The Battle of the Boyne

The Original Clash for the Throne

Lesson Plans and background notes

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Contents:

Background to The Glorious Revolution

The term Glorious Revolution was given to the political and royal change that took place in the British Isles in 1688 and 1689. The Seventeenth Century was a turbulent time in British Politics. The English Civil War had given way to a period of republican style government which at times verged on dictatorship. It was against this backdrop of uncertainty that the seeds of the Glorious Revolution were sown.

In 1660 the Stuart family were restored to the throne of the British Isles, with Charles II as King. It was hoped that memories of the Civil War, and the brief period of republican government under Oliver Cromwell and the Commonwealth, would pass. However, stability came to an end with the death of King Charles II on 6 February 1685. Charles died with no legitimate male heir. The Crown would now pass to his brother, James, Duke of York. This posed a problem. James was a Roman Catholic and under the restoration settlement the king or queen could only be Protestant. Anxious to avoid another civil war, the politicians came up with a compromise. James was allowed to succeed his brother and become King. Many in the establishment, although opposed to James, were prepared to tolerate his accession as his existing heirs were all Protestant.

The ill-fated three-year reign of James II was characterized by struggles over the balance of power between king and parliament, and a debate over freedom of religious belief. Perhaps haunted by the childhood memory of his own father's execution, James tried to cement the power of the monarchy at the expense of parliament. He tried to copy his cousin, King Louis XIV of France. This greatly annoyed the political establishment. He further alienated Church and Military leaders when he attempted to introduce a new book of Common Prayer and remove some of the restrictions on Roman Catholic life. They resolved to replace the King. Representatives of the two main parties met secretly and decided to invite William, Prince of Orange, the Protestant champion of Europe, to take the throne of the British Isles.

James's supporters melted away and Parliament declared that, by his actions, he had broken the contract between Government and the People. They argued that he had thus vacated the throne. William, Prince of Orange, and his wife Mary Stuart, were invited to take the throne as Joint Monarchs. New restrictions were placed on the power of the Monarch and a Bill of Rights introduced. Seven key principles would form the bedrock of this new administration – Religious Toleration, Liberty of the Subject, Freedom of the Press, Freedom of Speech, Trial by Jury, Parliamentary Democracy and Constitutional Monarchy.

One of the most interesting things about this new arrangement was the fact that it was a Joint Monarchy. This was the result of a political compromise to gain the support of the majority of politicians. The Whigs were keen supporters of William of Orange. Meanwhile the Tories were content that making Mary Queen would keep a Stuart on the throne. In this way they would not be interfering with the Divine Right of Kings. This is the only period in British History that there has been a Joint Monarchy in power.

It was the birth of a male heir to King James II and his second wife, Mary of Modena, that forced the conspirators to act. Elements of the Protestant Press poked fun at the arrival of the new heir. Some even

suggested that he was not legitimate and had been smuggled into the Royal Bedchamber in a 'warming pan' - the Seventeenth Century version of a hot water bottle! Nevertheless, the arrival of young James Francis Edward Stuart would be the final straw. The prospect of a Roman Catholic dynasty on the British throne forced the conspirators to put their plans into action – the Glorious Revolution was underway.

The birth of James Francis Edward Stuart on 10 June 1688 may also be the origin of the nursery rhyme 'Rock-A-By-Baby'. James is the heir to the throne, and the baby in the cradle. The strong wind represents the favourable weather conditions that allowed William, Prince of Orange, to land on the south coast and kept James II's loyal Navy in port. The branch that breaks is the Roman Catholic branch of the House of Stuart on the British Throne.

The Glorious Revolution, and the political changes it heralded, would become incredibly important to the Loyal Orange Institution when it was formed just over 100 years later.

Events of the Glorious Revolution

As the actions of King James II alienated the political, military and religious establishment, so an invitation was issued to William, Prince of Orange, and his wife Mary, to take the throne of the British Isles. Plans were drawn up for an invasion.

At the beginning of November 1688, weather favoured the Prince of Orange. A strong easterly wind prevented James's loyal navy from leaving port and allowed the Prince of Orange to land unopposed. Brixham became the focal point of William's landing. One of those who waded ashore with his army was a Presbyterian Minister from Scotland. William Carstares was both a spymaster and Chaplain to the court of William, Prince of Orange. As the waves lapped against the shore, men gathered round him as he recited Psalm 118 and assured the assembled soldiers and sailors that God would be with them in their cause.

The diarist, John Evelyn, described how the landing of the William of Orange was greeted in the capital. "I went to London; heard the news of the Prince having landed at Torbay, coming with a fleet of near 700 sail, passing through the channel with so favourable a wind that our navy could not intercept or molest them. This put the King and Court into great consternation, they were now employed in forming an army to stop their further progress, for they were got into Exeter, and the season and ways very improper for His Majesty's forces to march so great a distance…"

James raised his standard and tried to muster an army to defend his cause, but key leaders such as John Churchill, future Duke of Marlborough, joined William instead. Any threatened confrontation melted away and James was imprisoned briefly in the Tower of London. For political reasons, and the fact William wanted to quickly turn his attention back to Europe, James was allowed to escape, and quickly hurried to France.

William launched a major propaganda campaign, with one of his slogans being "The liberties of England and the Protestant religion I will maintain." Even before he landed in England, William had prepared the ground by launching a massive propaganda campaign. Printed ballads, and pamphlets filled the streets praising the Prince of Orange and the Protestant cause. This had helped pave the wave for the peaceful transition of power. William and Mary were thus seen as liberators by the majority of the population.

