



Year 4

The Stuarts

Reading Booklet

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Name: _____

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Lesson 1 - James I and VI and the Union of the Crowns

Elizabeth I never married and was famously the 'Virgin Queen'. As she had no children, the crown passed to Elizabeth's distant cousin James VI of Scotland. James' mother, Mary Queen of Scots, had been a devout Catholic and was executed by Elizabeth I for plotting to assassinate her and replace her as queen.

Despite his mother being killed by Elizabeth, James VI was willing to become king of both Scotland and England and his vision was to unite the two kingdoms. His coronation created a 'union of the crowns' between Scotland and England, the first step in the creation of Great Britain. James wanted to create a single, unified kingdom and in 1606 ordered for a flag to be created combining the crosses of St George and St Andrew.

James VI was a Protestant. Historians have argued that he was a wise king but wasn't keen on sharing his power! In 1598, when he was King of Scotland and heir to the English throne, he wrote a book called 'The True Law of Free Monarchies'. It claimed that kings and queens should have all the power to rule a country because he believed God had said so.

This idea became known as the divine right of kings. James felt strongly about this and it caused problems in years to come because it had never been a widespread view in England. Most people thought that the king should wait for Parliament to agree to decisions before making big changes.



Lesson 2 - The Gunpowder Plot

James I was married to a Catholic Queen, and his mother had been a Catholic. When he came to the throne, England's Catholics believed that James I might let them practise their religion freely. This was not the case. James reintroduced harsh laws against Catholics from Elizabeth's reign: Catholics were fined for not going to Protestant Church; Catholic priests were killed or sent into exile; Catholic baptism was outlawed; Catholics were not allowed to go to university. In reaction to this oppression and discrimination, one of the most famous stories in English history took place: The Gunpowder Plot.

Had the gunpowder plot succeeded, it would have completely wiped out Britain's ruling class: The King; the King's court; and much of the Houses of Parliament. The plot nearly succeeded, had it not been for one of the plotters named Francis Tresham who wrote to a friend warning him to stay away from Parliament. The so-called 'Monteagle letter' was given to the English Secretary of State, who ordered that the cellars below the Houses of Parliament be searched. It was there that they found Guy Fawkes with 36 barrels of gunpowder.

Guy Fawkes was a Catholic soldier who had been recruited by the plotters to be the person to light the gunpowder due to his considerable experience with gunpowder. When Guy Fawkes was caught, he was tortured into giving the names of his fellow conspirators. The plotters were rounded up and sentenced to be killed.



Lesson 3 - Charles I and the causes of the English Civil War

Like his father James I, Charles wanted to rule with absolute power, and refused to listen to the demands of Parliament. From 1629 to 1640, he ruled without calling

Parliament once, something known as the 'Eleven Years Tyranny'. He made many unpopular decisions, such as fighting an expensive war in Europe, taxing the people without Parliament's permission, and encouraging seemingly Catholic rituals in the Church.

Parliament became increasingly angry with the King. In 1639, the people of Scotland rose up against Charles I as they were unhappy with his reforms to the Scottish church. Charles I had to call Parliament to raise money to fight the Scots but, after 11 years of being ignored, the Members of Parliament were angry. They demanded that Charles give up some of his power before they approved taxes and confronted him with their 'Grand Remonstrance': a list of all the things they thought Charles had done wrong.

Rather than agreeing with parliament, Charles decided to arrest five members of the House of Commons who were the ringleaders. The people of England were so furious that Charles had to flee London for his own safety. Shortly afterwards, the Civil War began.



Lesson 4 - The English Civil War

In 1639, war broke out in Scotland in response to Charles' new prayer book, which was seen by Scots as encouraging Catholic rituals. Charles tried to raise taxes to fight them in 1640, but Parliament refused to support him unless he agreed to only rule with Parliament's approval of his decisions.

The Scottish rebels marched to England and began to take control of some of the north of England. Charles called Parliament again, who only agreed to raise money for him if he agreed that Parliament would meet every three years. They confronted

him with their 'Grand Remonstrance': a list of all the things they thought Charles had done wrong. Rather than agreeing with Parliament, Charles decided to arrest five members of the House of Commons who were the ringleaders. However, the Speaker of the House refused to tell the king where they were and the king left London, leaving Parliament in charge of the capital. The two sides, those who supported the king and those who did not, went to war.

