

Oliver cromwell- hero or villian? assignment

[History](#)



Oliver Cromwell: Hero or Villain? Oliver Cromwell was a Puritan MP from Cambridgeshire when Charles I raised his standards in Nottingham, 1642. This was the start of the civil war. Cromwell introduced a new model army to the Parliamentarians which was a superior fighting force that led to the defeat of the Royalists. This influenced people to believe that he were a hero as they were against King Charles I. Cromwell seemed as the only person that would stand up to him. When the king was executed in 1649, the country became republic and the army took control.

As Cromwell was in charge of the army, he quickly became the most powerful man in England. Although he was seen by many as a hero, he also polarized people's opinions. This makes it hard to find a reliable, non-biased source as many of them are controversial. This essay will assess Cromwell's characters and actions to determine whether he was a hero or a villain.

Oliver Cromwell achieved great things in his lifetime. In 1645, he re-organised the army to form the new model army, giving wealth to the soldiers and giving the country a superior fighting force.

This lead to Cromwell been seen as a hero which is why, when the king was executed, he gained control over the army and also a large amount of power over England. Cromwell's skill as a soldier, along with his new model army, led to the defeat of the Royalists at the battle of Naseby in 1645. This broke the power of the king. Cromwell also went on to win many other battles. In 1651 Cromwell went to battle with Charles II. His new model army , with 28 000 soldiers, intimidated Charles's 16 000 soldiers, and the battle was soon won by Cromwell, crushing Charles II's hopes of becoming a king.

This was seen as the final conflict in the interminable Civil War. After this the country became republic meaning no monarch reined over England. Many people joined Cromwell and saw him as a hero. They had grown tired of the monarchy and saw Cromwell as a leader of change. Among many of the changes Cromwell made, one major decision was to last until the present day. Cromwell instigated a shift in power from the monarchy to parliament. Although England remained a republic all through

Cromwell's life, this change in power that occurred when England returned its monarchy is still seen as an influential and popular move by Cromwell. This is why for the majority of the public Cromwell was a hero. Since Cromwell's reign as lord protector England has never returned to being a Republic. Due to Cromwell's persistence of sharing power with parliament, no subsequent monarch had full control over the country. This was the start of the shared power for parliament, allowing a wider pool of people to have an opinion.

This power sharing achieved success with the people, and still exists today, with parliament having much more involvement in creating laws and policy along with the monarchy. Overall, the evidence of Cromwell's achievements suggests he did great things for England. Many people certainly saw this, suggesting Cromwell really was a hero. When Cromwell became lord protector over England, it gave him power to control and mould the country in which ever way he required. Cromwell wanted to pass new laws but parliament repeatedly refused them which angered him.

In 1652, Cromwell had had enough of being told what to do. In retaliation he closed down parliament, but this reminded people of their previous King's actions, when Charles I raised his standards in parliament. Cromwell started to introduce new laws across the country; Sunday was to be a day of rest. No-one was to work and fines were given if people were out on the streets unless they were going to church. Also, due to Cromwell being protestant, theatres and playhouses were closed as they were believed to be places of the devil.

Christmas day was even abolished in 1652 and it seemed to everyone Cromwell was against any act of merriment. Cromwell's popularity started dropping as people disagreed with the laws he was passing without parliament, but Cromwell didn't listen. This caused people to see him as a villain. Cromwell later decided to divide England in to eleven areas, each ruled by a major-general, to try to gain more control over his people, but to them it still seemed as though Cromwell was against entertainment. Many places of dancing and games rapidly disappeared.

Cock-fighting and maypole dancing were stopped which caused people to start rebelling as they didn't believe Cromwell had the right to stop their entertainment. Cromwell's popularity declined rapidly as more laws were passed, and most of his people saw him as a villain. Cromwell soon realized he couldn't control the country alone, and as more rebellious groups sprung up he decided to create a new parliament. Cromwell tried to pass new laws about religion but his new parliament questioned him. Cromwell didn't like this so in 1655, he closed his new parliament down too.

Cromwell allowed most people to have religious freedom for the first time since 1290. In addition Jews were allowed to live in England. People felt Cromwell's modern ways were changing the country but they did not mind accepting different religions. However, as Cromwell was a strong puritan, he later banned all Catholic services which he believed was what God wanted him to do. He took out stained glass windows and lavish decorations from the churches and told the priest all services had to be protestant. This created a divide in opinions about Cromwell.

Although Protestants were glad they had simple churches and English services, Catholics felt he was being a hypocrite for allowing religions like Jewish to be taught, but not Catholicism. This was an unpopular move on Cromwell's behalf and led people to believe he was a villain; " I would rather live seven years under the old king's government at its worst than this government of generals and court martials" said John Lilburne, 1649. The statement shows that the many people did not like the changes Cromwell made to religion and the government.

This is evidence to why many saw him as a Villain at this time. However some still believed that Cromwell could change England for the better, and he was later offered the crown by his people. This meant their was still hope in Cromwell even though he was hated by many. Cromwell's action that led to the defeat of Irish rebellions in 1649, caused much controversy with parliament and his people. Many people in Ireland supported King Charles I, and parliament was worried that his supporters might launch an attack from Ireland after the execution of the king.

Although Ireland never attacked England, the people of Ireland were fighting for King Charles I's son to become the next King, so Cromwell, along with 12 000 soldiers, went to end the rebellions. Due to Cromwell's skills as a soldier, he won numerous battles and restored order to many places across England but to achieve this, Cromwell and his army also murdered thousands of innocent men, women and children. Cromwell used the excuse that Irish rebels had massacred Protestants, women and children, so their punishment was justified.

His soldiers massacred many men, women and children also. Here again controversy arose as, although Cromwell was gaining control over the Irish rebels which saved England from any attacks, he had also killed thousands of innocent people, and they were unsure of whether Cromwell really was a hero or just a murderous villain. Cromwell's army was able to surround the last rebels at Drogheda and, although the battle was almost won, he still insisted on killing the innocent.

The rebels gave quarter (surrendered their weapons), but Cromwell told his soldiers to continue killing even though they cried "no quarter". Cromwell later said in 1650; "I believe this is God's judgment on these barbarous wretches who have massacred innocent Protestants. It will prevent and trouble in the future. This explains what we did, which of course makes us both sad and sorry. Some of us believe that a great thing like this can only be done if God is on our side.

It was him who gave our men courage, and this happy success, and therefore God should have all the glory". Overall Cromwell instigated many

atrocities by murdering innocent people in the name of God. Loved by many, but also hated by large numbers of the country, he was said to be protecting his beloved England which is why he gave no quarter. However, Cromwell's harsh and ruthless decisions in Ireland when murdering thousands of innocent Irish people came across to the public as merciless.

His actions demonstrated to many that their opinion of him as a villain and not a protector were justified. Cromwell's distinct personality never died through out his life. His strong beliefs and his controlling ways gave him power over England although his personnsality influenced controvertial views between the people, of him. One main belief Cromwell kept through out his life was his passionate belief of God. He believed the Parlimentarians had God on their side and during the civil war, was convinced they were going to win against the Royalists.

When Charles I was executed, Cromwell trusted God in how his life would turn out and felt he had no other choice but to follow in what he thought God wanted. In 1656, when Cromwell took the position of Lord Protector he said; " I did not push myself into this position, of that God be my witness. I could not refuse the power God put into my hands. " This convinced people to side with Cromwell. Also his order and control suggests that Cromwell was then seen as a hero due to the fact he used these strengths to remodel the new model army which in due course, won England many battles.