In 1689 a new Parliament introduced a Bill of Rights for the Kingdom and this was followed by the coronation of William and Mary at Westminster Abbey on 11 April 1689. This model of Constitutional Monarchy would help lay the foundations of modern democracy in the western World.

The creation of a Joint Monarchy, in which both King and Queen would have the same power, was a new departure. This settlement was necessary to ensure that the majority of both Tory and Whig politicians embraced the new arrangements and a political solution would prevent a possible civil war.

Not only was the Glorious Revolution part of a wider European power struggle but it also involved a family dispute. William was both James's son-in-law and his nephew! This may also have explained why the recently deposed king was 'allowed' to escape. Not only was he a potential focus for the remaining Jacobite sympathisers in the kingdom, but he was also Mary's father. William felt it prudent to let him go – hoping he would never return.

Allowing James to escape was a mistake. In France, he was able to secure financial and military backing from Louis XIV and launched a campaign to try and regain his throne. There followed a bitter period of war in Ireland and Scotland as the Jacobites attempted to dislodge the newly crowned William III and Mary II.

Events in Ireland

During his short reign, James II had encouraged the promotion of a Roman Catholic ascendancy in Ireland. This is not to say that he wanted the complete removal of the existing Protestant Establishment, but the sudden elevation of a large number of Roman Catholic families caused disquiet in the Protestant community.

Richard Talbot, Earl of Tyrconnell, was Lord Lieutenant in Ireland under King James II. He had watched developments in Britain with interest and was determined to hold Ireland for the Jacobite cause. He continually tried to extend Roman Catholic control and influence.

For over two years Tyrconnell, the first Roman Catholic to be in charge of Ireland since the Reformation, set about extending Roman Catholic control. Protestants were dismissed from Town Corporations. Protestant magistrates were replaced and an army of 20,000 men was raised. A significant number of the senior officers, in this new army, were Roman Catholic. Under Tyrconnell the levers of political and administrative power in Ireland were transferred from Protestant to Roman Catholic control. Such was the dramatic nature of the changes that even some of James's English Roman Catholic advisors urged caution. Some leading Protestant merchants sold their businesses and moved to Britain while some Protestant Army officers quietly departed and offered their services to the Prince of Orange in Holland.

Tyrconnell set about trying to make Ireland an island fortress for the ousted James II. Consequently, when James landed, it appeared, at least on the surface, that he was in a commanding position. James believed Ireland offered him a secure base from which he could launch a campaign to retake his throne.

Despite protestations to the contrary, Irish Protestants feared a new 1641 type massacre. This view appeared to be validated when a mysterious letter was found in Comber, County Down, warning of a planned massacre of Protestants. The letter was probably a hoax, but it had an undeniable impact. Those families who could afford to leave fled to Britain. Many sought sanctuary in places like Londonderry and Enniskillen, while others prepared to fight.

The Jacobite aim was to push through Ireland as quickly as possible. They would knock out any pockets of Williamite support, especially in parts of Ulster, and capture a deep-water port. This would enable James to send his army to Britain, especially Scotland, where a Jacobite force was building under James Graham of Claverhouse. Bonnie Dundee, as Graham was affectionately known by his supporters, had organised a considerable Jacobite following in Scotland and some even feared he might capture Edinburgh. James hoped that a demonstration of power in Ireland and Scotland might also encourage Jacobite resistance in England.

Protestants prepared to resist. In Ulster they formed themselves into a *Council of the North* and made plans to defend as many strongpoints as possible, appealing to the new Williamite administration for swift assistance. The country was braced for war.

The first major clash took place at Dromore in County Down in March 1689. A Jacobite army led by Richard Hamilton routed a hastily assembled Protestant force sent to delay it. The Break of Dromore, as it became known, ensured that eastern Ulster fell into Jacobite hands. Those that could fled to England or hurried north and west to Coleraine and Enniskillen. The Protestant garrisons of Coleraine, Londonderry and Enniskillen made plans to hold out against the Jacobite army.

To learn more about the Williamite and Jacobite War in Ireland and see the progress of both armies throughout Ireland between 1688 and 1691, please visit our website at goli.org.uk, and follow the links to our Twelfth at Home project.

The War in Ireland

Political compromise had been the main feature of the change of regime in England in 1688 and 1689. It was a bloodless revolution. However, this was quickly eclipsed by military conflict, especially in Ireland and Scotland. Determined to retake his throne, James ordered his army to push into Ulster. Williamite garrisons bedded down in a number of strongholds and waited for help to arrive from England.

Between 1689 and 1691, four important battles that secured the Glorious Revolution. Although there were a variety of smaller battles, skirmishes and sieges, it would be these four big engagements that determined the course of British history.

The Siege of Londonderry (18 April 1689 – 1 August 1689). This was the most strategic action of the war. James had hoped to capture a deep-water port but the Williamite garrison and citizens held out for over 100 days before being relieved.

The walled city of Londonderry is located on the mouth of the river Foyle. It was one of the deep-water ports that the Jacobites needed, and indeed hoped, to capture as part of James IIs attempts to regain his throne. As early as December 1688 Jacobite forces began to close on the city. As the City Fathers differed over what to do, 13 local apprentices seized the keys to the gates and locked them in the face of James' troops. It was clear that Londonderry would resist. By April of the following year, the Jacobites finally pushed Williamite outposts back to the city and laid siege to it for 105 days.

