

Unit 8 The civil wars: was England 'turned upside down' in the seventeenth century?

About the unit

In this unit pupils will learn about the main personalities and events in the story of the English civil wars. They will consider the connections between conflicting ideas and the events of the war. They will study questions of cause, consequence and interpretation.

This unit is expected to take 8–11 hours. There is scope to adjust some of the teaching activities to take account of time constraints in different schools.

Where the unit fits in

The unit builds on earlier work relating to Tudor and Jacobean times. It also relates to the study of the monarchy carried out as part of the consideration of Britain 1066–1500.

Expectations

At the end of this unit

most pupils will: demonstrate knowledge of the causes, course and aftermath of the English civil wars; give reasons for the outbreak of the civil wars and assess the role of Charles I in the build-up to the wars; explain the causes of the Parliamentary victory; identify disagreements about how the country should be governed; comment on how Cromwell has been interpreted in different ways; assess how far the civil wars led to change, making links between the events of the wars and different political and religious ideas

some pupils will not have made so much progress and will: demonstrate knowledge of some key events and individuals involved in the English civil wars and their aftermath; describe how Charles I governed before the wars; suggest some reasons why the Parliamentary army won the wars; give reasons why people supported different sides; describe how there were disagreements within the Parliamentary army and describe who won this argument; identify differences in ways in which Cromwell has been interpreted; describe some of the changes that took place during the civil wars and Commonwealth period

some pupils will have progressed further and will: demonstrate a detailed knowledge of the English civil wars and the wider historical context within which the conflicts of the seventeenth century took place; evaluate the extent to which Charles I made mistakes in the run-up to the wars; explain some of the different views about why the wars started; explain the relative importance of different factors in securing victory for the Parliamentary side; analyse the disagreements over how the country should be run; evaluate different interpretations of Cromwell; review and evaluate the level of change that took place during the civil wars and Commonwealth period and how far the conflict was a clash of ideas

Prior learning

It is helpful if:

- reference has been made to questions of political debate in previous areas of study
- pupils have experience of work involving the consideration of conflicting ideas
- pupils are familiar with activities involving the analysis of cause and consequence and the consideration of questions of interpretation

Language for learning

Through the activities in this unit pupils will be able to understand, use and spell correctly words relating to:

- seventeenth-century politics, *eg Parliament, puritan, monarchy, republic, radical, Leveller, Digger, conservative, dissenter*

Speaking and listening – through the activities pupils could:

- listen for a specific purpose, note the main points and consider their relevance and validity
- discuss and respond to initial ideas and information, carry out the task and then review and refine ideas

Resources

Resources include:

- books and other sources of information, including film interpretations, relating to the English civil wars and the seventeenth century
- CD-ROMs, *eg 'The making of the United Kingdom, crowns, parliaments and peoples' (British Library)*, and websites, *eg www.britannia.com/history/monarchs; www.royal.gov.uk/history/*

Out-of-school learning

Pupils could:

- do fieldwork, visiting sites significant during the civil wars
- read novels set in the period

Future learning

The political issues considered in this unit should be further explored in units covering both 'Britain 1750– 1900' and 'A world study after 1900'. Pupils studying unit 10 'France 1789–94' can make comparisons between events in both countries that led to the kings' execution. Pupils' understanding of causation could be developed in unit 18 'Twentieth-century conflicts'.

