EXECUTION OF CHARLES I

After the Royalist defeat, Parliament had to decide what to do with the king. Many people in Parliament did not trust Charles so put him on trial for treason (betraying the king and country). After hearing evidence against Charles, the **judges sentenced him to death.**

However, many people on Parliament's side were reluctant, because, despite the war, they still believed that Charles had been appointed king by God. Only 59 of the original 132 judges signed the death warrant. Charles was executed on 30th January 1649 outside the Banqueting House in London.

Look carefully at the print. This was published in 1649 to tell people about Charles' execution. Spot the following in the image.

- The executioner
- Charles' soul being carried to heaven
- The soldiers holding the crowd back
- The woman who has fainted from shock

Do you think that the artist supported Charles or Parliament? Why?

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On the day of his execution **I stood amongst the crowds** in the street before Whitehall gate, where the scaffold was erected, and **saw what was done**, but **was not so near as to hear anything**. The blow I saw given, and can truly say with a sad heart, at the instant whereof, I remember well, **there was such a groan by the thousands then present as I never heard before** and desire I may never hear again. A troop (of soldiers) immediately marched from Charing Cross to Westminster, and another from Westminster to Charing Cross, **purposely to disperse and scatter the people**; so that I had much ado amongst the rest to escape home without hurt.

An eyewitness account of the execution of Charles I from Philip Henry, who wrote about about the event in his diary.

What can you learn about how the crowd felt about Charles's execution?

'there was such a groan by the thousands then present as I never heard before'

Why do you think that soldiers were sent 'purposely to disperse and scatter the people'? **What do you think that they were afraid of happening?**

Why might we trust Philip Henry's account?

'I stood amongst the crowd'/ 'I saw what was done''

Is there any reason that we might not trust this account?

'not so near as to hear anything'

As a child, Philip Henry had played with the king's sons as his father was the groundskeeper. **Does this affect how much you can trust the source? Why?**