The defenders experienced hardship, starvation, disease, and death, as they held firm against the odds. Matters were made all the more precarious by the large number of Protestant refugees that had arrived in the months leading up to the beginning of the formal siege. As the siege proper wore on, the inhabitants were reduced to eating horse, cat, dog, and even rat meat to survive. However, the attackers had made a strategic error. The Jacobite forces besieging the city failed to employ heavy siege guns or mortars to press their cause and relied on conventional bombardment, occasional probing assaults, and starving the city of supplies. Eventually a flotilla of ships led by the Mountjoy broke the boom across the river and relieved the beleaguered garrison and citizenry. The Jacobite stranglehold was lifted, and the siege ended on 1 August 1689. James had failed to capture this strategic port city.

The Battle of Newtownbutler fought on 31 July 1689 destroyed the Jacobite forces that had been trying to take the Williamite town of Enniskillen for several months. It also outflanked the Jacobite's around Londonderry and forced them to retreat.

This battle was fought between Newtownbutler and Wattlebridge in County Fermanagh. It took place a day before the siege of Londonderry was lifted. The battle resulted in a significant victory for the Williamite Army in the West, as it threatened to cut off the Jacobite forces besieging Londonderry. This was one of the reasons why the Jacobite army retreated from the city after the relief ships arrived. The Battle of Newtownbutler followed a loose siege of the fortified town of Enniskillen. This town was a Williamite stronghold throughout the war and a thorn in the side of Jacobites. Its position disrupted their supply trains in the west of Ulster. It was also the base of the heralded *Inniskillings*, who would go on to play an important role in the British army for generations to come. One of these soldiers would help carry William to safety when his horse became stuck in the mud at the battle of the Boyne the following year.

In the summer of 1689, James II sent Justin McCarty, Viscount Mountcashel, to destroy the Williamite stronghold of Enniskillen. On 30 July McCarthy attacked Crom Castle. The defenders sent word to Enniskillen and a force of Williamites made haste towards Crom. They were initially intercepted by Jacobite dragoons and forced to retreat. They withdrew towards Enniskillen but set up a successful ambush of pursuing Jacobite forces, who were themselves forced back.

The next day the Williamites advanced towards McCarthy's men. The Jacobites had a well-prepared position near the hamlet of Kilgarret but the local knowledge of the Enniskillen troops quickly allowed them to make their way through marshy ground and capture McCarthy's cannons. Victory quickly turned into a rout as the Jacobite army fled, with many drowning in Lough Erne. McCarthy, however, refused to retreat and was wounded trying to retake his captured cannons.

The victories at both Newtownbutler and Londonderry ensured that western Ulster was securely in Williamite hands. When King William landed in 1690, he was thus able to proceed quickly south without fear of attack from Jacobite garrisons in Ulster.

Two additional great battles would determine the fate of the war – the Battle of the Boyne and the Battle of Aughrim.

The Fortunate escape of the Prince of Orange

The newly crowned King William III arrived on the banks of the Boyne on 30 June 1690. Despite advice from some of his commanders that he should immediately launch an attack on Jacobite positions, William adopted a more cautious approach.

A Council of War was held between William and his generals. Some advocated a direct assault across the Boyne River to smash the Jacobite centre. Others believed that he should try and flank James' forces by sending a large part of his army to the west and cross the Boyne River at Rossnaree and Slane. In the end William adopted elements of both plans. First thing in the morning, he would send forces to capture the crossings at Slane and Rossnaree, while the rest of his army would cross the Boyne at several places between Oldbridge and Drogheda. The adoption of this strategy would prove extremely productive.

The new king then decided to scout the positions of the Jacobite forces himself. Accompanied by his advisors and bodyguards he slowly travelled along the north bank of the River Boyne to see where the Jacobites had placed their cannons. A keen-eyed Jacobite officer spotted this group of riders and ordered small cannons to be fired from a hidden position. William was struck on the boot and on his left shoulder by a ricochet piece of cannon shot. Two soldiers were killed in the attack.   Seeing him knocked from his horse a cheer rose for the Jacobite held side of the river – was the new King dead? Certainly, the Jacobites believed so and news of the incident quickly spread to Dublin and even France. In a fatal mistake, elements of the Jacobite camp celebrated into the night, fully expecting that there would be no battle the next day. How wrong they were!

King William was only wounded. Indeed, the impact of the shot had been more keenly felt on his leather jerkin, than his shoulder. His wound was quickly attended to by William Bentinck, and he vowed to be in the heat of battle the next day. However, rumour of the incident had also spread through the Williamite camp. To counter any misplaced news that he was dead or mortally wounded, William decided to show himself, in person, to several regiments. As soldiers gathered round campfires, the Prince of Orange rode through the camp demonstrating that not only was he alive, but he was in good health.

This incident was recorded in several first-hand accounts of the Williamite War in Ireland and has also been immortalised in paintings and on several Orange banners down through the years. The Earl of Meath, who was with William III that day recounted the incident in a letter written just a few days later. He wrote the following "King William, viewing the enemies camp the day before the engagement, was shot with an 8 pounder, which took off his coat off his shoulders, and just drew blood from his skin. He called for a napkin and another coat, and after it was settled upon him he stretched out his arm three times and said – 'The enemy designed to prevent his fighting next day, but certainly I'll be tomorrow against the thickest of them'."

After the war George Storey, who had accompanied the Williamite forces in Ireland and compiled a history of the war, pointed out the spot where William had been injured to those planning to erect a memorial to the battle. The foundation stones of the mighty Boyne Obelisk were laid on this spot in 1736.

The Battle of the Boyne

The Battle of the Boyne (1 July 1690). This was the most politically significant battle of the Glorious Revolution and the war in Ireland. It was the last time two rightful kings of the British Isles would fight each other, face to face, for the throne.