Why was 1649 a year of reckoning?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a narrative of events 1642–8 • how different defeated groups were dealt with in 1649 • to begin to make a connection between the political conflict of these years and conflicting ideas about how society should be organised | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe in the broadest of outlines the story of the civil wars 1642–8. A timeline may be appropriate. • Focus on 1649 as a year of reckoning, as the winners of the civil wars demonstrated their power over the losers. • Tell three graphic stories: the sombre scene at Whitehall as Charles I is beheaded in public, the drama at Burford church as the leaders of the Leveller mutiny are shot dead by firing squad, and the killing of Irish Catholic civilians at Drogheda and Wexford. Pupils make brief notes of the main points. • Use each violent incident to identify different ideas about power. <i>Who should have power? How much should they have? Should the king share power with Parliament?</i> • Pupils examine the narrative of the stories (either as a whole class or in groups), compare these with their notes and look for indicators of the different views held by the protagonists in the events of 1649. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analyse the relationship between the events of 1649 and the conflicting ideas about how society should be organised • listen for a specific purpose, note the main points and consider their relevance and validity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teasing out of underpinning ideas should be kept as simple as possible: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Parliamentarians v Royalists – Catholics v Protestants – that there were divisions among the winners – how Cromwell dealt with the opposition • Language for learning: pupils could identify key vocabulary, distinguishing between everyday and subject-specific uses of words. |
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What do successful monarchs do? What did Charles I do?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to use prior knowledge of monarchs to elicit key issues • to make comparisons between Charles I and his immediate predecessors • about the details of the reign of Charles I prior to the outbreak of war in England • to evaluate the mistakes made by Charles I and their consequences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remind pupils that all monarchs face problems in their reigns. Use a question-and-answer session to establish the different sorts of problems faced by medieval, Tudor and Stuart monarchs 1500–1625. • Ask pupils to construct a checklist of 'dos and don'ts' for monarchs, <i>eg Be successful in war, Try to avoid arguments about religion, Don't go into debt, Stay on good terms with Parliament.</i> • Tell pupils the story of the reign of Charles I 1625–42. • Emphasise particular decisive and dramatic moments and encourage discussion about whether they made the civil wars more or less likely. • Ask pupils to evaluate how well Charles measures up against the checklist for successful monarchs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make links between the events of the reign of Charles I and the story of his predecessors as rulers of England • assess the relative significance of the mistakes of Charles I • evaluate his competence as a monarch | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer back to unit 2 'Medieval monarchs' and to unit 5 'Elizabeth I'. • The story of Charles I's reign could be provided as a written outline. |
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Pupils should learn:

Pupils:

How do historians disagree about the causes of the civil wars?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that historians disagree about why the civil wars took place • to analyse the causes of the civil wars and identify those that were significant | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give pupils, in groups, a range of 'cause cards' relating to the origins of the civil wars and ask the groups to sort them. Do not, at this stage, suggest the criteria that should/could be used. • Discuss the different criteria each group has used. Suggest use of social, economic, political, religious, role of the individual. • Introduce pupils to the idea that historians disagree about why the civil wars broke out. Explain, in very simple terms, the dispute between the traditional view that the conflict was caused by long-term factors and the more recent view that the causes were relatively short-term. • Pupils sort, and re-sort, the 'cause cards' into short-term and long-term causes and try to identify the most significant ones. • Lead a class discussion comparing the classification of the groups and exploring the reasons for their choices of significant causes. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • categorise causes of the civil wars and recognise that different interpretations use different categories • know some causes of the civil wars and can explain that some are more important than others | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different categories could include social factors, economic factors, political factors, religious factors, role of the individual. • Language for learning: pupils discuss and respond to initial ideas and information, carry out the task and then review and refine ideas. • Key skills: these activities will provide opportunities for pupils to demonstrate evidence of working with others and problem solving (sorting and prioritising causes). • ICT: the causes could be saved in a word processor. Pupils could work in groups to sort the causes into a table under headings. Using a large screen or projector, the pupils display their analysis and justify it to the rest of the class. |
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How did the civil wars divide families?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • about the differing responses of members of the same families to the arguments and dilemmas of the civil wars | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell pupils the story of the Verney family of Buckinghamshire, which had divided loyalties during the civil wars. The Verney story is particularly poignant because two of the main characters were killed in the fighting. • Pupils consider both the story of the family conflict and surviving sources, such as the Verney letters, in order to produce an explanation of how family members could choose different sides in the conflict. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand and explain the complex impact of the conflict on individual families | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The experience of the Verney family could run through the entire unit. Reference to their personal experiences could be used to help pupils understand the wider national context. |
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Why did Parliament win the civil wars?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to analyse the causes of Parliamentary victory in the civil wars • to analyse key events in the wars such as the Battle of Naseby | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guided by the teacher, pupils consider a range of possible explanations for the eventual defeat of the Royalist forces by the Parliamentarians, <i>eg better generals, better weapons, mistakes made by the king, the organisation of the army, more money, support from abroad.</i> • Pupils use a narrative of the wars and focus on some of the decisive moments. By reflecting on the detail of the narrative of the wars, pupils work out that some factors did not apply, <i>eg the weaponry on both sides was very similar, the Royalist army had good generals and brave troops, the Royalist side was let down by factors such as the poor leadership of Charles and the emergence of the New Model Army.</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analyse reasons for the Parliamentary victory • make links between an event, such as the Battle of Naseby, and the bigger story of Parliamentary victory | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decisive factors could include the battles of Marston Moor, Naseby and Preston, as well as the role of such leaders as Cromwell and Prince Rupert. • Language for learning: pupils use terms of qualification and comparatives, <i>eg more, most, less, least, few, fewer</i>, in their explanations of why Parliamentarians won the civil wars. • ICT: pupils could be given a digital copy of the plan of the Battle of Naseby. They could use web publishing or other software to link relevant parts of the plan to their analysis of why Parliament won the battle. Further links could relate the analysis of the battle to the bigger story of why Parliament won the war. |
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Why did the winners of the civil wars argue among themselves?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • about the wide range of views on how the country should be run after the civil wars • about the power struggle between the army and Parliament between 1649 and 1653 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the very different views held by Republicans, Levellers, Diggers, and Royalists. • Ask the pupils to use their knowledge to say how radical/conservative the ideas were, <i>eg on a scale of 1 to 10</i>, and to explain their choices. • Establish that the radicals in the army were eventually defeated and that there were two winners of the civil wars: Parliament and conservative army generals. • Tell pupils that there was then a battle for power between the two. • Pupils study the events of 1649–53 and decide which side triumphed in this struggle. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand some of the political arguments used by different factions within the victorious Parliamentary army • explain whether the army or Parliament was more successful in the struggle that followed the conclusion of the civil wars | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizenship: links could be made to legal rights and the electoral system, which could be explored in a historical context. |
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Why do people interpret Cromwell in very different ways?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that Cromwell has been interpreted in very different ways • that interpretations of Cromwell are influenced by the background of the interpreter and the purpose of the interpretation • to reach substantiated conclusions through critical analysis of information | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils consider the different views of Cromwell that were common in the seventeenth century and the way this disagreement has continued to the present day. • Pupils consider the widespread nineteenth-century English view of Cromwell as a great reformer and man of principle. Contrast this with examples from modern Ireland of the view of Cromwell as an inhuman monster. • Pupils briefly research Cromwell's campaign in Ireland and the rules of warfare in the seventeenth century in order to answer the question <i>Did Cromwell keep to the rules of warfare?</i> • Give pupils a set of cards containing information about Cromwell's 'rule' as Lord Protector. Get them to sort these under the headings 'Protector' and 'Dictator' and ask them to reach a conclusion as to whether Cromwell was a protector of the people or a dictator. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explain how and why different interpretations of Cromwell have been produced • produce a structured interpretation of Cromwell's actions at Drogheda and Wexford • use information cards to reach a conclusion about the nature of Cromwell's 'rule' as Lord Protector | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links could be made with unit 17 'Divided Ireland'. • Citizenship: pupils consider other people's viewpoints and have the chance to express and explain views that are not their own. • ICT: pupils could decide whether Cromwell deserves his reputation as a harsh dictator, using sources provided in a structured investigation on CD-ROM. |
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What happened at the Restoration?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to analyse reasons for, and results of, events and changes • that the monarchy was restored in 1660 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell pupils about the recall of the Long Parliament and the delicate negotiations with Charles II concerning his possible return to England as king. • Describe in simple terms the offer made by Charles in the Declaration of Breda. • Pupils examine his motives in agreeing to make these 'concessions'. • Discuss the questions <i>Did Charles keep his promises? What was restored?</i> Tell pupils what happened to the body of Cromwell, to his former supporters, to the House of Lords and the bishops, to Catholics, Anglicans and dissenters, and to former Royalists. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analyse reasons for the Restoration • understand the different consequences for people across the social spectrum | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key skills: some of these activities could provide opportunities for pupils to demonstrate evidence of communication (in a class discussion, listening). |
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Was 'the world turned upside down'?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to begin to evaluate the extent of the changes that occurred during the civil wars and Commonwealth period • to make links between the changes and different political and religious ideas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give pupils a range of sources that describe aspects of life in England during the reign of Charles I and up to the Restoration. Using these sources and their own knowledge of the period, they construct a timeline which highlights the key political and religious changes, the episodes of peace and war, and the conflict of radical and conservative ideas. • Pupils use the timeline to make substantiated judgements about the episodes of greatest change during the period, and about the extent to which England had changed by the time of the Restoration. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • produce a structured explanation of some of the key changes of the period • make links between various factors to determine the extent of these changes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizenship: activity has strong connections with legal and human rights and the key characteristics of parliamentary and other forms of government. |
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