CHARLES I, A MARTYR OR A TYRANT?

Introduction

Charles I, who reigned from 1625 until 1649, was an absolute ruler. He was tried and executed for high treason by a Rump Parliament led by Oliver Cromwell. But was he a despot or did he just rule in the only way he had learnt to? Was he worse than his predecessors? Was it necessary to execute him? Had he stood up for himself, would he have been able to save his life? Go back in time and find out!

Tasks

Go back in time to 1648. Parliament is indecisive about what to do with Charles I. There are many MPs who are not sure whether Cromwell’s idea of impeaching the monarch is the right thing to do, so they have summoned you to clarify the subject for them. As members of a special group of six lawyers, you have been asked to stand the case for and against Charles I. Three of you will analyse the evidence for Charles, and the other three will analyse the evidence against him taking Parliament’s side. Then, both the defence and the prosecution will produce Powerpoints to explain your cases before the jury (the rest of the class), who will reach a decision based on your presentations. You will also have to design a list of the charges against the king to be handed out and to assist the jury with their conclusion.

Process

1. You will be assigned to a team of six students.
2. Three of you will choose to defend Charles’s position and the other three will undertake the prosecution.
3. THE DEFENCE (Royalists) You will analyse the resources below regarding the following aspects of Charles I’s reign:
   a. The king’s personality.
   b. The essence of the monarch’s authority.
   c. Control of the daily business of government.
   d. Control over the church and religion.
   e. Taxation.
   f. Foreign affairs (Scotland and Ireland)

   Once you have analysed the information about each issue and found the evidence to support your claim, you will have to present your case designing a Powerpoint presentation, in which each aspect analysed will be clearly stated and justified from a royalist position. This Powerpoint will be shown to Parliament (the rest of your class) alongside with an oral 20-minute presentation of the conclusions you have reached.

4. THE PROSECUTION (Oliver Cromwell’s side) You will analyse the resources below regarding the following aspects of Charles I’s reign:
   a. The king’s personality.
   b. The essence of the monarch’s authority.
   c. Control of the daily business of government.
   d. Control over the church and religion.
   e. Taxation.
   f. Foreign affairs (Scotland and Ireland)

   Once you have analysed the information about each issue and found the evidence to support your claim, you will have to present your case designing a Powerpoint presentation, in which each aspect analysed will be clearly stated and justified from an antiroyalist position. This Powerpoint will be shown to Parliament (the rest of your class) alongside with an oral 20-minute presentation of the conclusions you have reached.

5. When both presentations are ready, the defence and the prosecution must get together and design a handout to help the MPs take down notes while you are presenting your cases. This handout must include a list of the issues that will be discussed plus quotes from appropriate primary sources and/or names of the documents used as evidence in each case.

6. Come to class with all required printouts and make sure all technological devices are set and ready for use.

7. When both cases have been presented, the MPs will vote.

Evaluation

You will be evaluated in the following aspects of your work:

a. Analysis of the topic.
b. Organization.
c. Use of the ICT resources (in this case, Powerpoint).
d. Oral Presentation.
e. Design of the handout you must give to each member of the jury.

Remember that you must check on all the technological devices before the presentation. You should also bear in mind that language is IMPORTANT: check vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation of names and places. It is advisable for you to practise and rehearse before a fake audience before the actual presentation, as fluency and respect for the time-limit will also be taken into account.
Politics is a very complex science. Politics during the 17th century in England was intriguing! Now that you have looked into both sides of the coin regarding the trial and execution of Charles I of England, Scotland and Ireland, you may understand that the monarch was neither a tyrant nor a martyr. What is indisputable is that understanding the whys and wherefores of his execution and of the period which followed it enables you to understand the critical political, intellectual and social processes which they triggered off and which would shape the world as we know it today.

The objective of this webquest is to evaluate Spanish-speaking Teachers’ Training College students’ understanding of the period. As this is part of the “English History II” syllabus, it is assumed that students have full understanding of historical facts previous to 1648, their causes and consequences. This webquest has been designed for a class of twelve students, where six are involved in the analysis and presentation of the cases for and against Charles I and the rest take the role of the jury.

Standards

Credits

Other