

## *Teacher's Notes*

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## Introduction

The Civil War of the 1640s is an exciting subject in terms of the events, characters and developments in it and also the intense historical debate that still surrounds it. To begin with, it is extremely difficult to even agree on what to call the events! To call them the English Civil War is to ignore:

the pivotal role of Ireland and Scotland in causing the war;

the fact that there were numerous wars between 1637 and 1651;

and the fact that England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales were all heavily involved in these wars and deeply affected by them.

In Scotland and Wales the events of the 1630s and 1640s are usually referred to as The Great Rebellion. However, the majority of the sources in the National Archives, which we have used on this website, relate to events in England, particularly the internal conflicts, hence our use of the title Civil War.

### **This exhibition has a number of aims.**

This exhibition has a number of aims.

The first is to show a range of sources from the National Archives that few people other than academic scholars will have seen before. They have been carefully chosen for their historical significance, but also for their potential interest and accessibility to students.

Teachers can use these sources to help their students consider changing interpretations of the events of the period. (For many years the Whig interpretation of the period was overwhelmingly dominant, and in terms of popular understanding it still is. The Whig interpretation was constructed

mainly by historians of the late 19th century. It suggested that the struggles of the 1630s-1650s were an inevitable part of a long, evolutionary and inevitable progress towards a more rational form of government than Divine Right. Essentially the historians who developed the interpretation saw the period they were writing in as a golden age for Britain and saw the 1630s-50s as an important stepping-stone towards the point they had reached – a constitutional monarchy in which Parliament ruled the country but the monarch was important and respected.)

Finally, a third aim is to introduce students to some issues concerning the nature of archival sources - how they are stored, searched and used by historians.

As with all Learning Curve exhibitions, we hope to provide a resource that combines the following elements:

- Depth of coverage
- Focus on the curriculum
- Flexible, enquiry based approach
- Stimulating opportunities to interpret sources and communicate ideas.

There are 6 galleries in the exhibition.

1. Sensational sources
2. What kind of king was Charles I?
3. Why did people go to war in 1642?
4. Why did people want the king back in 1646?
5. Why did Britain become a republic?
6. What kind of ruler was Oliver Cromwell?

Each contains a number of case studies. Each case study is designed so that it can be used as a 'stand alone' item in one or two classroom sessions. However, taken altogether, the case studies in a gallery are linked to form a more coherent area of research. This gives students and teachers the maximum amount of flexibility.

Each gallery has a challenge – an activity or worksheet for students to complete which asks the big questions. Most galleries also contain a

background information section. This is designed to give some context to the sources being studied and is not meant to replace standard resources such as textbooks or educational TV programmes.

To get students making effective use of the original source material, each source is accompanied by questions, notes and a transcript. The questions help students interpret the original source and are also designed to help students build up a bank of points and ideas which will be helpful to them in tackling the gallery challenge or activity.

## Curriculum

This exhibition is intended for the history national curriculum at Key Stage 3, year 8. Unit 8: The Civil Wars, was England 'turned upside down' in the seventeenth century?

While some of the original sources used here are very accessible (images and simple documents), others are quite difficult for pupils to manage in their original form. To help with this we have provided simplified transcripts and you may prefer to have pupils work primarily from these when answering questions and tackling activities. There are also notes to help pupils with interpretation and audio versions of the documents being read out, which pupils sometimes find easier to understand.

Importantly, there is an audio version provided for each source, which follows the full transcript. We hope that this feature will make the material more accessible and provide further opportunities for differentiation when using the exhibition with mixed ability groups. The use of sound in this way will perhaps encourage pupils to engage more with the period and help them to appreciate the differences in language, expression and ideas.

Many of the documents could be used by students studying this topic for G.C.E. at AS and A2. These pupils can use the full transcriptions of the document with their colourful 17th century language to gain more sophisticated levels of meaning from the sources.

## Gallery 1: Sensational sources

### Aim

The aim of this section is to get students to think about the entire process of using sources in the subject of history. We introduce students to interesting sources, but also get them thinking about where these sources are kept, how they are stored, how historians look them up and what historians do when they have found them. In the process, students may begin to see that the sources appearing in textbooks are highly processed. For historians, the challenge is often finding a relevant source in the first place, and once this is done there are the questions of deciphering, translating and understanding.

### Contents

Finding an original source

What does it say?

What does it tell us?

Code – a document in cipher

### Methodology

This section is designed to be browsed by students and/or played on a whiteboard or with a projector to stimulate discussion. Some keener students, who are particularly interested in the preservation, curating and use of sources, might like to research the sources in this and other galleries to create a presentation for other students on the sources in history and their use.

## Gallery 2: What kind of king was Charles I?

### Aim

This gallery bridges the source-based approach of Gallery 1 with the more content heavy galleries 3-6. The essential content area is the personality and attitude of Charles I, with a view to trying to place him in a wider historical context. Charles had all of the same commitment to the principles of Divine Right as James I and Elizabeth I before him. However, he did not have the same political antennae that these monarchs had. We present students with a range of sources and see whether they come to the same conclusions that most historians have reached about Charles.