In June of 1690, after a briefly threatening to take his main army into Ulster, James II withdrew his forces south towards Dublin. This was much against the advice of his military commanders. This withdrawal meant that the last physical barrier between the advancing Williamites and Dublin was the River Boyne outside Drogheda. It was here that James hoped to fight the decisive battle of the war. June 1690 also witnessed the arrival of King William in Ireland. His aim - to finish the war as quickly as possible and to concentrate on the wider conflict in Europe. He encouraged his forces to mop up Jacobite resistance in Ulster and push south for a knockout blow. On 1 July 1690, 35,000 Williamites and 25,000 Jacobites faced each other across the River Boyne outside Drogheda.

The Jacobite army had a strong defensive position on the south side of the river, occupying the small village of Oldbridge and manning as many of the river crossings as they could. They also held the walled city of Drogheda and its main bridge across the river. This meant that the Williamite forces had to cross the river and meet them head on…. or so they thought.

The battle itself lasted for the equivalent of a school day. At 8am 10,000 Williamites, commanded by Count Meinhard Schomberg, moved, under the cover of a lingering mist, to attack the Jacobite left flank. They headed towards the Rossnaree and Slane crossing points. Only 800 Jacobite dragoons guarded the ford at Rossnaree. Sir Neil O'Neill's dragoons fought bravely but were unable told hold back the Williamites for long. In the end, they were forced to retreat. When news reached James that a large party of Williamites had moved on Slane, he sent more than half of his troops to meet, what he believed, was the main Williamite attack. This fateful decision weakened the Jacobite centre at Oldbridge and allowed the Williamites to push their main attack across the river. It was here, at Oldbridge, that most of the fighting took place. The Williamites waded across under heavy fire from the southern bank. The Earl of Meath recorded that shots fell on both sides like "showers of leaden hailstones." Bitter hand to hand fighting took place as the Williamites gained a foothold on the southern shore.

As fighting intensified around Oldbridge, James continued to hold a large part of his army near Slane, where a large gorge and marshy ground prevented any fighting. This mistake allowed the Williamites to seize the initiative and drive home their numerical advantage.

With their infantry falling back, wave after wave of Jacobite cavalry thundered across the battlefield and fell upon the Williamites in the hope of driving them back into the river. They failed.

After several hours of fighting, the Jacobite army broke and retreated towards Dublin. The Battle of the Boyne was over. Only the spirited actions of the Jacobite cavalry and French infantry, saved the whole army from collapse.

Many nationalities would see action in the battle. On the Jacobite side were soldiers from Ireland, England, Scotland, Wales, Germany and France. On the Williamite side the army contained contingents

from across the British Isles, France, Denmark, Holland, Switzerland and Germany. The battle also witnessed the death of two significant figures in the Williamite Army. The Duke of Schomberg, previously William's commander in Ireland, was killed in fierce fighting, as was Rev. George Walker, of Londonderry fame, who had tried to reach the surrounded Schomberg.

After fleeing the battlefield, James II embarked for France, never to return. Although a heavy blow for the Jacobites, his absence left more able leaders in charge of the campaign. They retreated the army west of the Shannon river. Pitched battles, sieges and guerrilla warfare would continue for another year until the war finally came to an end with the signing of the Treaty of Limerick.

Aughrim and the ending of the War

The Battle of the Boyne was a significant moment in the war to secure the Glorious Revolution. However, it did not bring the fighting in Ireland to an end. After James fled the country, French and Irish Generals took control of the Jacobite army, retreated it west of the Shannon River, and hoped to hold out long enough to inspire a major French landing of men and supplies.

Several battles and skirmishes would take place between the two sides as the Williamites sought to deliver a final blow to the Jacobite cause. In this closing phase of the war, the most significant engagements occurred at Aughrim, in County Galway, and then, finally, before the walls of Limerick City.

The Battle of Aughrim (12 July 1691). This was the bloodiest battle of the war in Ireland and followed a week-long struggle over the town of Athlone. Between the 20 and 30 June 1691, the two sides had fought for control of this historic town and its strategic bridge over the Shannon. Eventually the Williamite attackers were successful and the Jacobite army appeared to retreat in disorder. Many felt that the war might be over.

Within two days, however, the French General commanding the Jacobite forces was able to reorganise and enthuse his beaten troops. He made plans to quickly face the advancing Williamites. The two armies would meet in and around the town of Aughrim, in County Galway. It was here that the evenly matched forces fought a bitter struggle, on very difficult terrain, from mid-afternoon until well into the evening. Indeed, it was not until shortly after 8pm that the Williamites began to gain the upper hand. At that time, the Jacobite command structure received a mortal blow as their leader General Saint-Ruhe (St. Ruth) was decapitated by a cannonball. Only darkness and oncoming bad weather prevented a complete Jacobite rout, as their remaining forces withdrew towards Limerick in the South West. Over 6,000 men were left dead on the battlefield. This was three times the casualty rate of the battle of the Boyne the previous year. Aughrim also demonstrated the hostility that existed between European regiments fighting on either side. Some accounts show that initially French and Dutch regiments, fighting for the Williamites, would not allow dead French Jacobite soldiers to be buried.

The war in Ireland would rumble on until it reached the walls on Limerick in 1691. This Jacobite stronghold was never taken by the Williamite forces, despite having been besieged twice. In August General Ginkel besieged the city for a second time. Initially it appeared as if the Jacobite garrison was prepared to hold out, again in a vain attempt to wait for addition help from France. When it looked like such help would not arrive, they requested talks with the Williamites. King William was anxious to bring the war in Ireland to an end and turn his attention and energy to the fight against France on the European mainland. As a consequence, he offered lenient terms to Limerick's defenders. Those officers who refused

to submit to the new regime were even given the opportunity to leave Ireland and seek service in other European armies. About 5,000 did so. The rest declared loyalty to William and Mary and petitioned to have their lands returned. In the majority of cases, these petitions were granted - much to the annoyance of elements in both the English and Irish Parliaments. Unfortunately, many of the lenient terms offered by William, as part of the Treaty settlement, were undone by the introduction of Penal legislation by the Dublin Parliament.

