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CHARLES I LOSES HIS HEAD



During the English Civil War, when Royalists (supporting the Monarch) and Parliamentarians (supporting Oliver Cromwell) were at odds, even children could be swept into the political upheaval (which lasted between 1642-1646). In this painting—by William Frederick Yeames (in 1879)—we see the young son of a Royalist being guestioned by a Parliamentarian. The child is asked this frightening question: "And When Did You Last See Your Father?" <u>The painting</u> is maintained at the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool.

When he became king, <u>Charles I</u> continued to use the Duke of Buckingham as his advisor. Bad judgment, disastrous decisions and flagrant royal spending led to increasing conflict between the <u>king</u> and Parliament.

Whenever Charles I didn't like what Parliament did, he would dissolve it. After all ... the divine right of kings gave him the authority to do whatever he wanted. Or ... so he thought.

Happily for future generations, Charles I spent a great deal on fine art even while his relationship with Parliament deteriorated. Members of the royal family were frequent subjects of famous painters. The Royal Collection today contains many wonderful portraits of the <u>king</u>, his wife <u>Queen Henrietta Marie</u> (sister of the king of France) and <u>their children</u>. (The paintings depicted in these links were created by Anthony van Dyck in 1635.)

In 1649, after the authority of Parliament was continually challenged by the power of the King, the country fought a Civil War. <u>Charles I</u> was arrested and charged with high treason.

This development presented an interesting issue: No English law dealt with a trial of the sovereign. Finally, using a Roman law allowing the military to overthrow a tyrant, a court was convened to try Charles I.

The king, of course, viewed the whole process as completely illegal. Although forced to attend the proceedings, <u>he viewed</u> the trial with contempt. The public, squarely in favor of Charles I, was not allowed into the hall until the charge of treason had been read.

Found guilty, Charles I was <u>condemned to death</u> on January 26, 1649. (Follow this link to the order condemning him.) Sentence would be <u>carried out</u> at the <u>Royal Banqueting House</u> in Whitehall.

Four days later, the executioner assigned to swing the axe could not be found. A substitute was located; his identity is not known to this day. Unlike the <u>tortuous death</u> his grandmother (Mary, Queen of Scots) endured, it took just one swing of the axe to sever the king's head. He was 48 years old.

Forces loyal to the Crown ultimately defeated Parliamentary forces, led by the Puritan <u>Oliver Cromwell</u>. <u>Charles</u> <u>II</u>, son of Charles I and grandson of James I/VI, was invited back <u>as monarch</u> in 1660.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at: <u>http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/CHARLES-I-LOSES-HIS-HEAD-King-James-I</u>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/CHARLES-I-LOSES-HIS-HEAD-King-James-I

Media Stream



<u>Charles I Becomes King</u> Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons. View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Charles-I-Becomes-King

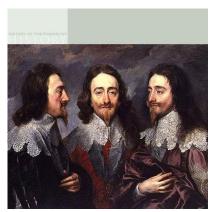


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Queen Henrietta Marie

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Royal Banqueting House

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