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# Parliament Limits the English Monarchy

**MAIN IDEA**

**REVOLUTION** Absolute rulers in England were overthrown, and Parliament gained power.

**WHY IT MATTERS NOW**

Many of the government reforms of this period contributed to the democratic tradition of the United States.

**TERMS & NAMES**

- Charles I
- English Civil War
- Oliver Cromwell
- Restoration
- *habeas corpus*
- Glorious Revolution
- constitutional monarchy
- cabinet

**SETTING THE STAGE** During her reign, Queen Elizabeth I of England had had frequent conflicts with Parliament. Many of the arguments were over money, because the treasury did not have enough funds to pay the queen’s expenses. By the time Elizabeth died in 1603, she had left a huge debt for her successor to deal with. Parliament’s financial power was one obstacle to English rulers’ becoming absolute monarchs. The resulting struggle between Parliament and the monarchy would have serious consequences for England.

**TAKING NOTES**

**Analyzing Causes** Use a chart to list the causes of each monarch’s conflicts with Parliament.

Monarch	Conflicts with Parliament
James I	
Charles I	
James II	

## Monarchs Defy Parliament

Elizabeth had no child, and her nearest relative was her cousin, James Stuart. Already king of Scotland, James Stuart became King James I of England in 1603. Although England and Scotland were not united until 1707, they now shared a ruler.

**James’s Problems** James inherited the unsettled issues of Elizabeth’s reign. His worst struggles with Parliament were over money. In addition, James offended the Puritan members of Parliament. The Puritans hoped he would enact reforms to purify the English church of Catholic practices. Except for agreeing to a new translation of the Bible, however, he refused to make Puritan reforms.

**Charles I Fights Parliament** In 1625, James I died. **Charles I**, his son, took the throne. Charles always needed money, in part because he was at war with both Spain and France. Several times when Parliament refused to give him funds, he dissolved it.

By 1628, Charles was forced to call Parliament again. This time it refused to grant him any money until he signed a document that is known as the Petition of Right. In this petition, the king agreed to four points:

- He would not imprison subjects without due cause.
- He would not levy taxes without Parliament’s consent.
- He would not house soldiers in private homes.
- He would not impose martial law in peacetime.

After agreeing to the petition, Charles ignored it. Even so, the petition was important. It set forth the idea that the law was higher than the king. This idea contradicted theories of absolute monarchy. In 1629, Charles dissolved Parliament and refused to call it back into session. To get money, he imposed all kinds of fees and fines on the English people. His popularity decreased year by year.

## English Civil War

Charles offended Puritans by upholding the rituals of the Anglican Church. In addition, in 1637, Charles tried to force the Presbyterian Scots to accept a version of the Anglican prayer book. He wanted both his kingdoms to follow one religion. The Scots rebelled, assembled a huge army, and threatened to invade England. To meet this danger, Charles needed money—money he could get only by calling Parliament into session. This gave Parliament a chance to oppose him.

**War Topples a King** During the autumn of 1641, Parliament passed laws to limit royal power. Furious, Charles tried to arrest Parliament's leaders in January 1642, but they escaped. Equally furious, a mob of Londoners raged outside the palace. Charles fled London and raised an army in the north of England, where people were loyal to him.

From 1642 to 1649, supporters and opponents of King Charles fought the **English Civil War**. Those who remained loyal to Charles were called Royalists or Cavaliers. On the other side were Puritan supporters of Parliament. Because these men wore their hair short over their ears, Cavaliers called them Roundheads.

At first neither side could gain a lasting advantage. However, by 1644 the Puritans found a general who could win—**Oliver Cromwell**. In 1645, Cromwell's New Model Army began defeating the Cavaliers, and the tide turned toward the Puritans. In 1647, they held the king prisoner.

In 1649, Cromwell and the Puritans brought Charles to trial for treason against Parliament. They found him guilty and sentenced him to death. The execution of Charles was revolutionary. Kings had often been overthrown, killed in battle, or put to death in secret. Never before, however, had a reigning monarch faced a public trial and execution.

