

Cromwell

Study Guide for the Film of 1970

Dr. Ron Fritze's Tudor and Stuart Britain Course At Athens State University, Fall 2011 Semester

Cromwell starring Richard Harris dramatized the role of Oliver Cromwell in the English Civil War, including his participation in the trial and execution of King Charles I. Unlike the Tudors, the Stuart dynasty has not attracted much cinematic interest, except for the playboy King Charles II in a minor way.

It is important for Americans to understand that the English Civil War looms in the popular consciousness of the British people in much the same way as the American Civil War remains alive in the popular consciousness of Americans. Just as we have people who continue to debate the rights and the wrongs of the American Civil War, the British have people who debate the rights and wrongs of their civil war as well. We have re-enactors, they have re-enactors.

The film treats the historical Oliver Cromwell sympathetically. Not all British and Irish would agree that he should be treated that way. In fact, Cromwell is the most hated figure in the Irish historical imagination.

To prepare for viewing this film, take a look at the Wikipedia article on the film *Cromwell*. The article includes a list of some of the film's historical inaccuracies. As you study this film, you should research and answer the questions below. They will help you write your compare-and-contrast paper. You will also find that the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* and the *Historical Dictionary of Stuart England* will help you with your background research.

1. Was Richard Harris good casting in terms of his physical resemblance to Oliver Cromwell?
2. Do Richard Harris and the film's script present an accurate portrayal of Oliver Cromwell's personality and character?
3. Is the film accurate in its portrayal of the events leading up to the English Civil War and the course of the war? Are some events left out?
4. How does the film portray King Charles I's attempt to arrest the Five Members? How does it differ from the real historical event.
5. How does the film portray Charles I and his role in the English Civil War?
6. How does the film portray Queen Henrietta Maria and her role in English politics?

- 7.** How does the film portray Sir Edward Hyde and his role in the royal government and the English Civil War?
- 8.** How does the film portray the issues that divided King Charles I and his subjects? Is this portrayal accurate? Why or why not?
- 9.** How does the film portray Sir Thomas Fairfax and his role in Parliament and the English Civil War?
- 10.** How does the film portray John Pym and his role in Parliament and the English Civil War?
- 11.** How does the film portray Henry Ireton and his role in Parliament and the English Civil War?
- 12.** How does the film portray the trial and execution of Charles I? Is this portrayal accurate, why or why not?
- 13.** How does the film portray the Earl of Essex and the Earl of Manchester in their roles in Parliament and the English Civil War?
- 14.** According to the film, how did Cromwell come to be the Lord Protector of England?



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