Nearly 4% of the population died, and families were pitted against each other: brother against brother, father against son. The soldiers who fought for Parliament were nicknamed the 'roundheads' due to their short hair, and those who fought for the King were nicknamed 'cavaliers' due to their flamboyant appearance. The English Civil War officially began in 1642, and was fought between supporters of Parliament and supporters of the King. It lasted for seven years, and was the bloodiest conflict ever fought on English soil. The roundheads were the more disciplined army, and eventually won the war.

When the Civil War began, Parliament did not set out to kill Charles I. Many Parliamentarians still believed he was the rightful king, chosen by God, but simply wanted him to share his power. However, during the discussions that followed Charles's capture, he refused to make any compromises. Parliament started to realise that it was going to be impossible to rule with him, so they would have to rule without him. A special court was created to try the king, involving only those Members of Parliament who agreed he should die. Britain then became a 'republic' or 'commonwealth' - a state without a monarch.



Lesson 5 - Oliver Cromwell and the Commonwealth

Following the defeat and execution of Charles I, Britain became a 'Commonwealth' led by the powerful Parliamentary general, Oliver Cromwell. Oliver Cromwell ruled for nine years, becoming 'Lord Protector' in 1653 and dying in 1658. He ruled England like a king, but refused to be crowned a king.

During his reign he dismissed parliament and ruled England through what was effectively a military dictatorship. Much of his early reign was spent asserting control over Ireland and Scotland, which he did so with notorious violence. He tried hard to impose his Puritan beliefs on the English people. He allowed greater religious freedom for Protestants, but under Cromwell's rule a string of 'moral' laws were introduced which banned the theatre and bear-baiting, and forbade people to drink or celebrate Christmas, among other things.

Being a strong military commander, he increased the navy and captured Jamaica from the Spanish. Oliver Cromwell is a highly controversial figure. Some people have seen him as the Lord Protector who saved England, Ireland and Scotland from Charles I's tyranny, while others believe he was a harsh and cruel dictator. When Oliver Cromwell died, his son Richard became Lord Protector. However, he was not as popular as his father and the Commonwealth began to fall apart.



Lesson 6 - The Restoration of Charles II

Oliver Cromwell ruled for nine years, becoming 'Lord Protector' in 1653 and dying in 1658. Much of his early reign was spent asserting control over Ireland and Scotland, which he did so with notorious violence. He tried hard to impose his Puritan beliefs on the English people. When he died, his son Richard Cromwell took power, but he

was a poor leader with little desire to do the job.

In 1660, Parliament invited Charles II (Charles I's son) back to England from his exile in France and 'restored' him as king. After Cromwell's Puritan rule, the Restoration was seen as a time of great celebration and relief. Charles II was popularly known as the 'Merry Monarch'. He enjoyed sports, the theatre and gambling. Charles II was married to the Portuguese princess, Catherine of Braganza but they had no children.

During Charles II's reign two significant events took place: The Great Plague and the Great Fire of London. Charles was more sympathetic towards Catholics during his reign, as he was a secret Catholic himself! He didn't openly admit his beliefs until he died, on 6th February 1685.



Lesson 7 - The Great Plague of 1665

In 1665, the Great Plague spread across London. There are three types of plague - one that affects the lungs, one the blood and the bubonic plague. Most of the sick in 1665-1666 had bubonic plague. This created swellings in the lymph nodes found in the armpits, groin and neck. Pneumonic plague was airborne and spread via coughs and sneezes. Plague sufferers experienced headaches, vomiting and fever. The city at this time was very unhygienic and the plague was spread by the fleas carried by rats which spread quickly in the hot summer.

There was no known cure at the time but many people thought it was caused by bad smells. Only the rich could afford doctors. The King and wealthy merchants, lawyers, doctors etc were able to get away from the city (bringing the plague with them), but most people couldn't. It is believed that cloth merchants brought the plague to the countryside on their cloth.

Historians estimate from records of deaths recorded at the time that around 100,000 people died from the disease in London alone, roughly 15 % of its entire population. The children's nursery rhyme, still sung today, a 'Ring a Ring 'O Roses' is believed to be about the Great Plague.

Lesson 8 - The Great Fire

Perhaps the most well-known event of Charles II's rule is the Great Fire of London, which occurred in 1666. It followed a second, less harmful, outbreak of the plague in 1665.

