



HISTORY

Heckmondwike Grammar School History Department A-level induction material

Paper 1, Option 1C: Britain, 1625–1701 – Conflict, Revolution and Settlement

This paper looks at the big changes in how England was ruled between 1625 and 1701. It covers a time of major conflict, including civil war, the trial and execution of a king, a period without a monarchy, and finally a new type of government after the **Glorious Revolution** in 1688–89. A key question you'll explore is: *How much did this revolution really change things?*

After Queen Elizabeth I died in 1603, James VI of Scotland became king of both England and Scotland (as James I). He believed strongly in his right to rule by God's will, but still had to work with Parliament. His son, Charles I, was less careful and clashed with Parliament so badly that it led to a civil war. He was executed in 1649.

For the next 11 years, England was a republic, led first by Oliver Cromwell. But this didn't last, and the monarchy came back in 1660 with Charles II. His brother, James II, caused even more tension, especially because of his Catholic beliefs. In 1688, he was replaced in what's known as the Glorious Revolution. The new rulers, William and Mary, agreed to govern with Parliament, starting a more stable system of rule.

Religion played a huge role in all this. Elizabeth I had tried to find a balance between Catholicism and Protestantism. But the Stuart kings pushed the Church of England closer to Catholicism, which angered many Protestants and helped lead to the civil war. Even after 1688, religious arguments continued.

The 1600s were also a time of new ideas. Thinkers like **Hobbes** and **Locke** said that rulers should have the people's permission to govern, not just claim power from God. The **Royal Society** promoted science and experiments, helping to change how people understood the world.

At the same time, England started to look beyond its borders. Colonies were set up in **America**, and places like **Bombay** became part of the growing empire. The **navy** and **trade** expanded too, laying the foundations for the British Empire.

The course is split into four themes (but they are all connected):

1. **Political stability** – the struggle between monarchs and Parliament
2. **Religion** – ongoing arguments and division
3. **Society and ideas** – changes in beliefs, thinking and daily life
4. **Economy and empire** – trade, colonies and the start of empire

The main interpretation you'll explore is whether the **Glorious Revolution** was truly revolutionary by the time it led to the settlement of 1701.



The frontispiece to the *Eikon Basilike*, a bestselling book of Charles I's religious meditations, published after his execution in 1649. The image shows Charles as a divine, Christ-like figure and highlights fundamental divisions over religion and the power and authority of the monarch, questions which dominate this course.

Transition activities (note that these will inform the work we will cover in our first lessons)

Read the following 4 sections to gain some background information to inform your verdict about the position of Britain by 1625. Then complete the table (A)

Theme 1 The quest for political stability by 1625

The quest for **political** stability is a key theme when examining reasons threats by 1625. Successful governance relied on a positive partnership between the Monarch and Parliament. Angela Anderson asserts that when King James I (pictured) came to the throne in 1603, he inherited a strong monarchy, a stable society, political and religious loyalty. However, James also inherited an expensive war, financial problems and political and religious tensions.



D. Smith judged, “James’s sound judgement and political skill proved eminently well suited to preserve the delicate balance in Church and State that he inherited from Elizabeth...”

James faced 4 main problems 1603 – 1625:

- A. The conflict of where power should lie
- B. The relationship of the 3 separate kingdoms, with one King.
- C. The monarch’s need for money and taxation
- D. Religion (dealt with largely in Theme 2)

A. The conflict of where power should lie.

The King

The King believed strongly in the **Divine Right of Kings** – the idea that his authority came directly from God. This meant he thought he had the right to rule without needing to ask permission from Parliament or follow laws if he didn’t want to. He had **personal** and **prerogative powers**, which allowed him to make decisions on his own. However, by the 1600s, this view of royal power was starting to seem old-fashioned and out of touch.

Parliament

Parliament was becoming more confident and wanted to play a bigger role in how the country was run. During the **Reformation**, Parliament had helped pass important laws, setting a precedent for having influence. However, Parliament wasn’t a permanent part of government – it only met when the King called it. Technically, it existed to support the King: to **advise him**, **approve taxes**, and **turn his decisions into law**. But by the early 1600s, this role was becoming more contradictory. Parliament wanted to represent the views of the people who elected them, not just serve the King.

