**A King is Executed Name:**

**Date: Block:**

**Directions:**

1. READ the introduction and the story.
2. ANNOTATE while you read the introduction AND the story (circle unknown words, underline important phrases, “talk back” by writing your thoughts)

Talk Back Below!

1. ANSWER the questions at the end of the reading.

When James I died in 1625, few English people were sorry. Many hoped that his son, Charles I, would be a successful replacement. Charles worked long hours and did not waste money (as his father had). But the job of being a successful king was simply too much for him. Before long, the people knew that he could not and would not understand them.

Charles could not stand anyone who opposed him. He fought constantly with Parliament. For their part, members of Parliament did not trust him. Charles’ wife was Catholic, and Parliament was afraid that Charles would convert to Catholicism and possibly turn England away from the Protestant faith.

For a period of 15 years, Charles struggled with Parliament. It refused to obey him. In return, he did not permit it to meet. In fact, for 11 years, he did not call Parliament to meet at all. He ruled on his own, without the approval and support of Parliament. But he was able to raise enough money to keep his government going, fight wars, and live the way kings were expected to live.

By 1640, Charles was forced to turn to Parliament for money. In return for taxes, he agreed to sign the Petition of Right, a document that said Parliament would meet at least once every three years. It could not be dissolved (brought to an end) unless it agreed. But Charles would sign anything without intending to keep his word. He even personally tried to arrest the members of Parliament who were against him. Parliament now knew that Charles would not obey the law. Promises were empty words.

In the English Civil War that followed, the majority of the nobles were aligned with the king. On the other side, the parliamentary army was made up of merchants, tradespeople, and small farmers. The king’s followers were called Royalists, or Cavaliers, because of their fancy clothes and long hair. The supporters of the Parliament were called Roundheads because of their bowl shaped haircuts.

Oliver Cromwell led the Roundheads to defeat the king and his supporters. Charles was captured, put on trial, and condemned to die. In this story, we find the king preparing to face his executioner. Ask yourself whether Charles really had to die. What, if anything, was accomplished by his execution?

“What time is, Father?” asked King Charles.

“We have plenty of time,” said the priest. “Have no fear.”

“Fear!” replied Charles. “I am the King of England. I am not afraid. I am God’s representative on earth. God walked beside me; he guided me.”

“We are all human,” said the priest. “We all make mistakes.”

“You are right, Father. Perhaps I have made a few mistakes. But do I belong in jail because Parliament would not agree with me?!”

“Sire, you knew that Parliament represented the English people. Why couldn’t you give in – at least some of the time?”

“But father, I gave and gave. I promised and promised. Did I not agree to the Petition of Right?”

“Yes, and it was the highlight of your reign as king. Innocent people must be kept out of jail; all accused must be given a fair trial. This a nation of laws, not of individuals. Your promise was not enough. Parliament must see that our laws are obeyed. Was it so difficult to agree to those things?”

“Of course not,” replied Charles. “I agree with Parliament! I would never order a man imprisoned without a fair trial. But they would not believe me! They would not trust me! They would not accept my promises. They had to take my power away. The members of Parliament are simply power grabbers. They fought me and I fought back. Would I be here if they weren’t out to steal my powers? Who does Cromwell think he is? Did they fight me to protect the English people? No sir, they are rebels, traitors! They are mad for power. They have overthrown the KING, the monarchy, the representative of God on earth!”

“Your Highness has a way of turning things around. You signed the Petition of Rights. You knew very well it said that tax bills had to be passed by Parliament. How then could you expect to raise money when you dismissed Parliament? You would not let it meet for years.”

“I refused to meet with those traitors,” said the king.

“But you promised,” replied the priest.

“I promised Parliament what it wanted to believe.”

“Sire, you are the king. You will do as you wish,” said the priest sadly. He got up to leave the cell.

Suddenly, there was a harsh shout from outside the cell. “Get ready, your Highness! Your time has come!”

Charles looked at the priest. “Will you stay with me, Father? I am cold and weary.”

“I will stay, if you wish.”

Soon after Charles I was executed, the monarchy was abolished. The government of England was changed to a commonwealth – in theory it was a republic, but in reality the army was in control. Oliver Cromwell was the head of the army, therefore he was the ruler of England. He became the Lord Protector – a military dictator. He had crushed Charles I because he was a tyrant… now he did the same things for which Charles had been put to death. When he died, the people were happy to see a king once again. Charles II, the son of Charles I, took power and was followed by his brother, James II. Parliament went back to its pattern of struggling with the king over money and was afraid once again that England would become Catholic.

Leaders of Parliament offered the crown to William and Mary (James’ Protestant daughter) to rule as equals. This marked an important step for England – Parliament showed that it had the right to remove the crown of the country’s rulers. This great change is called the Glorious Revolution.

**Questions for Review: Answer the following on a separate sheet of paper.**

1. Why did King Charles I refuse to let Parliament meet for many years?
2. Why did Charles eventually have to turn to Parliament?
3. Describe the opponents in the English Civil War.
4. Why did Charles call Cromwell and his followers traitors?
5. What evidence shows you that Charles believed in divine right and saw himself as an absolute monarch?
6. What might Cromwell have said to Charles I if he had overhead the conversation between him and the priest?
7. Imagine that you are present at the trial of Charles I. You can choose to either be his defense lawyer or the prosecutor. Explain your defense for him or your case against him.