

Causes of the Civil War

The Civil War was horrible. Some families ended up fighting each other, and civilians who didn't want to be involved had fighting in their towns and soldiers raiding their property.

There are different **Explanations of Why the War Started**

Religious Factors

Puritans wanted religious reform and were worried Charles had **Catholic sympathies**. He probably did — he tried to impose more **elaborate services** in church. He also married Henrietta Maria, a French Catholic, which worried lots of Protestants.

Political Factors

- 1) **Parliament** wanted to have more **power**, but Charles didn't want it to.
- 2) Charles attempted to rule **without** Parliament throughout the 1630s.
- 3) **Parliament** took control of the army in 1642 to **stop** Charles sending them to fight a **war** in Ireland that Parliament **hadn't approved** — this left Charles **virtually powerless**.

Economic Factors

- 1) Charles was spending more **money** than he collected in taxes.
- 2) Illegal methods of **taxation** were introduced and old methods were revived. Overall, people were paying a lot more tax.
- 3) The illegal taxes angered **landowners** and **merchants**, who complained to their **MPs** — this made Parliament **even more** angry with Charles.

≡ MP means 'Member of Parliament'. ≡

Social Factors

- 1) The **population** of England was growing quickly — contributing to poverty and unemployment.
- 2) There were **tensions** between social classes — the middle classes getting richer, the nobility declining.



"In every government there must be...[something] like a Magna Carta, which should be standing, unalterable... That Parliaments should not make themselves perpetual is fundamental." *Part of Cromwell's speech to Parliament, September 1654. Cromwell was saying that it was important that there are always basic laws to protect people, but that it was also important that Parliament shouldn't always be made up of the same people.*

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Some Historians blame Long-Term factors

Some **traditional** historians blame **long-term factors** for causing the Civil War —

- 1) Some historians say some of the problems went back to the reign of **James I** — he was unpopular with Parliament and they disagreed about **religion** and **finance**. James I really believed he ruled by **divine right** — an idea he passed on to his son Charles.
- 2) Class and other **social tensions** had been developing since the reign of Queen **Elizabeth I**.

Other Historians blame Short-Term factors

A more **recent view** of historians is that **short-term factors** were more to blame. These short-term factors are shown in the box below.

Build up to the Civil War

- 1630s** Proposed religious reforms angered Puritans.
- 1639 and 1640** England was defeated by Scotland in the religious Bishops' Wars.
- 1640** Charles called a Parliament in 1640. MPs began to demand political and religious reforms.
- January 1642** Charles tried to arrest five MPs by taking 400 soldiers into the House of Commons. They escaped.
- March 1642** Rebellion in Ireland, but Parliament didn't want to let Charles have an army to crush the rebellion — it would give him lots of power.
- June 1642** Parliament passed the 19 propositions that demanded an increase in Parliament's power. Charles was angry and both sides raised armies.



Charles I tried to arrest five MPs.

Charles tried to arrest the five MPs who led a rebellion against him in Parliament. However, they had been warned about Charles's plan so they escaped on boats down the River Thames.



There's no single reason why the Civil War broke out...

It's likely that many factors contributed to the rising tensions between Charles and Parliament. Some historians now think that short-term factors were most important, but appreciate that long-term factors played some part. Make sure you learn examples of both.