The Church

The Church of England supported the idea of hierarchy and helped spread the King’s message to the people through weekly sermons. The King was **Head of the Church**, and he personally appointed **bishops**, making the Church a powerful tool in maintaining royal authority.

James I’s Rule (1603–1625)

James VI of Scotland became James I of England in 1603. James I's early years as King were seen as fairly **stable**, continuing the calm of Elizabeth I's reign. Up to **1621**, he generally got on well with Parliament, there was some **religious tolerance**, and his government functioned without major crises.

But after 1621, **tensions began to grow**. Parliament became more critical of James's policies, especially his **foreign policy** and his **choice of advisors**, like the Duke of **Buckingham**. There were arguments in Parliament over war in Europe (see the **Thirty Years' War**) and over James's failure to act firmly. Parliament even tried to **impeach** some of the King's advisors, including **Francis Bacon** and **Lord Cranfield**.

As James's health declined, his son **Charles** started to take on more responsibility. Charles had a different personality and a more rigid approach to kingship. Problems quickly followed.

The Spanish Marriage Crisis

In 1623, Charles and Buckingham secretly travelled to **Spain** to arrange a marriage between Charles and a Spanish princess. This mission failed, and Charles returned **humiliated**. James had to make diplomatic sacrifices to protect his son, which damaged his reputation.

In revenge, James, Charles, Buckingham and Parliament agreed to fund a **naval attack**. But Charles and Buckingham also secretly sent an **army** to Europe, without Parliament's knowledge.

Charles I Becomes King (1625)

When James died in **March 1625**, Charles became king. Parliament immediately refused to give him full control over **Tonnage and Poundage** (important customs taxes) for life – something usually granted to new monarchs. Instead, they wanted to approve it **year by year**, limiting Charles's financial power.

Parliament was also angry at **Buckingham's failures**, especially the disastrous **Cadiz expedition**.

Marriage to Henrietta Maria

Charles then married **Henrietta Maria**, a French **Catholic** princess. This caused huge concern in Protestant England. She was allowed to practice her faith in England and brought many Catholic priests and advisors with her. Even worse in Parliament's eyes, English ships were sent to **La Rochelle** to help the French **crush a Protestant rebellion** – a deeply unpopular move.

Conclusion

Relations between King and Parliament were mostly calm between **1603 and 1621**, but from **1621 onwards**, things got much worse. Arguments over religion, royal advisors, foreign policy, and money pushed the country towards a major **conflict**.

B. The relationship of the 3 separate kingdoms, with one King.

James I wanted to bring **England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales** closer together into a more united kingdom (though he was less focused on Wales). However, there were big differences

between these nations — in **language, government systems**, and especially **religion**. England was mostly **Anglican**, Scotland was **Presbyterian**, and Ireland remained mainly **Catholic**.

James hoped to **unite England and Scotland** by combining the best parts of their laws and systems of government. But this idea was **very unpopular** in **English Parliament**. Some MPs even refused to accept that anything good could come from Scotland!

Many English nobles believed James **favoured the Scots**, handing out **money, titles and important positions** to them. This made things worse, as it increased **resentment in Parliament** and added to the growing **tensions between the King and his English subjects**.

C. The Monarch's need for money and taxation

James's money problems began with the **legacy left by Elizabeth I**. He didn't have enough resources and didn't manage them well. By **1625**, royal **finances were in crisis**, and this was a major reason for the growing tension between **King and Parliament**.

Why Was the Financial Situation So Difficult?

- **Inflation** was rising, but the **income from royal lands** (rents) wasn't keeping up.
- **Many crown lands had already been sold** under Henry VIII and Elizabeth, so James had fewer assets to make money from.
- The **tax collection system** was **old-fashioned** and **inefficient**, meaning less tax actually reached the crown.
- James inherited **debts and a war with Spain** (which he ended with peace in 1604).
- James was **bad with money**. He spent heavily and had to support a **large royal family** with multiple households.
- Parliament thought the **royal court was wasteful and immoral** – full of parties, corruption, drunkenness, even murder and scandal – which caused further resentment.

Parliament and the Financial Crisis

Even though Parliament gave James some income through regular taxes (called "duties"), it wasn't enough to cover the **shortfall**. To solve this:

- **Lionel Cranfield** was appointed to fix royal finances. By **1620**, he had cut court spending by over **50%**.
 - However, this limited the **patronage system** (rewarding supporters with jobs and gifts), and upset those who wanted to benefit from it.