The War to secure the Glorious Revolution was at an end.

Although the bloodiest battle of the war, and fought on 12 July, the importance of the Battle of Aughrim has largely been overlooked. The battle itself could have gone either way. General St. Ruth had so inspired his remaining Irish and French troops, that victory here was not beyond them. Only his sudden death during the fighting, and the failure to hold a strategic pass on the battlefield, resulted in their downfall.

Nevertheless, it was the presence of the recently enthroned King William III, and recently ousted King James II, at the Battle of the Boyne, that ensured that the exploits there would become the representative event of the Revolution.

It was on the banks of that 'beautiful river' that the two kings had faced each other. As the centuries wore on, and with a changing of the calendar, the 12 of July and the battle of the Boyne was enshrined as the anniversary on which the Orange Family annually marked the Glorious Revolution in the form of processions, religious services, picnics and gatherings. Although Aughrim became an almost forgotten engagement of the war, its name, included in a very prominent Orange folk song played with gusto every year to mark the Twelfth fortnight, ensured that it remained in the pages of Orange tradition.

The battle of the Boyne

1 July 1690

Williamites	Result	Jacobites
Monarchs: King William III and Queen Mary II	**Williamite Victory**	**Monarchs:** King James II (deposed)
Generals and Commanders: ❖ (General) **Duke of Schomberg** – Armand-Frederic / Frederick Hermann (French) ❖ (General) **Count Solms** – Hendrik Maastricht (Dutch) ❖ (General) **Count Schomberg** – Meinhard (French) ❖ (General) **Baron Ginkel** – Godard van Reede (Dutch) ❖ (Colonel) **Gustavus Hamilton** (Ulster) ❖ (Paymaster General) **Thomas Coningsby** (English) ❖ (Paymaster General) **Charles Fox** (English)		**Generals and Commanders:** ❖ (General) **Earl of Tyrconnell** (Irish) ❖ (General) **Lauzun** (French) ❖ (General) **Duke of Berwick** (Irish) ❖ **Richard Hamilton** (Ulster) ❖ **Neil O'Neill** (Ulster) ❖ (General) **Duke of Ormonde** (Irish) ❖ (Lieutenant-General) **Earl of Lucan** (Irish)
Nationalities: British, Irish, Dutch, French (Exiled Huguenots), Danish, German, Swiss.		**Nationalities:** British, Irish, French, Germans, Walloons.
Army: 36,000 men **Casualties:** c500 men		**Army:** 25,000 men **Casualties:** c1,000 men

Notes and quotes

Extracts and quotes from people at the Battle of the Boyne

"Yesterday morning I entered this town, after our army and King James had a smart battle for four of five hours on this side of the Boyne, both our whole armies being very warmly engaged…King William forced the pass on the River Boyne, called Oldbridge, three miles from Drogheda (in person) under the enemies great guns mercy and ours with small shot like showers of leaden hailstones."

- **The Earl of Meath** writing to Lady Stephens from Thomascourt, Dublin, July 1690.

"My poor guards, my poor guards, my poor guards."

- **King William III** when his own Dutch Blue Guard Regiment came under heavy attack by the Jacobites, 1 July 1690.

"…when it came to a trial they…fled the field and left the spoil to the enemies, not could they be prevailed upon to rally, though the loss in the whole defeat was but inconsiderable; so henceforth I never more determined to head an Irish army and do now resolve to shift for myself and so, gentlemen, must you."

- **King James II** criticizing his own soldiers and blaming them for the defeat at the Boyne. He encouraged his advisors to also leave. Dublin, 2 July 1690.

Exercise: Encourage pupils to write a short 'eyewitness' account of the Battle of the Boyne. This could be either from a Williamite or Jacobite perspective.

Eyewitness to Battle

The Earl of Meath's letter following the Battle of the Boyne

The following letter was written by Edward, Fourth Earl of Meath, and dated Thomascourt 5 July 1690 to Friddesweed Lady Stephens, wife or widow of Sir John Stephens, and details the events of the Battle of the Boyne.

The letter states:

"Dublin, Thomas-Court, 5 July, MADAM – yesterday morning I entered this town, after our army and King James had a smart battle for four or five hours on this side of the Boyne, both our whole armies being very warmly engaged. It happened on first July, about 11 in the morning where King William forced the pass on the River Boyne, called Oldbridge, three miles from Drogheda (in person), under the enemies great guns, mercy and ours with small shot like showers of leaden hailstones. Kind William viewing the enemies camp the day before the engagement, was shot with an 8 pounder, which took off his coat off his shoulders, and just drew blood from his skin: he called for a napkin and another coat, and after it was settled upon him he stretched out his arm three times and said, without the least passion – 'The enemy designed to prevent his fighting next day, but certainly I'll be tomorrow against the thickest of them'. He was just to his word, for the next day he fought through the pass, and with loss on both sides he took the battery of the enemy's great guns, and killed all the small-shot men that endeavoured to retain it. Soon after he charged the enemy in the rear, broke their first lines and our other line being in the front of theirs, we drew up to enclose the enemy's whole army, but a deep bog being between, we could not pass it, which gave them time to run for it, and the night drawing near, we did not pursue till next morning, and then it was too late, but well enough, for they fled to Dublin and made short stay there, for king James, Tyrconnell, &c, flew through the County of Wicklow, in order as I suppose, to take shipping at the first port when they can find vessels to transport them. We killed besides prisoners, between 6,000 and 7,000. Most of their best officers lay dead and gasping upon the ground. We lost Duke Schomberg, killed in the neck with a musket ball, and some few Officers and Soldiers, inconsiderate for such an engagement.

