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The Early Stuarts and the English Revolution

1603–60

KATHERINE BRICE AND MICHAEL LYNCH

SECOND EDITION



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Contents

	Introduction: about this book	v
CHAPTER 1	Context: The kingdoms of Britain in 1603	1
	1 English society in 1603	1
	2 The political system in England	5
	3 Scotland and Ireland	10
	4 Implications of the accession of James I	12
CHAPTER 2	James I: consensus under strain 1603–25	18
	1 The new king of England	19
	2 Problems with the financial system in the early seventeenth century	21
	3 Religion	28
	4 Foreign policy	33
	5 Relations with Parliament	39
	6 Key debate: Wise or foolish: which is the more accurate description of James I?	47
	Question practice	51
CHAPTER 3	The reign of Charles I: 1625–38	52
	1 Charles became king	52
	2 Foreign policy in the 1620s	56
	3 The rise of Arminianism 1625–30	60
	4 Relations with Parliament 1625–9	63
	5 The Personal Rule 1629–40: economic policy	70
	6 The Personal Rule 1629–40: religious policy	76
	Question practice	84
CHAPTER 4	The collapse of the Personal Rule and the approach of civil war 1638–42	85
	1 The end of the Personal Rule	85
	2 Attacks on Charles's government	90
	3 The emergence of a royalist party	98
	4 The move towards civil war	105
	5 Key debate: How have historians interpreted the causes of the English civil war?	108
	Question practice	111

CHAPTER 5	The civil wars and their aftermath 1642–9	113
	1 The first civil war 1642–6	114
	2 Analysing the first civil war	120
	3 The failure to reach a settlement 1646–9	128
	4 The trial and execution of the king 1649	133
	5 The growth of political radicalism: the Levellers	138
	Question practice	145
CHAPTER 6	The Commonwealth 1649–53: an experiment in republicanism	148
	1 The Rump and the establishment of the Commonwealth	149
	2 The radical sects	150
	3 The third civil war 1649–52: Cromwell in Ireland and Scotland	157
	4 The achievements of the Rump	161
	5 The dissolution of the Rump, April 1653	165
	6 Key debate: How repressive was Cromwell's military policy in Ireland?	167
	Question practice	171
CHAPTER 7	The search for a settlement 1653–8	172
	1 The Nominated Assembly 1653	172
	2 The early Protectorate 1654–5	176
	3 Cromwell and the sects	180
	4 Royalist resistance 1652–9	183
	5 The Major-Generals 1655–7	186
	6 The later Protectorate 1656–8	189
	Question practice	199
CHAPTER 8	From Protectorate to Restoration 1658–60	201
	1 Richard Cromwell's Protectorate, September 1658 to April 1659	202
	2 The restored Commonwealth, May to December 1659	205
	3 The path to the Restoration, December 1659 to May 1660	211
	4 Reasons for the failure of the republic by 1660	216
	5 Key debate: What was the legacy of the English Revolution of 1640–60?	219
	Question practice	223
	Exam focus: AQA	224
	Exam focus: OCR	235
	Timeline	245
	Glossary of terms	247
	Further reading	251
	Index	254

The reign of Charles I: 1625–38

This chapter looks at the early years of Charles I's reign, his quarrels with Parliament and his decision to rule without Parliament in 1629. The following eleven years became known as the Personal Rule. Outwardly, there was calm, but tensions were building below the surface as long-cherished parliamentary liberties such as the right to agree to taxation were whittled away. The alteration in the established religion of the country to Arminianism, with its support for the royal prerogative, made religion a source of political unrest and disquiet. This disquiet was first to be openly expressed in Scotland when Charles attempted to bring the Scottish Church more in line with its English counterpart. The stages in this process can be seen in the following events:

- ◆ Charles became king
- ◆ Foreign policy in the 1620s
- ◆ The rise of Arminianism 1625–30
- ◆ Relations with Parliament 1625–9
- ◆ The Personal Rule 1629–40: economic policy
- ◆ The Personal Rule 1629–40: religious policy

KEY DATES

1625	March	Charles I became king	1633	June	Charles visited Scotland, crowned in Edinburgh
	May	Marriage of Charles and Henrietta Maria		Aug.	Laud became Archbishop of Canterbury
	Sept.	Failure of the trip to Cádiz			
1626	Sept.	Forced loan imposed	1635		Ship money levied on the whole country
1627	Oct.	Failure of expedition to Rhé	1637	July	Riot in Edinburgh at the new Scottish prayer book
1628	June	Charles accepted the Petition of Right		Nov.	Hampden's trial for refusing to pay ship money
	Aug.	Buckingham assassinated			
1629	March	Dissolution of third Parliament	1638		Covenant drawn up in Scotland which led to war
1632		Wentworth became Lord Deputy of Ireland	1639		First Bishops' War

1 Charles became king

- *How did Charles's character affect the governing of the country?*

The accession of Charles I in May 1625 seemed to make little difference to England and Scotland. However, the huge differences between the ways James ruled compared to his son would become apparent very quickly.

