

## *Why did Britain become a republic?*

### Case study 1: Death of Charles I - Source 4

Extract from a report of the trial of Charles I, January 1649

(Catalogue ref: SP 16/517)

#### What is this source?

This is an extract from an official Parliamentary report of the trial of Charles I.

The main exchanges here are between the king and Lord President Bradshaw. Bradshaw was the man prosecuting the king.

#### What's the background to this source?

After the Second Civil War many radical (extreme) MPs and army officers wanted to put Charles I on trial for treason (betraying the country). In December 1648 the army and radical MPs effectively took over Parliament. They put the king on trial and executed him in January 1649.

Most MPs were moderates (taking a middle viewpoint). They wanted to make a treaty with Charles and restore him to power. They were more afraid of the army and radical MPs than they were of Charles returning. However, in November 1648 army commanders decided that Charles must be put on trial. They took over Parliament in an event known as Pride's Purge. Of those MPs left in Parliament after the purge (clean out), the majority were still not prepared to support the trial or find Charles guilty.

#### It's worth knowing that ...

During the trial the king claimed that the court was not legal because there was no court that could put a king on trial. He refused to accept the authority of the court right up to the end.

Charles probably had more sympathy and support in the country at this time than at any other time in his reign. Despite this, he was doomed. Once the army commanders put him on trial, there was no way they would allow him to be found innocent.

## Your turn: What can we learn from this source?

1. What was the king accused of?
2. What was the king's response?
3. How did Bradshaw react to the king's statement?
4. From this exchange between the king and Bradshaw, do you think there was much chance of the king being found innocent? Explain your answer.
5. There are many documents on this website that refer to the king. In what ways is the attitude towards the king in this document different from other documents?
6. Do you think people at the time would have been shocked to hear or read these words?



# Civil War

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## Source 4

*Lerke*  
*Kinge*  
 Thou goodly word  
 Charles Stuart King of England you are accused on  
 the behalf of the People of England of diverse huge crimes  
 & treason w<sup>ch</sup> charge hath bin made vnto you the Court  
 now assembled you to giue so final a P<sup>ro</sup>uisione of  
 way off the charge or anyall of the charge.  
 I say againe that so I might giue satisfaction to the People  
 of England of the wrongs of my proceeding (not by way of arrests

*Lo: Poes*  
 Not in that way but to satisfie your heart I haue done nothing  
 against the Court that hath bin committed to mee) I will doe it  
 But to acknowledge a new Court against hisse p<sup>ro</sup>uisione to  
 alter all the fundamentall Lawes of the Kingdom in hisse behalf  
 I cannot performe.  
 This is the first time that you haue publickly disowned the  
 Court & put an affront vpon it, How farre you haue  
 & howed the fundamentall Lawes & the freedom of his Subiect,  
 & what hande you haue put vpon it, I cannot intencious and  
 v<sup>er</sup>ged to be shewen to hisse Nation, You haue committed your  
 meaning in bloud, & shewen it brought to the whole Kingdom  
 But I haue not vnderstande your meaning.  
 Alaske I would the default of Gentlemen you hat  
 brought the Parliament take him baraigne.

*Kinge*  
 I haue said & made to you, if it were only my particular  
 interest I would not

*Lo: Poes*  
 I you haue heard the pleasure of the Court & you are (though  
 you will not vnderstand it) to giue that you are before a Court  
 of Justice

*Kinge*  
 Well I giue I am before a Court  
 I would haue giue in a lower voice at how was  
 going away