The enemy is so dispersed, and threw away their arms and run westward, that there is no danger of them ever rallying again; so that you may be pleased with the event of a few hours fighting, which brings you all home to your safe interests and properties which I desire may be, for my own sake as well as yours, as soon as you can. My service to the family of Hobs and Nobs, and your Sally Stakes, are once again freely at your service, who am, madam your humble servant.

Meath

Timeline of the Battle of the Boyne

8.00am   The Williamite left flank moved towards Drogheda, which was occupied by a Jacobite garrison.

              10,000 Williamites, under the command of Meinhard Schomberg marched through the morning mist towards Rossnaree, hoping to ford the Boyne River upstream from the main Jacobite Army.

9.00am   Williamite artillery shelled Jacobite positions.

              Jacobite sentries reported movement on the Williamite right flank and James fearing he was being outflanked, moved a large part of his army towards Rossnaree. He had taken the bait and weakened his positions near Oldbridge.

10.00am   The Dutch Blue Guard began their advance across the Boyne at Oldbridge, opposed by strong Jacobite fire.

10.30am   Elements of the Dutch Blue Guards (William's own crack troops) secured a foothold on south side of the river. Jacobite infantry reformed and attempted to dislodge them with repeated attacks.

              Huguenot troops (exiled French Protestants) moved across to reinforce initial Williamite successes. Heavy fighting took place for the next hour.

11.15am   Danish forces crossed the Boyne at yellow river to reinforce the British, French and Dutch forces fighting on the south side of the river.

Rossnaree   Jacobite Dragoons under the command of Niall O'Neill retreated after fierce fighting at this crucial crossing point on the Jacobite left. The charismatic O'Neill was killed during the fighting and Williamites turned toward the Jacobite centre but were faced with marshy terrain at Rough Grange and a significant Jacobite force. Both sides faced each other but little fighting took place.

| 11.30am | Jacobite infantry attempted to reform in response to the Danish advance in the centre. To assist, Tyrconnell ordered a Jacobite Cavalry attack on the Williamite infantry. For 45mins Jacobite Cavalry mounted continued attacks. But with little success. |

| 12.15pm | Additional Williamite infantry, including the Inniskillings, began crossing the Boyne at Drybridge. William also crossed. It was reported later that his horse was briefly stuck in the mud and he was carried to the far bank by one of the Inniskilling regiment!) The thinning Jacobite line were unable to stop the Williamites and there is a real prospect of the Jacobite right collapsing. Elements of Jacobite infantry began to withdraw towards Donore Hill. |

| 1.30pm | Last significant stand by Jacobite forces around Donore Hill and church ruins. Confusion spread and Jacobites began to flee towards the bridge at Duleek in order to escape. |
| | French troops performed a valiant rear-guard to allow the majority of the Jacobite army to escape in some sort of order. James II fled the towards Dublin and many fully expect he will leave the country. |

Exercise: Imagine you are a soldier fighting for William or James in Ireland. Write a letter home telling your family about the events at the Battle of the Boyne.

Exercise: Imagine you are a newspaper reporter. Write a report of what happened at the Battle of the Boyne. *Remember* – exciting stories sell newspapers; so, make your report as exciting as possible.

Definitions, explanations, and Glossary

Glorious revolution:

The term given to describe the peaceful change in government between 1688 and 1689. King James II was replaced by King William III and Queen Mary II. The term Glorious was used because revolutions were usually violent and bloody affairs.

Constitutional Settlement:

When King James II was replaced with the Joint Monarchy of King William III and Queen Mary II a new constitution and **Bill of Rights** was introduced. This limited the power of the Monarch and increased that of Parliament. New freedoms were also introduced for the population. This was the beginnings of modern constitutional democracy.

Stadtholder:

This was the term given to the 'elected' royal leadership of the Dutch Republics that made up the United Provinces (Netherlands). It effectively meant Steward. Today's hereditary House of Orange is distantly related to this early beginning.

Williamite:

Supporter of King William III and Queen Mary II.

Jacobite:

Supporter if King James II.

1st July or 12th July:

In 1752 the calendar was changed. The new old Julian Calendar was replaced with the Gregorian calendar. This added 11 days to various dates. As a result, the Orange Order celebrates the Battle of the Boyne on 12 July every year as opposed to the 1 July.

Orange Order / loyal Orange institution:

The Orange Order (proper name Loyal Orange Institution) was founded on 21 September 1795. It takes its name from William, Prince of Orange and celebrates the freedoms secured by the Glorious Revolution – especially since the 'Revolution' was hard fought for in Ireland.

True or False?

Circle either True of False

The Battle of the Boyne took place on 1 July 1690.	True / False
Queen Mary II was married to King Louis XIV of France.	True / False
The River Boyne is in Scotland.	True / False
King James II won the Battle of the Boyne.	True / False
The Battle of the Boyne was the only battle of the war.	True / False
Supporters of King William III were called Jacobites.	True / False
King William III and Queen Mary II were Joint Monarchs.	True / False
Schomberg was a famous soldier who fought for King James II.	True / False
The Orange Order takes its name from William, Prince of Orange.	True / False

Who Am I?

