

What was life like under Oliver Cromwell?



# World Turned Upside Down



Guess the caption to this image



<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/z8vdmp3/video>

1. What was Cromwell's title?
2. What did Cromwell ban?

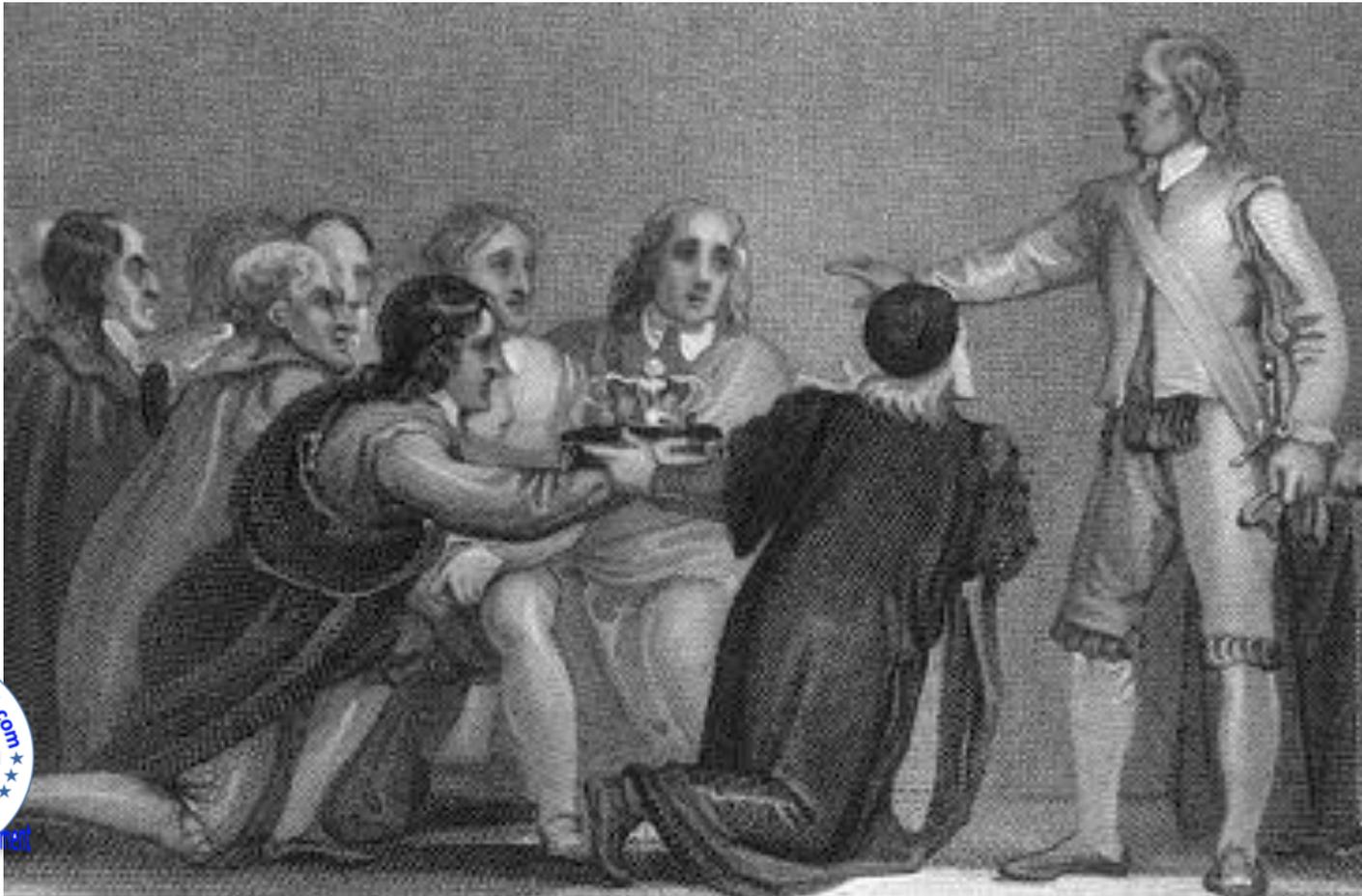
When King Charles was executed the country became a **Republic** (a country without a king or Queen. Things would stay this way for the next 11 years. This period is known as the **interregnum** (a Latin word which means between Kings)

Without a King or Queen, people looked towards the most powerful man in the country to guide them. That person was Oliver Cromwell, the leader of the army that had beaten Charles.