Cranfield also raised money by:

- Increasing **impositions** (taxes on certain goods)
- Selling **monopolies** (exclusive rights to sell or produce a product)

These were very unpopular because they **increased prices** and **limited competition**.

Tensions with Parliament

Because of his financial problems, James **needed Parliament** to grant him more money. In better times, Parliament might have agreed – but not now. They saw a **wasteful court** and felt that the King was using **impositions and monopolies** to raise money **without their approval**.

This led to a big argument:

- **Should the King be allowed to raise money without Parliament?**
- Was **taxation** Parliament's **right** to control?

This issue became part of a much **bigger constitutional debate**.

Three Key Issues by 1625

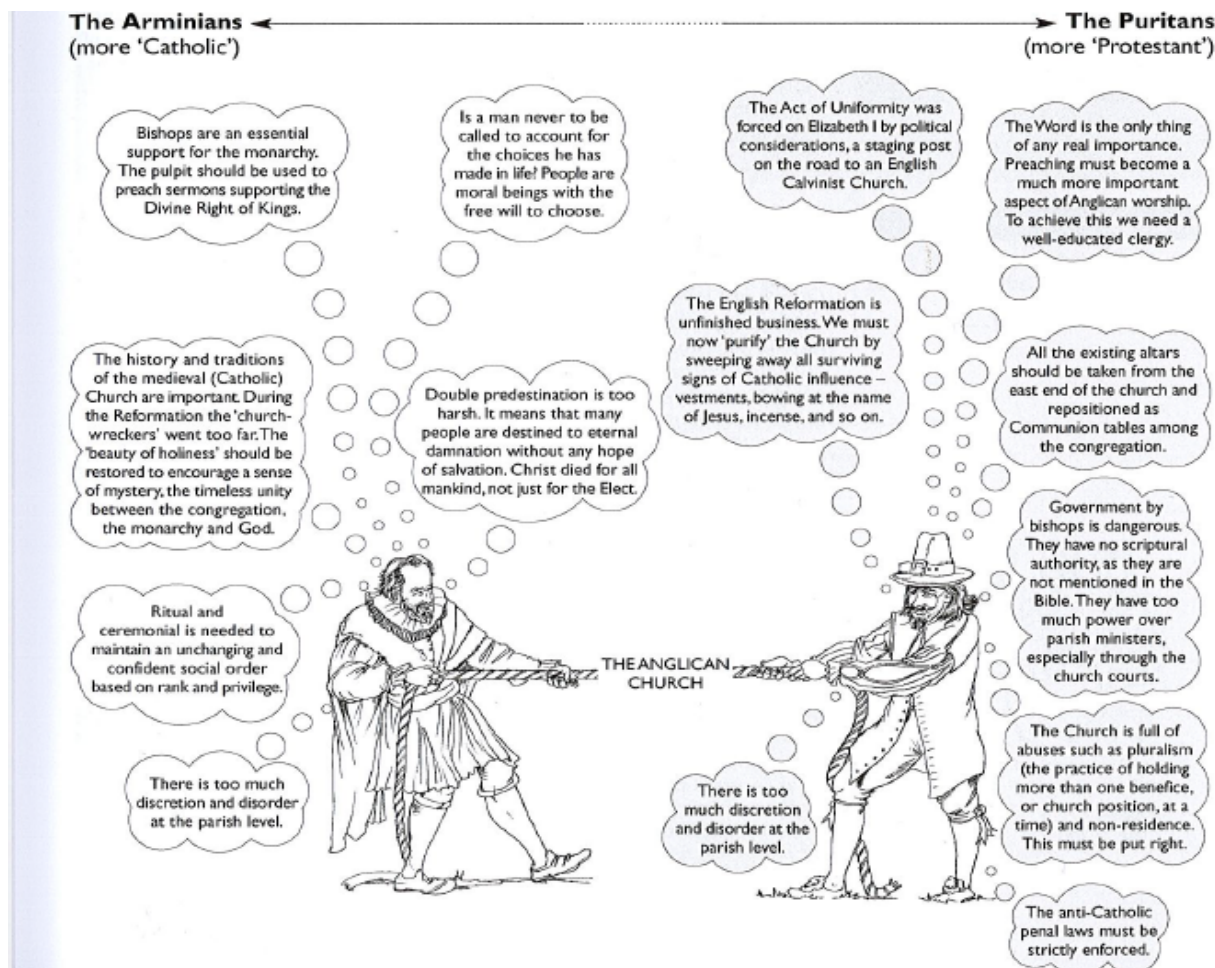
1. **Weak government structures** – There was no formal way to pay royal advisers. Instead, the King handed out **titles and gifts**. This created **rivalries, corruption**, and eventually led to **impeachments**, like Cranfield's (despite his success).
2. **Worsening relations** – The connection between the King and the **Political Nation** (those with power in Parliament and the country) had broken down.
3. **Major constitutional questions** – about the powers of **King vs Parliament**, especially over **money and taxation**.