Q. Can you match the picture with the description?

> - I became King when my brother Charles II died in 1685.
> - I introduced new laws to reform my country.
> - I tried to copy my cousin King Louis XIV of France.
> - I annoyed my army leaders. Politicians and church leaders.

King Louis XIV

> - I am an all-powerful ruler in Europe.
> - I made France the most powerful country in Europe.
> - I am the cousin of King James II
> - I am at war with William, Prince of Orange.
> - I support King James II against William, Prince of Orange.

Queen Mary II

> - I am married to William, Prince of Orange.
> - My father was the King of the British Isles.
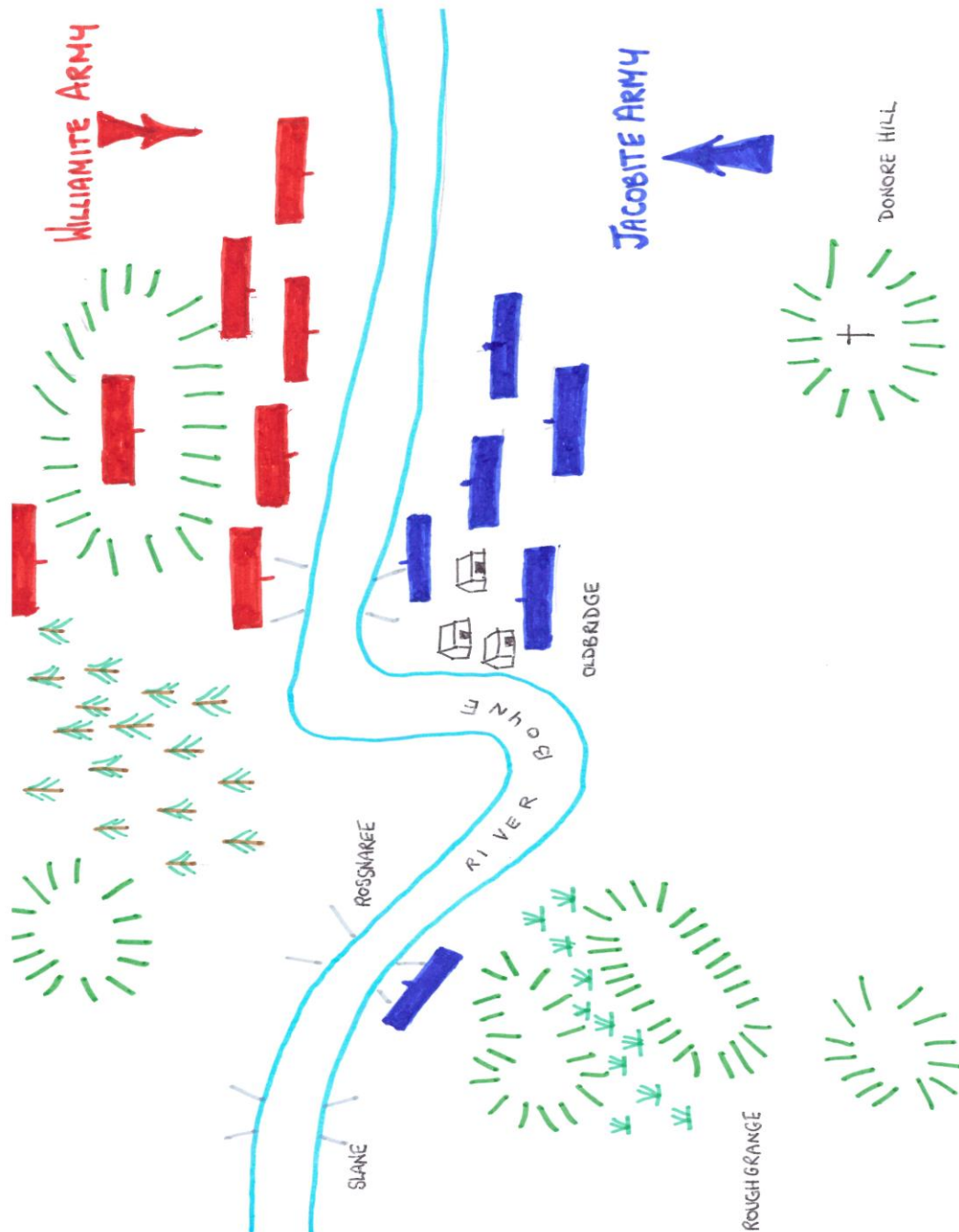> - I am Joint Monarch of the British Isles.