Cromwell was a member of Parliament and an army leader. He was also a **Puritan** (a strict Christian).

Cromwell did not work well with any Parliament and often ran the country without one. He was titled 'Lord Protector'. Cromwell refused to become King when parliament offered him the crown, but behaved like a monarch, even closing Parliament!!! He was called 'Your highness' and lived in royal palaces.

Was Cromwell a hypocrite? Was he 'King in all but name'?



Various groups grew out of the Civil War and death of the King, hoping to change the world even more...

## The Diggers

In January 1649, Gerald Winstanley wrote a pamphlet which said that God had made the earth for everyone, not just for the rich that owned the land. He soon created a group called the **Diggers** with the help of William Everard, a former member of the New Model Army.

Diggers believed that the civil war had been fought to free the people from an unfair society. They believed that everyone should own and work the land together. In 1649 they took over the common land at St George's hill in Surrey, where they "sowed the ground with parsnips, carrots beans".

When Cromwell had heard about what happened, he is believed to have said to the landowners "you must cut these people in pieces or they will cut you in pieces". The Diggers were beaten up and their houses, crops and tools were destroyed. Within a year, other Digger communities had been wiped out.



Lets look at this song by Billy Bragg

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YwQwA\\_kFxoE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YwQwA_kFxoE)

## The World Turned Upside Down

In 1649,  
To Saint George's Hill,  
A ragged band they called the Diggers,  
Came to show the people's will,  
They defied the landlords,  
They defied the laws,  
They were the dispossessed reclaiming  
what was theirs.

We come in peace they said,  
To dig and sow,  
We come to work the land in common,  
And to make the waste ground grow.  
This earth divided,  
We will make whole,  
So it will be,  
A common treasury for all.

The sin of property,  
We do disdain,  
No man has any right to buy and sell  
The earth for private gain.  
By theft and murder,  
They took the land.  
Now everywhere the walls,  
Spring up at their command.

They make the laws  
To chain us well.  
The clergy dazzle us with heaven,  
Or they damn us into hell.  
We will not worship,  
The God they serve,  
The God of greed who feeds the rich,  
While poor men starve.

We work, we eat together,  
We need no swords,  
We will not bow to the masters,  
Or pay rent unto the Lords,  
We are freemen,  
Though we are poor,  
You Diggers all stand up for glory,  
Stand up now.

From the men of property,  
The orders came,  
They sent hired men and troopers,  
To wipe out the Diggers' claim.  
Tear down their cottages,  
Destroy their corn.  
They were dispersed,  
But still the vision lingers on.

You poor take courage,  
You rich take care,  
This earth was made a common  
treasury,  
For everyone to share,  
All things in common,  
All people one,  
We come in peace.  
The orders came to cut them down.

Whose side is Billy Bragg on?

How do we know this?

Why does Billy Bragg sing a  
song about something that  
happened 350 years ago?

Various groups grew out of the Civil War and death of the King, hoping to change the world even more...

## The Levellers

During the Civil War, a man called John Lilburne started to write about the rights of the soldiers. He noticed that even though they were fighting for parliament, very few of them were allowed to vote for them. He thought that all adult males should be allowed to vote and that elections should take place every year. A few Levellers even thought women should be allowed to vote.

In 1645 he formed the Levellers. The Levellers also wanted **religious freedom**, the abolition (to get rid) of the monarchy and the House of Lords. When officers in the New Model Army learned of these ideas and rejected them, the Levellers called on the ordinary soldiers to revolt. Lilburne was arrested but was soon released.

Cromwell did agree with some of the Leveller ideas, but he refused to increase the number of people who could vote. As a result, Lilburne began to write about Cromwell's government. Cromwell decided to lock Lilburne up even though 10,000 people had signed a petition for him to be released.



Various groups grew out of the Civil War and death of the King, hoping to change the world even more...

## The Quakers

The Quakers believed that there was no need for organised church services. They said that everyone was equal (even women!), and that no-one should be spoken to with any more respect than anyone else.

They also believed violence was wrong, and that prisons should be less cruel.

They are the only of the groups from this time to still exist today.



## Why did Cromwell attack Ireland?

Generally speaking the Irish had supported King Charles I in the Civil War years and so it could be said Cromwell was seeking revenge, also he felt he needed to destroy the strong grip of Catholicism in Ireland. Cromwell's actions in Ireland were brutal and have left a lasting scar and memory that even today Irish Catholics get angry and upset about Cromwell/



## What do we know about Cromwell in Ireland?

“Each of the attackers [Cromwell’s men] picked up a child and used it as a shield to keep themselves from being shot. After they had killed all in the Church, they went into the vaults underneath where all the women had hid themselves.”

