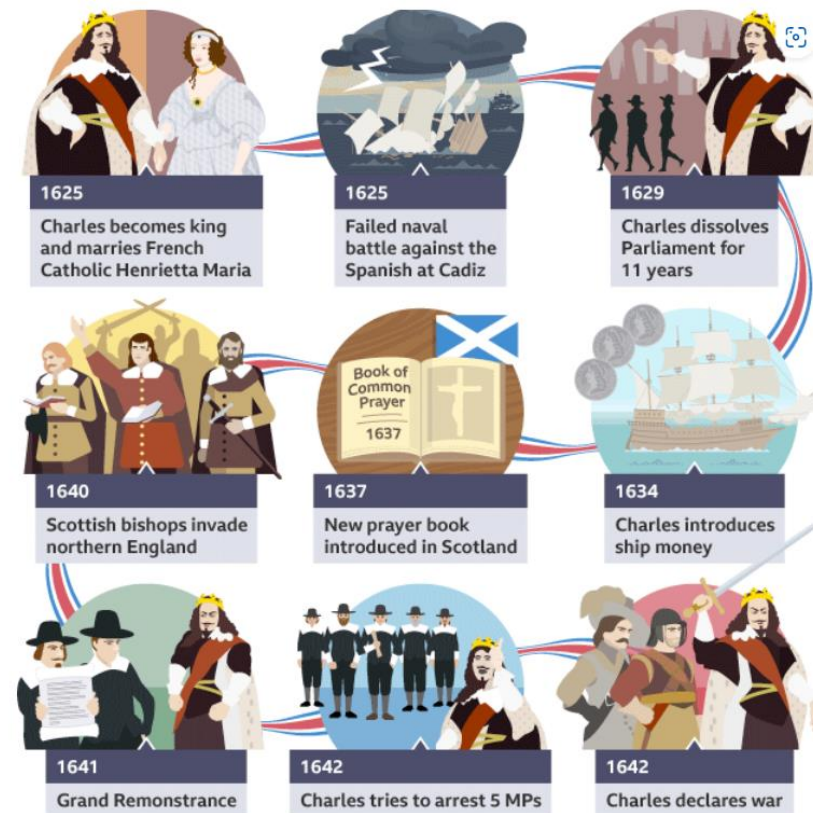
In 1640, angered by Charles' religious changes, some Scottish invaded the north of England. Charles was in urgent need of money. He had to recall Parliament to try and raise some new taxes to fund an army.

Knowing that Charles was in desperate need of money to fight Scotland, Parliament placed heavy demands on him in return for their support. Parliament demanded the removal of two of Charles' most trusted advisors, Archbishop Laud and the Earl of Strafford and that Charles had to agree to meet with Parliament at least every 3 years.

In December 1641, Parliament voted in favour of the Grand Remonstrance. This was a list of demands for Charles to make further reforms. Even some MPs felt this went too far. Charles refused to agree to the Grand Remonstrance. In January 1642, Charles went into the Houses of Parliament to try and arrest 5 MPs, but they had been warned of his arrival and escaped on the River Thames.

In August 1642, Charles grew tired of Parliament's demands and raised his standard at Nottingham, to declare war on Parliament.

Key events leading up to the outbreak of war in 1642



Key terms

Grand Remonstrance = 204 complaints about the King's rule, presented to him by parliament.

Ship money = Unpopular tax introduced by King Charles.

Puritans = Protestants who wanted to purify the Church of England from Catholic practises.

Key people



James I



Earl of Strafford



Archbishop Laud