## Contents

Case study 1: Monarchs before Charles I (original sources)

Case study 2: Charles I as ruler (original sources)

Challenge (activity)

Key people & events (background)

## Methodology

One way to make use of the material in this gallery is to ask different groups within the class to study case studies 1 or 2 and present their findings to the rest of the class. The seals in case study 1 are highly visual and suited to students who prefer working with this type of source. On the other hand, some of the sources in case study 2 help to give students a sense of people in the past as real people with real concerns, personality traits and foibles.

The challenge in this gallery is in two parts. The second section is ideally suited to using a word processor. The first part of the challenge, asking the student to be a spy for a foreign king, is slightly tongue in cheek, but based on reality. Some of the best sources we have on James I and Charles I are the surviving reports of the Venetian ambassador in the early 1600s. The feedback for this task could take the form of students talking through their findings, a (somewhat anachronistic) PowerPoint presentation or a letter. Students inspired by Gallery 1 might try and develop a code for their letter to prevent detection – not perhaps directly relevant to their historical studies but great fun!

## Gallery 3: Why did people go to war in 1642?

### Aim

We want to get students to try and see the events from the perspective of those involved in them. The outbreak of war was in no way inevitable and a number of different factors were needed in order for dispute to turn into conflict. Students can work their way through the information in the sources and see if they can see patterns or trends to indicate reasons for the war.

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Case study 1: 1637-39 (original sources)

Case study 2: 1640-42 (original sources)

Civil War soldier (video)

Challenge (activity)

Key people & events (background)

## Methodology

A good starting point for this gallery is to use the video of the different civil war people to engage the students. There is also a quiz based on the video. Students could investigate individual characters from the video and see if their words are supported by the sources. There is a research table in the activity section that can be used to help students record what they find out. They could complete the table by copying and pasting sections from the source transcripts into it.

An extended activity would be for a student to download the video and edit it in a video editing package, perhaps by adding music, captions or a text track with extra information. Alternatively, students could perform and film their own script.

## Gallery 4: Why did people want the king back in 1646?

### Aim

This gallery helps teachers introduce students to some of the issues in the historiography of this period. Traditional Whig interpretations have tended to portray the period as one of inevitable progress towards the traumatic execution of Charles I as a result of his arrogant and stubborn refusal to listen to his people. However, more recent interpretations have stressed the wide-ranging support for Charles in the immediate aftermath of his defeat, which does not really tally with the Whig interpretation. The means to address this is to be honest with students and say that historians have struggled to explain it, and then present them with an interpretation to analyse.

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Case study 1: Effects of war, 1642-5 (original sources)

Case study 2: Viewpoints, 1645-6 (original sources)

Challenge (activity)

Key people & events (background)

## Methodology

The activity centres on getting students to examine different but interrelated explanations of why Charles had so much support at the time. An easy way to help students to manage the workload is to either ask them to examine one of the explanations, or to direct students to one case study (or a smaller selection of sources) and see whether their allocated material supports one or more view. The sources in case study 2 are more personal and accessible to students of wide abilities. As a general rule, those in case study 1 are more challenging, but again there are some simple and personal sources, such as the petition of Mary Baker.

## Gallery 5: Why did Britain become a republic?

### Aim

The primary focus here is on events from 1647-53 and the shock they caused in the kingdom. A secondary theme is that the execution of Charles and the setting up of the English republic was the result of the actions of a driven, minority group with a clear vision of the country they wanted to create. The existence and actions of these revolutionaries is sometimes overlooked.

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Case study 1: Death of Charles I (original sources)

Case study 2: New government (original sources)

Investigate this document

Challenge (activity)

Key people & events (background)

## Methodology

The challenge in this gallery is a letter writing exercise describing events in the period 1647-53, combined with selecting original documents to support the points made in the letter. The work can easily be copied into a word processor file or PowerPoint presentation. It would also be possible to amend the main task and tackle the whole issue of shocking events through only one or two sources in the gallery. Prime candidate sources for this approach are source 4 in case study 1, or sources 1 and 6 in case study 2. Really keen students might like to use some brown paper and string to create a reconstruction 'package' of letters and documents and have some fun role-playing the reactions of the people (believers and sceptics) receiving the news on the other side of the Atlantic.

## Gallery 6: What kind of ruler was Oliver Cromwell?

### Aim

This gallery establishes Cromwell in the minds of students as a complex character, who does not really belong in exercises which ask that he be characterised as hero or villain. Few political leaders in British history have had as great an impact, have had as unusual a life history, or been as complex and contrary as Cromwell. This gallery also gets students working with a range of contrasting sources and thinking in terms of judgements about their value.

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Case study 1: Cromwell in his own words (original sources)

Case study 2: Cromwell in the eyes of others (original sources)

Challenge (activity)

Key people & events (background)



## Methodology

A key method of differentiating the task to different students is to allocate specific sources or sections for them to work on and then report back. You could also reduce the number of guidance points that you want students to follow in the challenge activity. The guide that students are asked to produce could be a PowerPoint presentation or similar multimedia device, even a video file in which exemplar sources are called up and analysed. Part 2 of the challenge is a discussion, but this too could be facilitated by the use of presentation software or other documents that can use hyperlinks. Particular sections of the historian's views could be made into hyperlinks and clicking the hyperlink could call up a source.