GCSE

History

1.4.1 The reign of James 1, 1603-1625

James I's approach to the kingdoms he ruled

His position as James I of England and VI of Scotland

James I became King of Scotland in 1567 and ascended to the English throne in 1603 after Elizabeth I's death. He sought to unite England and Scotland as 'Great Britain and Ireland', aiming to achieve internal security and promote peace in Europe. However, his unification plans ultimately failed due to strong opposition from Parliament, driven by religious, political, legal, and economic concerns, along with fears that James would attempt to rewrite existing laws.

Naming his heirs Prince of Wales – Henry in 1610, and Charles in 1616

James I named his heirs Prince of Wales for several reasons:

- It reinforced the traditional title given to the eldest son of the reigning English monarch.
- It had historical significance, symbolising the unity of England and Wales.
- James aimed to legitimize their claims to the throne and strengthen the monarchy's ties to Wales, which had been annexed by England in the Acts of Union of 1535 and 1542.
- It helped to establish a clear line of succession, reinforcing the stability of his reign.

James's eldest son, Henry Frederick, was made Prince of Wales in 1610 but died of typhoid at 18, disrupting James's plans for succession. Consequently, his younger son, Charles, became heir and was named Prince of Wales in 1616.

James I's problems with religion in his kingdoms

Conflict with Catholics and the Gunpower Plot of 1605

Religion was a central issue in Stuart Britain, as it had been during the Tudor era. Since Henry VIII's break from Rome, England had transitioned from Catholicism to Protestantism, with the monarch as the head of the Church of England. Anti-Catholic sentiment had grown due to the Reformation, the persecution of Protestants under 'Bloody' Mary, and wars with Catholic Spain. The Gunpowder Plot of 1605, led by the Catholic Robert Catesby, was an attempt to assassinate King James I and restore Catholic rule. Although the assassination attempt failed, some believe that Sir Robert Cecil, the king's Protestant minister, may have manipulated the plot to discredit Catholics and consolidate the king's authority.

The 1611 King James Bible and conflict with Puritans

- **The Puritans:** Protestants who sought to remove practices they viewed as remnants of Roman Catholicism within the Church of England.
- **Millenary Petition (1603):** Submitted to King James I, requesting church reforms.
- **Hampton Court Conference (1604):** King James called a meeting with Bishops and Puritans to discuss the petition/church issues – resulted in the King James Bible, completed in 1611, which many Puritans welcomed.
- **Unmet Demands:** The Puritans failed to achieve any of their other demands and avoided major change proposals to appear less extreme, making their smaller requests seem trivial. Their organised efforts also backfired, as King James did not appreciate feeling pressured.
- **September 1604:** King James I supported Bancroft's Canons, a set of church laws approved by a large assembly of Church of England clergy.
- **Content of the Canons:** Upheld many liturgies (types of worship) and beliefs and included practices criticized by Puritans, such as clerical dress and the use of the sign of the cross.
- **December 1604:** Richard Bancroft, a supporter of James's ultimate goal of church uniformity, was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury. This goal led to Puritan persecution.
- **Bancroft's Orders:** Clergy who refused to comply with the 1604 canons were to be expelled. Petitions were raised in opposition. In the end, only about 1% of ministers were removed.
- **Temporary Nature of Reforms:** Over time, James recognised the Puritans' loyalty and allowed for some moderate reforms in 1606.

James I's problems with ruling his kingdoms

James's difficult relations with Parliament

- James believed in the divine right of kings, claiming his authority came from God, which lead to clashes with Parliament.
- He inherited a financially troubled kingdom and relied on Parliament for funds but resisted relinquishing any authority in exchange.
- Although he called Parliament multiple times, sessions were often contentious, as James expected cooperation, while Parliament resisted, especially on matters like taxation.
- MPs were supposed to have legal immunity, yet in 1604, MP Thomas Shirley was arrested for debt, upsetting many who felt it violated parliamentary privilege.
- The King's efforts to manage religious tensions, particularly with Puritans, further strained relations with Parliament, as many MPs supported reforms he opposed.
- His effort to unite England and Scotland caused significant tension, with MPs opposing it for religious, political, legal, and economic reasons.

Reliance on favourites

- The Earl of Salisbury, Robert Cecil, was crucial in King James I's accession and became his Chief Minister.
- George Villiers, later made Duke of Buckingham, became King James I's favourite in 1615 and rose to chief advisor by 1623.
- Buckingham's close relationship with King James I sparked tensions with Parliament and led to widespread discontent among the nobility and the public, resulting in calls for his removal.