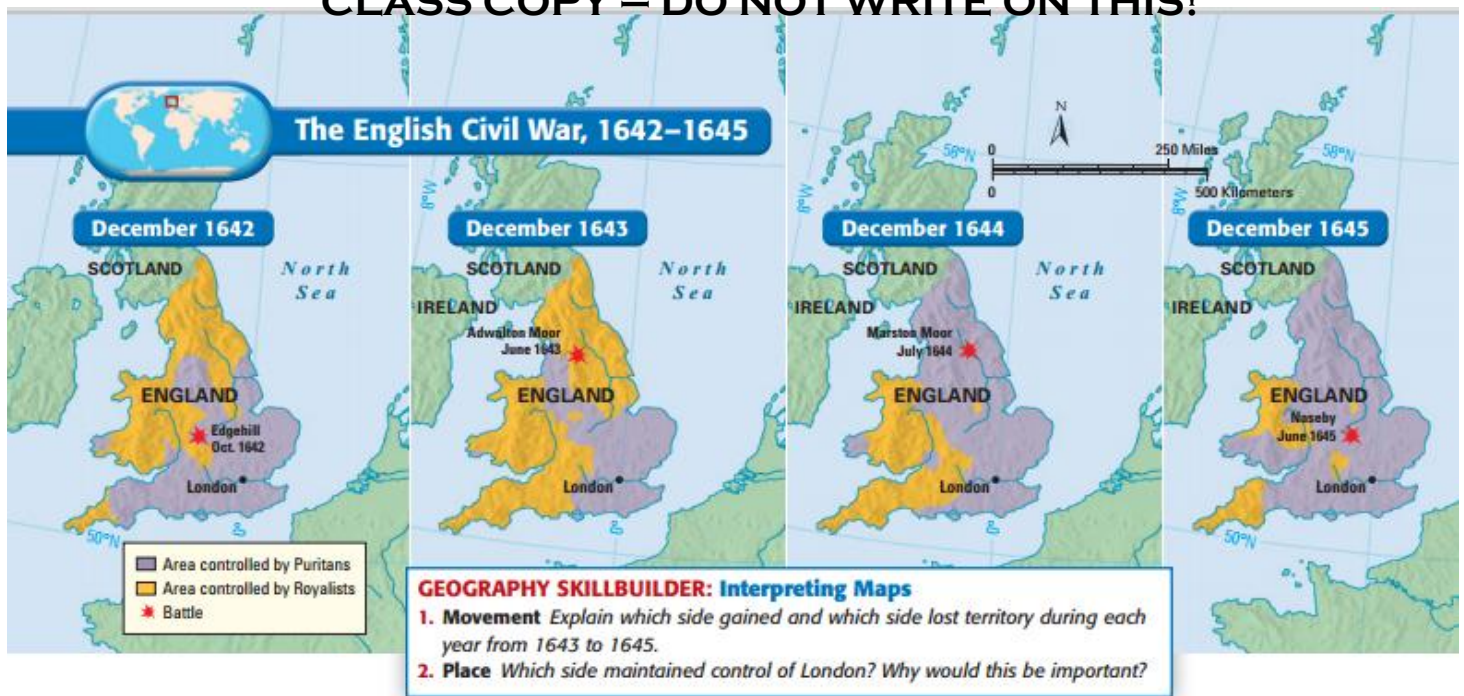
**Cromwell's Rule** Cromwell now held the reins of power. In 1649, he abolished the monarchy and the House of Lords. He established a commonwealth, a republican form of government. In 1653, Cromwell sent home the remaining members of Parliament. Cromwell's associate John Lambert drafted a constitution, the first written constitution of any modern European state. However, Cromwell eventually tore up the document and became a military dictator. **A**

Cromwell almost immediately had to put down a rebellion in Ireland. English colonization of Ireland had begun in the 1100s under Henry II. Henry VIII and his children had brought the country firmly under English rule in the 1500s. In 1649, Cromwell landed on Irish shores with an army and crushed the uprising. He seized the lands and homes of the Irish and gave them to English soldiers. Fighting, plague, and famine killed hundreds of thousands.

**Puritan Morality** In England, Cromwell and the Puritans sought to reform society. They made laws that promoted Puritan morality and abolished activities they found sinful, such as the theater, sporting events, and dancing. Although he was a strict

▼ This engraving depicts the beheading of Charles I.





Puritan, Cromwell favored religious toleration for all Christians except Catholics. He even allowed Jews to return; they had been expelled from England in 1290.

## Restoration and Revolution

Oliver Cromwell ruled until his death in 1658. Shortly afterward, the government he had established collapsed, and a new Parliament was selected. The English people were sick of military rule. In 1659, Parliament voted to ask the older son of Charles I to rule England.

**Charles II Reigns** When Prince Charles entered London in 1660, crowds shouted joyfully and bells rang. On this note of celebration, the reign of Charles II began. Because he restored the monarchy, the period of his rule is called the **Restoration**.