*Thomas Wood, an eyewitness to Cromwell’s attacks, written in 1663, 5 years after Cromwell’s death and 2 years after the restoration of the Monarchy with Charles II*

The soldiers threw down their arms on an offer of Quarter. The enemy entered MillMount without resistance. They put every soldier to the sword and all the citizens were Irish, man, women and child.

*Written by the Duke of Clarendon in 1668-70, he was in France with Charles’ son at the time of the Irish attacks*

### Why is this so bad?

#### 17<sup>th</sup> Century rules of Warfare

1. A successful army could give ‘quarter’ to the enemy. This meant if the enemy surrendered and gave up their weapons, it was wrong to kill them
2. If an attacking army broke into a town and the defenders did not surrender, they could be all put to death



## What do we know about Cromwell in Ireland?

“Cromwell’s Soldiers promised to spare the lives of any who laid down their arms. But when they had all their power, the word ‘No quarter’ went round”

*Written by the Marquis of Ormonde, September 1649*

‘Our army came to Drogheda on 3 September. On Monday 9<sup>th</sup> the battering guns began. I sent Sir Arthur Aston a request to surrender the town. Receiving no satisfactory answer, the guns beat down the corner tower, and opened breaches in the east and south walls.

On Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup>, after some hot fighting, we entered. Several of the enemy, including Sir Arthur Aston retreated into Mill Mound, a place very difficult to attack. Our men were ordered by me to put all to the sword. I also forbade them to spare any people in the town who had weapons. In the great church almost 1000 of them were put to the sword, fleeing there for safety. I think that night we put to the sword in all about 2000 men. This is the righteous judgement of God upon those barbarous wretches who have dipped their hands in so much innocent blood. It will help to prevent bloodshed for the future’

*A letter written by Oliver Cromwell to Parliament 17<sup>th</sup> September 1649*

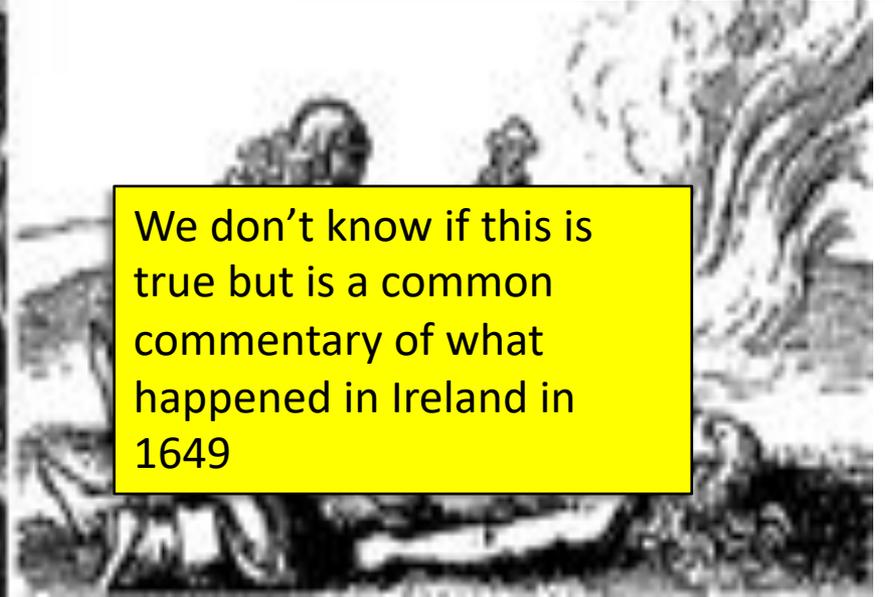


English Protestants stripped naked & turned  
into the mountains, in the frost & snow, where  
not many hundreds are perished to death,  
& many lying dead in ditches & Sausages  
upbraided them saying now are ye wilde  
Irish as well as we.



At one Mr Atkins house & Papist broke in  
& beat out his brains, then ripped up his  
wife with Child, after they had ravished her  
& from her womb naturas bed of conception  
then took they the Child & sacrificed it  
in the fire.