The legacy of James I

Table 3.1 (see below) shows the legacy that James left in his relationship with Parliament.

Table 3.1 James's legacy to Charles

Relations with foreign powers	Religious issues and divisions	Relations between Crown and Parliament
England had not yet declared war on Spain but it had financed Mansfeld's expedition and was subsidising the armies of Denmark and the United Provinces	Arminians were being promoted but there was still a voice at court for other more Puritan views There was increasing concern about the success of Catholic armies in Europe and their potential influence in England	James had been clumsy in his handling of Parliament and his policies did not always meet with approval He often did not appreciate Parliament but James accepted it as a necessary part of the political system Crown and Parliament generally worked together despite the tensions

Within the first few months of Charles's reign, this would change. He did not see the need to consult widely and for advice, he relied exclusively at first on Buckingham and then on a small inner circle of advisers. He intensely disliked the negotiations that were part of maintaining good relations with Parliament. In addition, he followed policies (especially in religion and foreign affairs) which caused alarm as they suggested the king was wholeheartedly committed neither to the Protestant Church nor to the maintenance of parliamentary liberties.

The character of Charles I

Charles I was very different from his father. He was an intensely private man and this led to misunderstandings.

SOURCE A

Adapted from *A sermon preached before the Honourable House of Commons* by Thomas Sprat, 1678.

Even his virtues were misinterpreted and scandalously reviled. His gentleness was miscalled defect of wisdom; his firmness, obstinacy; his regular devotion, popery; his decent worship, superstition; his opposing of schism, hatred of the power of godliness.

Charles believed strongly that he had been given his position by God and he took his responsibilities seriously. He did not believe it was necessary to explain his actions, which often caused confusion such as in many of his dealings with Parliament. Charles had been impressed by the decorum which he had observed at the Spanish court and which contrasted strongly with the relaxed and even scandalous nature of James's court. Charles insisted on strictly enforced directives about who was allowed access to the privy chamber and bedchamber

SOURCE QUESTION

What can you learn from Source A about contemporary views of Charles I?

ONLINE EXTRAS OCR

WWW

Develop your analysis of evidence to support or challenge by completing Worksheet 11 at www.hoddereducation.co.uk/accesstohistory/extras

(see page 6). The royal family's public acts, such as eating, were governed by rigid rules of etiquette, laying down, for example, the distance to be kept by onlookers from the royal family and the necessity of serving the king on bended knee.

Charles had a speech impediment which caused him to stammer. In addition, he was very shy and avoided contact with his subjects as far as possible. He was, however, devoted to his own family. After a difficult start, his marriage to Henrietta Maria of France (see page 38) turned into a warm and loving relationship, and the birth of his children undoubtedly gave Charles deep satisfaction. His eldest son, also named Charles, was born in 1630 and six other children followed in the years to 1644.

? SOURCE QUESTION

What message is the painter seeking to convey in Source B?

SOURCE B



Charles I with Henrietta Maria and Prince Charles and Princess Mary.
Painted by Anthony van Dyck, 1632.

Charles's patronage of the arts

The other consuming interest of Charles's life was patronage of the visual arts. He spent more time and energy in the 1630s developing an impressive art collection than on any other activity. Once, when engaged in critical and delicate negotiations over support for the Palatinate (see page 35), Viscount Dorchester found him rearranging his busts of Roman emperors.

Unfortunately, this apparently harmless, if expensive, activity was seen by many in a more sinister light. Charles's patronage of Catholic artists such as Peter Paul Rubens, who painted the ceilings of the Banqueting House in Whitehall, and Gian Lorenzo Bernini, who made a bust of the king, aroused deep suspicion.

William Prynne saw the negotiations with Bernini, which were assisted by the pope's nephew, as part of a plot 'to seduce the king with pictures, antiquities, images and other vanities bought from Rome'. Even the patronage of the architect Inigo Jones could be regarded with distrust because his **Palladian** style was regarded as profoundly un-English. The purposes to which his buildings were put were also a cause for disapproval. For example, his Banqueting House, which was added to Whitehall Palace, was used for **masques**, which were seen as expensive and immoral imports from France and Italy.