By 1625, the growing **financial crisis**, poor management, and conflict over royal spending had created serious **tensions** and the potential for **political instability**.

Theme 2 Religion: conflict and dissent by 1625

James largely seems to have followed a pragmatic approach over religion, successfully negotiating a middle course between the demands on those on the 'extremes' of Christian religion – Catholics and the Puritans (see the diagram below, highlighting key differences within the church).

Initially, in part due to the failed Gunpowder Plot, he was forced to increase sanctions on Catholics, however by 1611 was showing a far more conciliatory approach. The moderate George Abbot was appointed Arch Bishop of Canterbury, and policies allowed Puritans to co-exist with the Anglican Church as a faction within it – they had to participate in some ceremonies, but rather just for appearances sake. On the other hand, fines were occasionally imposed on Catholics for not attending Anglican Services, but these were only gently imposed. It was fairly easy to continue to operate as a Catholic and to satisfy the Anglican rules. James, despite his Presbyterian background viewed the church as an instrument of his own authority, and therefore imposed the rules to assert his own authority, rather than to push his own ideological agenda.



In Scotland there was an overlap with the desire to unite the 3 kingdoms, and James hoped to bring the Anglicans in line with the Presbyterians. A Prayer Book was sent North of the border, then hastily withdrawn due to opposition. Again, this shows tact and understanding of the situation.

Until 1618 there was relative calm in religious matters, and this was reflected in Parliament, as few complaints and grievances were recorded. From 1618 the complex European Thirty Years War led to greater religious divisions, which impacted significantly on the relations between the King and Parliament in England, triggering a constitutional crisis by 1621.

James's son in law (a Protestant German Prince) was involved in a conflict with Bohemian Emperor Ferdinand Hapsburg (the Hapsburgs were a very powerful Catholic family across Spain, Belgium and Austria). The conflict quickly escalated across Europe. James was unwilling to become involved, and generally avoided expensive foreign exploits. However, he felt compelled to support his son in law, and also to be seen to act against Catholic aggression. He called Parliament who granted 2 subsidies. However, many in Parliament were struggling due to the fall in trade as a result of the war and were unwilling to grant more financial resources. James thus had to redouble his attempts to find a diplomatic solution.

In the following Parliament there was more discussion of war, and the members considered the possibilities of a land war involving troops or a naval war. This discussion provoked a huge row!

Did Parliament have the right to discuss this?

Surely formulation of policy was the King's job?

Did the rights of Parliament exist by right or by gift of the monarch?

Parliament stated that their rights are 'the ancient and undoubted birth right and inheritance of the subjects of England...'

It was King's prerogative to decide on policy, and Parliament appeared to be encroaching on it by claiming the right to debate royal policy on foreign affairs and religion.

But Parliament **did** have a role to advise the King - thus the lines were unclear.

Once this rift occurred it was clear no further money would be granted, so James dissolved Parliament and continued diplomacy.

Parliament was worried that this long term situation would force the King into a closer relationship with Catholic Spain, and perhaps even religious concessions be made.

Indeed, James was now seeking a Catholic Spanish princess as a bride for his son!