Many religious fanatics at the time believed that this fire and pestilence meant that the apocalypse was upon them, particularly seeing that the date, 1666, was the number of the devil. In reality, London's wooden and straw houses and narrow medieval streets meant that fire was waiting to happen. The fire started at a bakery on Pudding Lane and strong winds helped spread the fire, which is believed to have destroyed a third of the city including thousands of homes, leaving around 70,000 people homeless. The fire was fought with water and fire hooks - pulling down houses to try and stop the spread.

Eventually, the Navy used gunpowder to blow up buildings creating a firebreak and stopping the fire. In the years that followed the fire, the appearance of London changed, with a new St Paul's Cathedral and an end to wooden buildings.



Lesson 9 - Christopher Wren and the rebuilding of London

After the Great Fire of London in 1666, the city of London needed rebuilding. Charles II ordered that lessons should be learned from the fire and ordered that houses must be made from stone and not wood, the streets should be made wider and buildings were no longer allowed to hang over into the street.

Before the fire, people didn't have fire insurance but in 1667 the first insurance company was set up - the Fire Office.

Insurance companies had their own fire brigade and policy holders were asked to put plaques on their buildings so the fire brigade knew which fires to put out. James

Dalton, from the Association of British Insurers, said: "The Great Fire of London led to the modern insurance industry we know today." Many people had ideas about how the city should be rebuilt and shared these with the king. Charles II favoured the plans submitted by the architect Christopher Wren and appointed him to oversee the rebuilding of the city. The narrow streets, that had helped the fire spread, were replaced by wide avenues. Wren was influenced by the classical buildings and grand formal street plans of Paris. However, Wren did not have the chance (or finances) to rebuild the city as he had planned. Charles II did insist that the roads were widened and that building standards improved (most buildings were now being made from brick and stone, buildings were not allowed to be taller than four storeys).



Lesson 10 - James II and the Monmouth Rebellion

Charles II's reign was relatively peaceful. Many people were pleased to have a king back after Cromwell's Commonwealth. However, he could not father an heir with his wife but he did have lots of illegitimate children. This meant that when he died, his brother James became King, and James was a Catholic.

James II was a military man and had been a good soldier, and successfully led battles against the Dutch. He married twice; first to Anne Hyde, who he had two children with, Mary and Anne (both future Queens of England), and then to the Italian Catholic Mary of Modena who gave birth to his first son and heir, James Francis Edward.

James' beliefs led to conflict in parliament. The Duke of Monmouth was the eldest of Charles II's illegitimate sons. He claimed that his father, the king, had actually married his mother making him the legitimate heir to the throne. This was not true. However, lots of people favoured the Duke as he was a Protestant. When James was crowned

king in 1685, the Duke sailed to England and landed in Lyme Regis and began to raise his army. He was a handsome man and was popular enough with the people to gain some supporters. However, he was unable to defeat the royal army and at the Battle of Sedgemoor was defeated and captured. James II signed his nephew's death warrant and he was beheaded.

Lesson 11 - William and Mary and the Bill of Rights

Many people were worried when James II became king because he was a Catholic. A lot of powerful people were Protestants, and they were concerned he might try to make the country Catholic again. James issued the 'Declaration of Indulgence' to abolish the laws that discriminated against people on the grounds of their religion, especially Catholics. The Declaration was against the laws that had been passed by parliament. In addition, in 1688 James's Catholic wife gave birth to a son, James Francis Edward Stuart, which meant that the country would have another Catholic king.

People were upset about this. As a result, seven English lords secretly invited William of Orange, the Dutch Prince who was married to James II's protestant daughter Mary, to invade England and take the throne from James. William landed on British soil and James II fled to France. Mary and William were crowned joint monarchs; a king and queen ruling together.

The next step for the members of parliament was to make sure that the country would never have the same problem again. To limit the power of the monarchy, Parliament decided to pass the Bill of Rights. This put into writing some important things that kings and queens could and could not do.

The Bill of Rights was passed in December 1689 and said that kings and queens could not tax the people without the agreement of Parliament (as Charles I had done) and that there could be no permanent royal army. Monarchs had no power to overrule laws passed by Parliament, elections had to be free and fair and Parliament had to meet every year. Later it was agreed that no future king or queen could be Catholic or even marry a Catholic. These events have been known as the 'Glorious Revolution' because it made clear that the king or queen did not have control over Parliament, which was meant to speak for the people (although in reality, at this time it only represented wealthy men). This was a step towards democracy as we know it today.