

The Puritans and the Civil War

Charles I- Oliver Cromwell
The Commonwealth

The Stuarts : James I (1603-25)

Charles I (1625-49)

- James VI of Scotland became James I of Great Britain. After him, his son Charles.
- They both believed in the absolute power of the monarch. King = representative of God on earth.
- Charles I had an elegant and refined court. Spent lavishly on the arts. His wife Henrietta was Catholic. Parliament denied the money he needed for his foreign policy and his luxurious court --→ for 11 years he ruled without Parliament (1629-40).

A Brief History of Parliament

- *Magna Carta* (1215) signed by King John: “No taxes shall be demanded in our realm without the consent of the Great Council.... No man shall be arrested, put in prison, or lose his property, or be outlawed or banished, or harmed in any way ... unless he has been judged by his equals under the law of the land”
- **Great Council** formed by barons, two knights from each shire and two citizens from the big towns.

Parliament from the verb «parler»: to speak → parlement = a talk

- *Model Parliament* (1295) under Edward I : representatives of the barons, clergy, knights and citizens.
- Knights and citizens were called «Commons» → germ of future Houses of Lords and Commons.
- Middle Classes became more and more important in Parliament (merchants, artisans, bankers). Most of them were Puritans (Calvinists).

The Civil War

The war broke out in 1642 → Royalists against Parliament (leader: Oliver Cromwell)

- Royalists = Cavaliers: aristocrats, clergy of Church of England, gentry.
- Parliamentarians = Roundheads: long hair = sinful, they cut their hair short. Middle classes, London, puritans, small gentry.
- 1649 the King was captured, tried and executed.

The Commonwealth

- 1649-1658: the only non-monarchic period of Great Britain.
- The state is governed by the Parliamentary forces. Most of them belong to the **Puritan middle-classes**. Cromwell is appointed Lord Protector of England, Scotland and Ireland.
- Milton was a Puritan and supporter of Cromwell's rule. He was appointed Secretary for Foreign Languages in Cromwell's Council of State.

The Puritan Mind

- No scholarly interpretation of the Bible.
- Calvinistic theory of **predestination**: all men are born sinners and bound to damnation. Only God's grace can save Man, requiring of him a holy life of **hard work, sobriety and discipline**.
- Poverty is almost regarded as a sin by the Puritans.

Important Dates To Remember

- 1620 The Pilgrim Fathers land in America.
- 1642 The Civil War Broke out and theatres were closed (until the Restoration, 1660)
- 1649 Execution of the King. The Commonwealth of England (“Repubblica”).
- 1653 Oliver Cromwell appointed Lord Protector of England, Scotland and Ireland.
- 1658 Cromwell died.

The Restoration 1660

- At the death of Cromwell, after his son's failure in governing the country, Charles II was called back from his exile in France.
- Restoration of the **Monarchy** and of the **theatre**.