Theme 3 Social and intellectual change by 1625

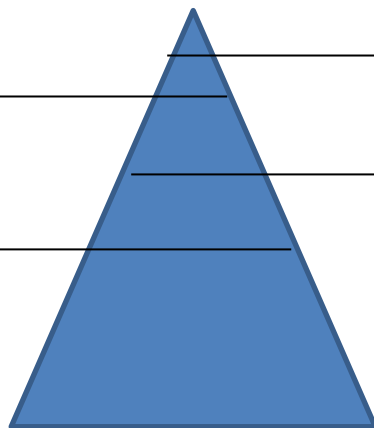
There are some interesting factors here which help to set the scene for 1625, but do not necessary add to instability in Britain. Inferences can certainly be made in terms of the changing populations, the personal and national impact of disease, and the impact of that on the stability, and the subtle changes in the structure of the hierarchy.

The structure of society

KING

Gentry – These made up 5% of households. They are considered to be people able to live comfortably without manual labour. They got involved in minor roles in the government e.g. as JP's. There was a MASSIVE growth in the gentry.

Husbandmen owned less than 50 acres



55 peers in the House of Lords

Yeomen – they worked manually for a living, could have up to 100 acres of land, and some were as wealthy as the gentry.

Cottagers and labourers

A growing gulf between the rich and poor was developing further. New wealth developed often from success in farming, trade or law and enabled social mobility.

Population changes had profound social effects in this period. The long-term trend was that population was rising from 1500 to the mid 1600's. The following are estimates:

1520 – 2.5 million

1600 – 4.1 million

1650 – 5.2 million

There were also regional variations; the increase was not uniform across the country.

There was high child mortality up to and beyond 1625. There were virulent strains of common childhood diseases such as typhus and measles, and frequent bouts of plague until 1665, which reduced average life expectancy. There was a young population, with 40% below the age of 21, and in England a life expectancy of 35, in Scotland, 30. Note that this appears unduly low due child mortality. Some did live into their 50's / 60's, and 40 + was not unusual for a cottager / labourer who survived to 30.

There is traditionally seen to be a male dominance and subservience of women in society in the period. However, there were significant examples of women becoming very influential, and also of many marriages which were not simply for status and advancement.

There was an increase in literacy, in part due to the reformation, which made many in the enlarged gentry more articulate, politically aware and more confident about asserting what they perceived as their rights.

There were significant economic difficulties – see also Theme 4, and those that did not grow their own food found subsistence increasingly difficult. By 1625 food had increased in price x7, wages only increased x3, (compared to 1520) so in many cases there was a short fall, there was hunger, starvation and for some a significant drop in living standards. Scotland was particularly badly hit in 1623 due to poor harvest and dependency on cereal crops.

Vagrancy continued to be a problem due to the poverty, but some problems had been addressed by the poor laws.

Theme 4 Economy, Trade and Empire by 1625

As the **population grew** (see Theme 3), prices rose because more people meant **more demand for goods**. At the same time, **wages often fell**, as more people were available for work.

This hit people hard — especially those on a **fixed income** who couldn't keep up with rising prices. Even **richer landowners** were affected, because many of their **rents were fixed**, so their income didn't rise with inflation. This meant that **wage labourers, cottagers**, and even some **aristocrats** suffered financially. But not everyone lost out. Some **freeholders** (people who owned and worked their own land) were in a good position. They could **buy land cheaply** from struggling landlords and grow their estates. This allowed some to move up the social ladder and join the **minor gentry** — increasing both their **wealth** and **status**.

The Economy in 1625

- **Agriculture** remained the **main industry** across England, Scotland, and Wales.
- Most other industries were **small-scale** and based in the **home** (domestic industry).

- People mostly aimed to **produce what they needed** locally (subsistence living).

Even in big towns like **Hull** and **Bristol**, large areas were used for **allotments**, where people grew their own food. Even **craftsmen** often had gardens to grow crops. Poor **transport** and **infrastructure** limited long-distance trade.

Regional Differences

It's important to remember that **income**, **opportunities**, and **social mobility** varied **hugely between regions**.

By 1625, **England, Wales, and Scotland** were still seen as **small and fairly poor** countries in Europe.

- **England had few overseas colonies**, and countries like **Italy, the Netherlands, and Belgium** dominated international trade.
- However, **London** was starting to grow rapidly as a **trading centre**. This created **economic growth** across the surrounding regions, as demand for **fuel, food, and goods** increased.

Table (A) How Stable was Britain by 1625?

<u>Evidence that Britain was stable by 1625:</u>	<u>Evidence that Britain lacked stability by 1625:</u>

Historical interpretations exercise

In this paper, you will be expected to engage with historical interpretations of the events covered.

