



What kind of king was Charles I?

Case study 1: Monarchs before Charles I – Source 2

The first Great Seal of James I

(Catalogue ref: SC 13/N4)

What is this source?

This is the Great Seal of James I. The main job of a seal was to seal up a document. The king rolled or folded the document, poured hot wax on the join and then pushed this seal into the hot wax.

This stopped anyone from looking at the document except the person it was sent to. The seal also showed that the document really did come from the king.

What's the background to this source?

James ruled from 1603-25 and he was the father of Charles I. James had a poor reputation as a monarch in some ways.

This was because his court was rather disorganised and he often drank too much. However, historians now point out that James was good at reaching compromises with his opponents on difficult issues. One reason for this is that his court was not too stuffy or formal. MPs and nobles found it easy to approach James and tell him about their concerns.

It's worth knowing that...

The other job of the seal was to send very strong messages to people about the ruler. It was packed full of symbols.

You can see:

- The motto - *Jacobus Dei Gracia Anglie Francie Et Hibernie Regina Fidei Defensor* (James, by the grace of God, ruler of England, France and Ireland and Defender of the Protestant Church)
- The Tudor rose (James was related to the Tudors, which is why he became king of England after Elizabeth died with no children)



- The king in armour with a sword
- The fleur de lys (flower) of France (English rulers claimed to rule France since medieval times, but by the 1600s it was just a tradition on the coat of arms)
- The thistle of Scotland
- The harp of Ireland
- The lion of England
- The orb (the round object representing the monarch's role as head of the church)
- The sceptre (representing the monarch's power on earth)

Your turn: What can we learn from this source?

James had some very strong ideas about what it meant to be a monarch. See if you can find the symbols on the seal that show his views.

1. He saw himself as an emperor, a king who rules more than one kingdom.
2. He wanted the three kingdoms he ruled to be united as one state rather than seeing themselves as three different countries.
3. He was a committed Protestant and took his duty to run and protect the church very seriously.
4. He saw himself as the defender of his people against the enemies of his kingdoms.
5. He believed in law and justice.



Learning Curve

Civil War



Civil War > What kind of king was Charles I? > Source 2

Source 2a





Source 2b