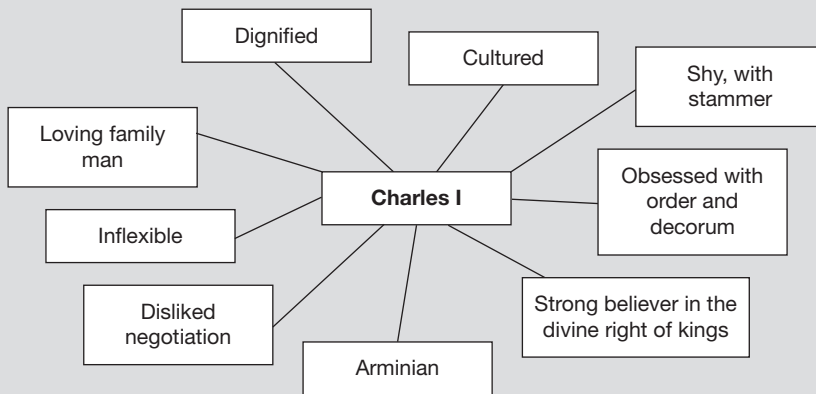
KEY FIGURE

William Prynne (1600–69)

Prynne was a Puritan who fearlessly challenged the actions of Charles throughout his reign. He wrote attacks on the direction of Church policy and twice he had parts of his ears cut off.

SUMMARY DIAGRAM

CHARLES BECOMES KING



KEY TERMS

Palladian A style of architecture popularised by the Italian architect Palladio which imitated the classical features of Greek and Roman temples.

Masques Elaborate plays full of symbolism, which were performed at court at enormous cost.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The reign of Charles I began with high hopes on both sides, but these hopes were to be short lived. Undoubtedly, the dominant position of the Duke of Buckingham played a large part in this as it was very difficult for alternative views to obtain a hearing at court. The death of Buckingham did nothing to improve relations but merely showed that Charles was behind many of the unpopular policies. However, the failure of the Commons to give Charles sufficient money to run the country, let alone conduct a war, was also to blame and both sides could feel they had justifiable grievances.

The conduct of foreign policy added hugely to the mistrust which developed in the early years of the reign. The French marriage and Arminian

religious reforms, which looked suspiciously like Catholicism, created fears about the intentions of the court and soured relations with Parliament to the point where Charles resolved to rule without it in future.

The Personal Rule saw Laud implementing sweeping religious reforms. Wentworth in Ireland followed similar 'Thorough' policies. Rule without Parliament might have been extended indefinitely, despite the unpopularity of Charles's financial expedients, if he had not embarked on an ill-considered attempt to force the Scots into compliance with his religious changes in England. It was a mistake that was to have momentous consequences.

Refresher questions

Use these questions to remind yourself of the key material covered in this chapter.

- 1 Why did the relationship between Charles and Parliament go sour so quickly?
- 2 Why was the foreign policy of the 1620s so unsuccessful?
- 3 Who was to blame for the failures in foreign policy?
- 4 What was the impact of Buckingham on the political life of the country?
- 5 Why did religion become such a source of conflict in Charles's reign?
- 6 In what ways did both the Commons and Charles break with tradition in the 1620s?
- 7 What was the significance of the Petition of Right?
- 8 Why did Charles resolve to rule without Parliament?
- 9 How successful was Charles's government in the Personal Rule?
- 10 Why were Wentworth's actions in Ireland regarded with suspicion in England?
- 11 How did Laud attempt to change the Church of England?
- 12 How unpopular were Laud's changes to the Church?
- 13 Why did the attempt to impose religious uniformity lead to war with Scotland?
- 14 How far did Charles's actions in the first fourteen years of his reign show him to be trustworthy?

Question practice: AQA

Essay questions

- 1 'Financial problems were at the heart of disputes between the Crown and Parliament.' Explain why you agree or disagree with this view of the period 1603–29. [AS level]

EXAM HINT You should argue both for and against the proposition by considering financial problems as well as two or so other factors, and reach a clear judgement.

- 2 'The Stuart governments mishandled the religious problems they faced during the years 1603–38.' Assess the validity of this view. [A level]

EXAM HINT You should analyse the evidence in favour and against the statement. It is important that your answer should cover the whole period adequately, but beware the danger of writing a narrative.

Question practice: OCR

Essay questions

- 1 Assess the reasons why Charles I decided to rule without Parliament in 1629. [AS level]

EXAM HINT This question requires you to consider a range of reasons as to why Charles I decided to rule without Parliament in 1629. To reach the top levels you would need to weigh up the relative importance of those reasons and explain which was the most important and why others were less important.

- 2 To what extent was religion the cause of conflict in the reign of Charles I up to 1638? [A level]

EXAM HINT The question requires you to consider a range of reasons for conflict in the period to 1638. You would need to consider the role of religion, but also other issues such as finance and the policy of 'Thorough'. You should reach a judgement on the role of each issue in causing conflict and use these interim judgements to reach an overall judgement as to the relative importance of religion.

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