Study the two extracts below and answer the questions which follow.

Extract 1 – From John Morrill, *Stuart Britain: A Very Short Introduction*, published in 2000

Throughout Elizabeth I's reign [1558-1603], there was a triple threat of civil war: over the wholly uncertain succession; over the passions of rival religious groups; and over threats from other European powers. All these extreme hazards had disappeared or receded by the 1620s and 1630s. The Stuarts were securely on the throne with undisputed heirs; the English Catholic community had settled for a deprived status but minimal persecution, while the Puritan attempt to take over the Church by developing their own organizations and structures within it had been defeated...Finally, the decline of internal tensions and the scale of conflicts in Europe removed the incentive for other kings to interfere in England's domestic affairs. In all these ways, England was moving away from civil war in the early seventeenth century.

Extract 2 – From David L Smith, 'Politics in early Stuart Britain' in Barry Coward ed. *A Companion to Stuart Britain*, published in 2003.

Because the middle of the seventeenth century saw the complete collapse of a monarchical system...historians have naturally asked whether the British polity was at all stable during the decades that preceded this crisis. For centuries...the answer seemed clear enough: that the English Civil War was a struggle between royal tyranny and parliamentary liberties, the origins of which could be traced back at least to 1603, and probably earlier. The first two Stuart kings of Great Britain, James I, and especially Charles I, harboured aggressively authoritarian ideas of kingship which they were determined to impose on their three kingdoms. These ambitions generated political and religious instability and brought them into conflict with...parliaments. Tensions mounted which culminated in civil wars in all three kingdoms. It was the story, in Geoffrey Elton's famous phrase, of a 'high road to civil war'.

1. Historians disagree about how stable Britain was in 1625. Summarise in no more than 3 lines the views expressed in:

- a) Extract 1

- b) Extract 2

2. What are the key differences between extracts 1 and 2?

3. Are there any similarities between the two views?

4. Can you suggest any reasons why the extracts might differ?

5. Use your existing knowledge of Britain in 1625. With which interpretation do you most agree? Explain your answer by using your own knowledge to agree and/or disagree with the key points made in each extract.

Bibliography and further study exercise

Source	Type	Details
The British Civil Wars project	Website	<p>Articles on the <u>church and religion</u> and biographies on key figures such as <u>Charles I</u> may provide some useful background.</p> <p>An excellent website for use throughout the course.</p>
BBC History	Website	<p>A good, brief overview of the period 1603-1714. The headings '<u>A Single Monarch</u>' and '<u>Charles I</u>' will provide good background for the course.</p>
Blair Worden, <i>The English Civil Wars 1640–60</i> (Orion, 2009)	Book	<p>A very short study of the Civil War period.</p> <p>Chapter 1 will offer a useful introduction to the course.</p>
John Morrill, <i>Stuart Britain: A Very Short Introduction</i> (Oxford, 2000)	Book	<p>A very brief overview of the whole period by a leading academic historian.</p> <p>Chapters 1-3 (32 pages) will provide a very solid introduction to the course.</p>
<i>Monarchy</i> presented by David Starkey	TV series Available via 4OD	<p>Episode 10 – <i>Stuart Succession</i> – offers an engaging overview of political and religious developments, 1603-1642.</p> <p>Episodes 11-12 also cover later periods of our course.</p>
<i>In Our Time</i>	Radio series and podcasts	<p>Academics discuss key themes in the history of ideas. Lots are relevant to our course, including 'Republicanism', 'the Restoration' and the 'Glorious Revolution',</p> <p>Especially useful before starting the course would be 'the Divine Right of Kings' and 'the British Monarchy'</p>
<i>Revolutions</i>	Podcast series	<p>An outstanding podcast series. Episode 1.1 is a wonderful complement to this transition work.</p> <p>Available on Apple, Spotify, YouTube and elsewhere.</p>

I. There is no expectation that you try to engage with the entire list above, but we would like you access try at least one in preparation for the course. This will help deepen your understanding of Britain in 1625 and introduce to some of the wide range of independent learning material available.

Please complete the following table based on your independent learning.

What I read, watched or listened to	
How I found it	
How far, and in what ways, it added to my understanding of the key question: <i>How stable was Britain in 1625?</i>	

Be prepared to share some of your ideas during the first lessons of the course.