<https://vimeo.com/47932808>



We don't know if this is true but is a common commentary of what happened in Ireland in 1649

English Protestants stripped naked and turned into the mountains in the frost and snow where many hundreds perished to death and many lying dead in ditches.

At one Mr Atkins house, they break in and beat out his brains, then ripped up his wife with child. They then took her to nature's bed of conception and sacrificed the child in the fire

# Young Ned of the Hill

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n-y2ox2HPnc>

Have you ever walked the lonesome hills  
And heard the curlews (sea birds) cry  
Or seen the raven black as night  
Upon a windswept sky  
To walk the purple heather  
And hear the west wind cry  
To know that's where the rapparee (homeless) must die

Since Cromwell pushed us westward  
To live our lowly lives  
There's some of us have deemed to fight  
From Tipperary mountains high  
Noble men with wills of iron  
Who are not afraid to die  
Who'll fight with gaelic honour held on high

**A curse upon you Oliver Cromwell  
You who raped our Motherland  
I hope you're rotting down in hell  
For the horrors that you sent  
To our misfortunate forefathers  
Whom you robbed of their birthright  
"To hell or Connaught" may you burn in hell tonight**

Of one such man I'd like to speak  
A rapparee by name and deed  
His family dispossessed and slaughtered  
They put a price upon his head  
His name is known in song and story  
His deeds are legends still  
And murdered for blood money  
Was young Ned of the hill

You have robbed our homes and fortunes  
Even drove us from our land  
You tried to break our spirit  
But you'll never understand  
The love of dear old Ireland  
That will forge an iron will  
As long as there are gallant men  
Like young Ned of the hill

What do the Pogues think about Cromwell?  
How do we know what they think?  
Why don't the Pogues like him?



Are you surprised that someone like Cromwell who had fought so hard against corruption and power in the monarchy would act so aggressively to the people he had 'freed'?

# What can we learn from the story of Cromwell's head?

- 1658** - Funeral fit for a king at Westminster Abbey.
- 1661** - Body dug up, hung & beheaded. Head placed on a spike.
- 1685** - Blown off the spike in a storm. Found by a soldier and stuffed up a chimney.
- 1702** - Sold to a waxwork show .
- 1789** - Bought by a group of businessmen. Put on display in Bond Street.
- 1814** - Bought by a Doctor who examines it.
- 1960** - Given to Sidney Sussex College for burial in a secret location!



At each key date is Cromwell a hero or villain?

Oliver Cromwell is one of the most important figures in English History. But opinion about him is divided. Was he a hero, who guided England through a difficult time, or a tyrant, who grabbed power for himself?

**Ronald Hutton, Professor of History at Bristol University**

‘Cromwell was about 50% saint and about 50% serpent’



**John Morrill, Professor of History at the University of Cambridge**

‘Cromwell was committed to a wide measure of religious liberty - there was a state church under Cromwell, but no-one was forced to attend it, and almost everyone, Catholics and Jews included, was allowed to worship privately. Cromwell wanted to build a godly society, and he rode roughshod over those who got in his way - raising taxation without consent, and imprisoning without trial those he believed to be planning subversion of his regime.’

1. What are the main disagreements between these historians?

2. Are there any bits they agree on?



There are no statues of Oliver Cromwell in Ireland. When the Irish Prime Minister visited in the 1990s, he marched straight back out of his host's office as soon as he arrived. When asked why he had left, the Irishman said, 'I'm not coming in until you take down the picture of that murdering \*@\*#&\*' He was talking about the portrait of Cromwell that was hanging over the mantelpiece.

## Mystery as Oliver Cromwell's bust turned to face wall at Westminster



*A historic bust of Cromwell was pointedly turned to face the wall. Picture via social media*

# Task

1. Read page 84-85
2. Make a list of opinions that show Cromwell in a positive way
3. Make a list of opinions that show Cromwell in a negative way
4. Add any of your own ideas from this topic

## Cromwell was good

Cromwell rose to become a brilliant soldier and politician. He promoted people based on their ability not who their parents were or how rich they were



## Cromwell was bad

Cromwell sometimes put his personal enemies in prison and acted without Parliament's agreement. He was against the idea that ordinary people could vote

Cromwell banned fun things like Football, dancing, singing, theatres and many other things people enjoyed doing



In 2002 a BBC survey was commissioned and Cromwell was voted in the top 10 'Greatest Britons of all time'

### To end...

A statue of Oliver Cromwell stands outside the House of Commons in Westminster.

What would you write on the plaque?

Word limit = 100 words.