During Charles II's reign, Parliament passed an important guarantee of freedom, ***habeas corpus***. *Habeas corpus* is Latin meaning "to have the body." This 1679 law gave every prisoner the right to obtain a writ or document ordering that the prisoner be brought before a judge to specify the charges against the prisoner. The judge would decide whether the prisoner should be tried or set free. Because of the Habeas Corpus Act, a monarch could not put someone in jail simply for opposing the ruler. Also, prisoners could not be held indefinitely without trials.

In addition, Parliament debated who should inherit Charles's throne. Because Charles had no legitimate child, his heir was his brother James, who was Catholic. A group called the Whigs opposed James, and a group called the Tories supported him. These two groups were the ancestors of England's first political parties.

**James II and the Glorious Revolution** In 1685, Charles II died, and James II became king. James soon offended his subjects by displaying his Catholicism. Violating English law, he appointed several Catholics to high office. When Parliament protested, James dissolved it. In 1688, James's second wife gave birth to a son. English Protestants became terrified at the prospect of a line of Catholic kings.

James had an older daughter, Mary, who was Protestant. She was also the wife of William of Orange, a prince of the Netherlands. Seven members of Parliament invited William and Mary to overthrow James for the sake of Protestantism. When William led his army to London in 1688, James fled to France. This bloodless overthrow of King James II is called the **Glorious Revolution**. **B**

### MAIN IDEA

#### Contrasting

**B** How was the overthrow of James II different from the overthrow of Charles I?

## Limits on Monarch's Power

At their coronation, William and Mary vowed to recognize Parliament as their partner in governing. England had become not an absolute monarchy but a **constitutional monarchy**, where laws limited the ruler's power.

**Bill of Rights** To make clear the limits of royal power, Parliament drafted a Bill of Rights in 1689. This document listed many things that a ruler could not do:

- no suspending of Parliament's laws
- no levying of taxes without a specific grant from Parliament
- no interfering with freedom of speech in Parliament
- no penalty for a citizen who petitions the king about grievances

William and Mary consented to these and other limits on their royal power.

**Cabinet System Develops** After 1688, no British monarch could rule without the consent of Parliament. At the same time, Parliament could not rule without the consent of the monarch. If the two disagreed, government came to a standstill.

During the 1700s, this potential problem was remedied by the development of a group of government ministers, or officials, called the **cabinet**. These ministers acted in the ruler's name but in reality represented the major party of Parliament. Therefore, they became the link between the monarch and the majority party in Parliament.

Over time, the cabinet became the center of power and policymaking. Under the cabinet system, the leader of the majority party in Parliament heads the cabinet and is called the prime minister. This system of English government continues today.

## Connect to Today

### U.S. Democracy

Today, the United States still relies on many of the government reforms and institutions that the English developed during this period.

These include the following:

- the right to obtain *habeas corpus*, a document that prevents authorities from holding a person in jail without being charged
- a Bill of Rights, guaranteeing such rights as freedom of speech and freedom of worship
- a strong legislature and strong executive, which act as checks on each other
- a cabinet, made up of heads of executive departments, such as the Department of State
- two dominant political parties

### SECTION

## 5

### ASSESSMENT

**TERMS & NAMES** 1. For each term or name, write a sentence explaining its significance.

• Charles I • English Civil War • Oliver Cromwell • Restoration • *habeas corpus* • Glorious Revolution • constitutional monarchy • cabinet

### USING YOUR NOTES

2. What patterns do you see in the causes of these conflicts?

Monarch	Conflicts with Parliament
James I	
Charles I	
James II	

### MAIN IDEAS

3. Why was the death of Charles I revolutionary?
4. What rights were guaranteed by the Habeas Corpus Act?
5. How does a constitutional monarchy differ from an absolute monarchy?

### CRITICAL THINKING & WRITING

6. **EVALUATING DECISIONS** In your opinion, which decisions of Charles I made his conflict with Parliament worse? Explain.
7. **MAKING INFERENCES** Why do you think James II fled to France when William of Orange led his army to London?
8. **SYNTHESIZING** What conditions in England made the execution of one king and the overthrow of another possible?
9. **WRITING ACTIVITY** **REVOLUTION** Write a **persuasive essay** for an underground newspaper designed to incite the British people to overthrow Charles I.

### CONNECT TO TODAY DRAWING A POLITICAL CARTOON

Yet another revolution threatens the monarchy today in Great Britain. Some people would like to see the monarchy ended altogether. Find out what you can about the issue and choose a side. Represent your position on the issue in an original **political cartoon**.