King William III

> - I am Prince of Orange in the Netherlands.
> - My father died before I was born.
> - I am married to Mary Stuart.
> - Many see me as the **Protestant Champion** of Europe.
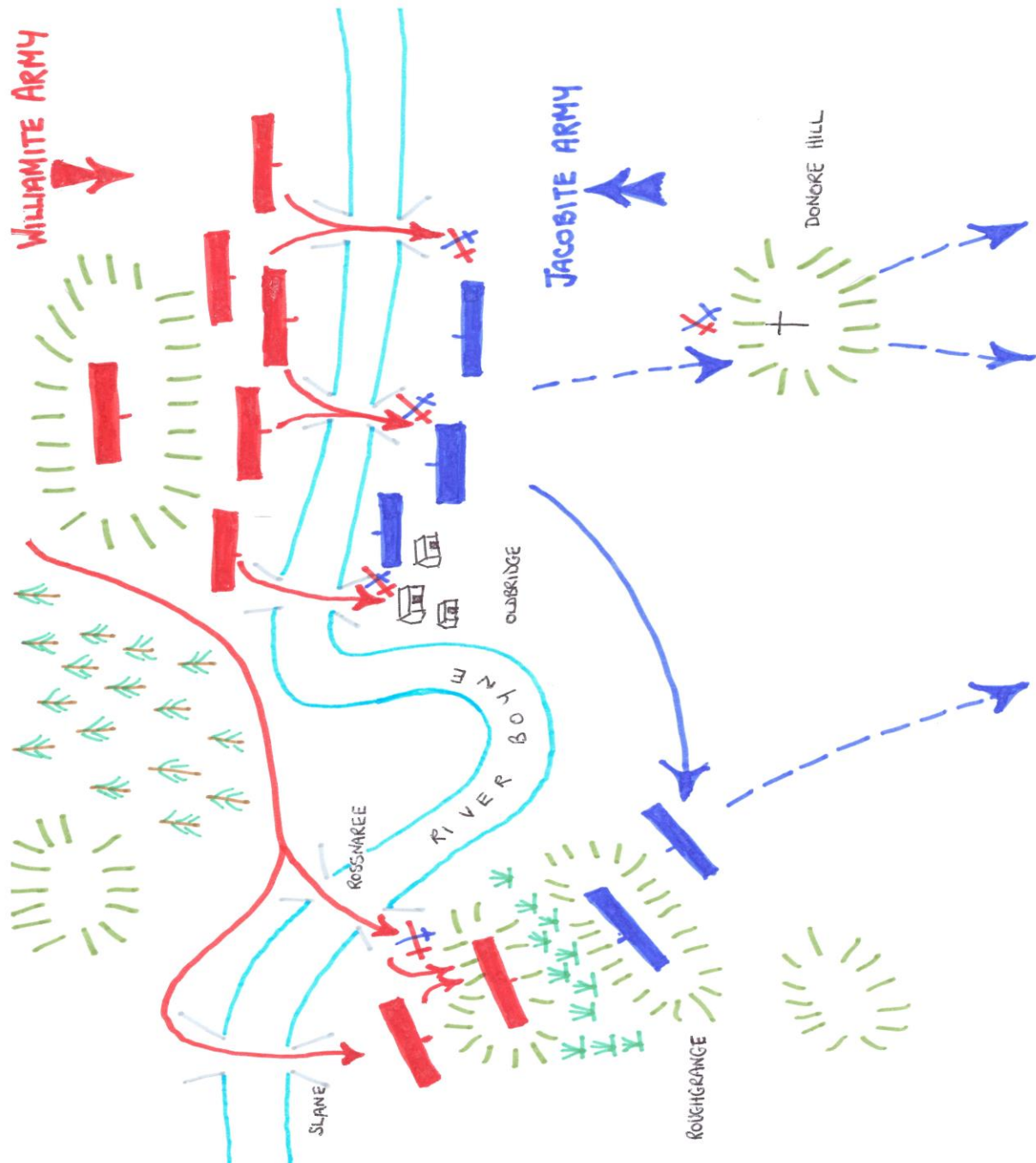> - I am at war with King Louis XIV.
> - I am Joint Monarch.

King James II

Map One: **Before the Battle of the Boyne**

Map Two: **Events of the Battle of the Boyne**

Music

Bonnie Dundee – Jacobite Song

Tae the Lords o' convention 'twas Claverhouse spoke
E'er the King's Crown go down there are crowns to be broke
So each caviller who loves honour and me
Let him follow the bonnets o' Bonnie Dundee

Chorus:

Come fill up my cup, come fill up can
Come saddle my horses and call out my men
Unhook the West Port and let us gae free
For it's up with the bonnets o' Bonnie Dundee

Dundee he is mounted and rides up the street
The bells tae ring backwards, the drums tae are beat
But the provost douce man says, 'Just let it be.'
When the toon is well rid o' that devil Dundee

Chorus:

Come fill up my cup, come fill up can
Come saddle my horses and call out my men
Unhook the West Port and let us gae free
For it's up with the bonnets o' Bonnie Dundee

There are hills beyond Pentland and lands beyond Forth
Be there lords in the south, there are chiefs in the north
There are brave downie wassles three thousand times three
Cry hey for the bonnets o' Bonnie Dundee

Chorus:

Come fill up my cup, come fill up can
Come saddle my horses and call out my men
Unhook the West Port and let us gae free
For it's up with the bonnets o' Bonnie Dundee

Then awa tae the hill to the lee and the rocks
Ere I own a usurper I'll crouch with the fox
So tremble false wigs in the midst of yer glee
For you've no seen the last of my bonnets and me

Chorus to finish.

The Green Grassy Slopes of the Boyne – Williamite Song

Some folks sing of mountains and valleys
Where the wild flowers abundantly grow
And some of the wave-crested billows
That dash 'neath the waters below
But I'm going to speak of a river
And I hope in the chorus you'll join
Of the deeds that were done by King William
On the green grassy slopes of the Boyne

Chorus:
On the green grassy slopes of the Boyne
Where the Orangemen with William did join
And fought for our glorious deliverance
On the green grassy slopes of the Boyne

On the banks of that beautiful river
There the bones of our forefathers lie
Awaiting the sound of the trumpet
To call them to glory on high
In our hearts we will cherish their memories
And we all like true brethren will join
And praise God for sending us King William
To the green grassy slopes of the Boyne

Chorus:
On the green grassy slopes of the Boyne
Where the Orangemen with William did join
And fought for our glorious deliverance
On the green grassy slopes of the Boyne

Orangemen will be loyal and steady
For no matter what'er may betide
We will still mind our war-cry 'No surrender'
So long as we've God on our side
And if ever our service is needed
Then we all like true brethren will join
And fight like valliant King William
On the green grassy slopes of the Boyne

Chorus to Finish.

Contact details

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