



What kind of king was Charles I?

Activity

Part 1

SHHHHH! You are a spy!

You are working for a foreign king in the late 1620s. This king is actually quite friendly towards England. He is interested in making an alliance with Charles I. He wants to check out if Charles is an effective ruler.

Your challenge is to **write a report** for the foreign king. You are not rich or important, but you have a friend in the archives. This means you can look at important documents to get an idea of how well Charles is ruling. The foreign king particularly wants answers to these questions.

- Does Charles rule in the same way as the rulers who came before him?
- How would you describe Charles's character?
- What do you think is going to happen in the next few years – will Charles's rule mean steady or difficult times ahead?
- How would you describe relations between Charles and the political nation? Remember: The political nation means the top people in the country – the lords, the local gentry, the wealthy merchants. They are important because they collect the taxes. They make sure the laws are obeyed. When the king needs an army, they help him to recruit and pay for it. Many of them also advise the king as MPs. If Charles doesn't get on with these men, he will have a hard time ruling his kingdoms.



You need to **provide evidence** to back up your answers. To get that evidence, look at the sources in Gallery 2: What kind of a king was Charles I?

Use this report outline to get you started.



[Report outline](#) [*opens as rtf – or quill writing activity*]

Part 2

Here are some comments a historian made about Charles I.

... Charles lacked many of the personal qualities needed by an early modern ruler. He had little skill in the art of man-management which was crucial when so much depended on the king's relations with leading politicians and noblemen. ...

... he was never a confident judge of human character and tended either to go overboard in his affection for those he felt were serving him loyally, like Buckingham, or to form strong dislikes which made it very hard for him to work with certain politicians. ...

... Another shortcoming ... was his unwillingness to bargain and negotiate. ...

(The author is Dr Richard Cust from Birmingham University. You can read the full document from which this extract is taken at:
http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/state/monarchs_leaders/personality_charles_01.shtml)

1. List all of Charles I's weaknesses according to this historian.
2. Explain which sources in this gallery seem to back up Dr Cust's views.
3. Do you think that the views of this historian are a fair assessment of Charles I?

Use this worksheet to record your answers. Open the worksheet and print it out or save it to your computer.



Report

You are a spy working for a foreign king in the late 1620s. This king wants to check out if Charles is an effective ruler. Your challenge is to write a report on Charles I for the foreign king. You need to provide evidence from the sources to back up your report.

Does Charles rule in the same way as the rulers who came before him?

Evidence:

How would you describe Charles's character?

Evidence:



How would you describe relations between Charles and the political nation (e.g. the lords, the local gentry, the wealthy merchants)?

Evidence: Evidence:

What do you think is going to happen in the next few years – will Charles's rule mean steady or difficult times ahead?

Evidence:



Worksheet

Here are some comments made about Charles I by historian, Dr Richard Cust.

... Charles lacked many of the personal qualities needed by an early modern ruler. He had little skill in the art of man-management which was crucial when so much depended on the king's relations with leading politicians and noblemen. ...

... he was never a confident judge of human character and tended either to go overboard in his affection for those he felt were serving him loyally, like Buckingham, or to form strong dislikes which made it very hard for him to work with certain politicians. ...

... Another shortcoming ... was his unwillingness to bargain and negotiate. ...

1. List all of Charles I's weaknesses according to this historian.
2. Explain which sources in this gallery seem to back up Dr Cust's views. Leave the table blank if a particular point is not backed up in the sources.

Charles I's weaknesses	Sources that back this up

3. Do you think that the views of this historian are a fair assessment of Charles I?