

What does the arrival of Catherine of Braganza tell us about Restoration England?

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Nature and purpose of the enquiry

This is a single lesson enquiry to be used as an introduction to Restoration England. It is intended to encourage students to draw inferences from some basic factual information and a small number of original sources, inviting them to establish a number of hypotheses that they develop and refine as they gain more information. By asking about how the life of the queen consort (rather than the King) can illuminate the period, it may prompt students to take a broader view of political history, recognising the range of sources from which we can learn, as well as acknowledging other aspects of the past (particularly economic, social and cultural).

Films related to this enquiry

This enquiry is closely based on the film 'The Royal Marriage: the Arrival of Catherine of Braganza'. It could be extended into a more wide-ranging examination of the lives of educated and elite women in late Stuart England by drawing on the films: 'Embroideries and the Stuart Period' and 'Aphra Benn and the Crisis of Stuart Monarchy'. The treatment of James II's wife, Mary of Modena, in the propaganda published to cast doubt on the legitimacy of her son (in 'The Warming Pan Scandal') also illuminates particular ways in which women were sometimes treated in political discourse.

Contexts for teaching this enquiry

This enquiry about the arrival and impact in England of Charles II's bride, Catherine of Braganza, is essentially intended as an introduction to the Restoration period for **GCSE** students embarking on the **AQA Depth Study 'Restoration England 1660-1885'**. The enquiry maps directly onto the three different themes within the unit.

The enquiry could also be used as an introduction to the Restoration period within a longer period or thematic study – such as the **A level AQA Breadth Study 'Stuart Britain and the Crisis of Monarchy, 1603–1702'** or the **GCSE OCR A Thematic Study of 'Power, democracy and monarchy c.1000-2014'**.

Its focus on the queen consort allows **students of all ages** to consider the roles that women played and the different kinds of influence that they exerted. The choice of a Portuguese bride also provides a way of examining foreign policy and trade – and its influences on domestic life at this point – and of highlighting the development of Britain’s economic power in India.

Resources

- The film ‘Royal Marriage: The arrival of Catherine of Braganza’
- A set of numbered information cards (including factual information, visual images, and pictures of artefacts)

Suggested structure and sequence of activities

The precise nature of the introduction will vary depending on the prior knowledge of the students and whether study of Restoration England is following from previous work on the Civil War and Interregnum. This lesson assumes that students are aware of the fact that Charles has been welcomed back to England, following the failure of the Commonwealth and that they appreciate the importance of the *different* kinds of religious concerns provoked by Charles’ father (Charles I) and subsequently by Cromwell.

Introduction

It is likely that students will previously have examined the options that Elizabeth I faced in choosing a husband (and her ultimate decision not to marry). It might therefore be appropriate to frame the focus of this lesson in the same way: just as Elizabeth had faced a difficult choice in seeking a husband as she sought to establish her rule securely after a period of intense religious upheaval and division, and in the face of potential foreign opposition, so Charles II faced an important choice that would have implications not only for the future of religious policy and stability within the kingdom, but also in terms of foreign policy and trade. What can we learn from the bride who was chosen; from her behaviour in England; and from Charles’s relationship with her about his intentions for the country and the nature of life (at least among the elite) in Restoration England?

Activity

- 1. Divide the class into pairs or small groups** (of no more than four students). Explain that they are about to be introduced to the new queen-consort, who arrived in England in May 1662. They will receive an initial introduction and gradually learn more about her – about where she came from, what she brought with her and about her experiences when she arrived.

As they receive each new piece of information they need to decide what tentative claims they can make about the royal court and the new king; about life in Restoration England – particularly for women and for the elite – and about the country’s foreign policy and trade relations.

- 2. Give out the first round of information cards** (A1, B1, C1 →H1 etc.) – or a small selection from them (depending on the capabilities of the group) and invite students to draw any tentative conclusions that they can from them. This might be modelled with the first two or three examples. A1, for example, could be used to identify that Charles wanted a foreign alliance; or that he had not chosen from France or Spain (the foreign powers with which students might be most familiar in this period). The students’ ideas could be collected in a table format, or in a series of concentric circles, or in a spider diagram format with lines branching off from the central image.
- 3. Give out the second round of cards** (A2, B2, C2 etc) and ask students to tick any ideas that seem to be confirmed by the further information, to add any new inferences that they can make and to cross or amend any ideas that now seem to be mistaken.
- 4. Repeat the sequence** with the third and fourth round of cards – ensuring that students continue to use the tick, add or amend strategy at each stage.
- 5. Model the process of formulating a well-reasoned hypothesis** that holds up after all the rounds have been completed. Ask the students to generate a number of these hypotheses: either one for each of the original categories A-H, or perhaps a series of two or three statements related to each of the broad areas into which the AQA GCSE study outline is divided: i.e. (1) Crown, Parliament, plots and court life; (2) Life in Restoration England; and (3) Land, trade and war.
- 6. Show the film** ‘Royal Marriage: The Arrival of the Queen of Braganza’ and check
 - (a) whether there is any further evidence offered in support of or to refine or challenge their hypotheses.
 - (b) whether the historians have put forward any additional claims that they have not made.
- 7. In conclusion, you might ask students to identify which information they found most surprising** and why or to identify the claims about which they are most and least confident and how they could be checked.

The value of the lesson will obviously be enhanced if you return to these hypotheses at regular points as you continue with and complete the study of Restoration England. How many aspects that proved to be important in the reign were fore-shadowed in this story? How well did the students predictions stand up?

Ways in which the suggested structure could be adapted or developed further

1. With more advanced students – perhaps particularly students who are familiar with the preceding period, the card sort element could be removed altogether so that students work directly from the film. For a quick introduction it might be possible to simply to present students with the three headings used for the AQA scheme of work and ask them to note down relevant information/ideas in relation to each so that they then generate a series of hypotheses to test as they then embark on the unit.
2. This initial investigation into the lives of elite women could be extended with reference to two or three of the other films on this site: ‘Embroideries and the Stuart Period’, ‘Aphra Benn and the Crisis of Stuart Monarchy’ and ‘The Warming Pan Scandal’ by asking: *What impression does this collection of materials present of the lives of educated and elite women in late Stuart England?*
3. Samuel Pepys’ diary is an important source of information about Charles’ behaviour and the Queen’s reaction, although often he is reporting what he has been told by others. The diary is available online at <http://www.pepysdiary.com/diary/> and can be searched very easily by date, so you might want to encourage students to engage with it directly for themselves, tracking the King’s actions and Catherine’s responses, for example.