Why did people go to war in 1642?

Case study 2: 1640-42 - Source 1

A petition from the citizens of London, September 1640

(John Rushworth, Historical Collections, Vol III, 1639-1640, p.1263. Published in London, 1680-1701)

What is this source?

This petition was sent to Charles I on 24 September 1640. Petitions were a way for Parliament or the citizens of a town to show that they were unhappy about something.

Charles ruled his kingdom without calling Parliament from 1629-40. During this period (called the Personal Rule) he brought in many changes. The citizens of London who sent this petition were unhappy with those changes.

What's the background to this source?

During the 1630s Charles tried rule the country without calling Parliament. This led to problems.

- Monarchs often ran out of money in the 1600s. When they needed more, they asked Parliament to agree to new taxes. Charles tried to raise money without a Parliament. He used taxes like 'ship money'. He sold monopolies and patents to merchants, giving them total control of particular trades and stopping other people making a living in these trades.
- People could be fined or jailed for not paying Charles's taxes.
 Charles also treated opponents of his policies harshly. They could be fined, arrested or tortured. This was often done with no trial at all, or in a special court called the Star Chamber. The Star Chamber usually did what Charles wanted.
- Charles also brought in many changes to the church. His religious policies led to a rebellion in Scotland in 1638. Charles tried to crush it, but he was very short of money to pay for the army he needed.

• By 1640 he was short of men, ships, money and supplies. He called a Parliament in April 1640 to ask for the money he needed, but he dissolved it again when MPs criticised aspects of his rule.

It's worth knowing that ...

London was by far the biggest city in the country in the 1600s, just like today. As a result, London paid a lot of taxes, collected in money and in goods. It was a rich and important city.

The citizens of London were also more politically active than any other part of the country and radical (wanting big changes). This helps to explain why the city sent several petitions to Charles during this period. London had more Protestant hardliners (Puritans) than other parts of the country. It is not surprising that London took the side of Parliament once war broke out in 1642.

Your turn: What can we learn from this source?

- 1. What were the people of London complaining about?
- 2. Is it possible to tell from this document which issues caused the greatest concern?
- 3. Does this source give us any clues about why the kingdom went to war in 1642?



Civil War



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Source 1

To the King's Most Excellent MAJESTY.

The humble Petition of your Majesties Subjects the Citizens of LONDON.

Most Gracious Soveraign,

- Eing moved with the duty and obedience which by the Laws your Petitioners owe unto your Sacred Majesty, they humbly present unto your Princely and pious wisdom, the several pressing grievances following; viz.
- '1. The pressing and unusual Impositions upon Merchandize, Importing, and Exporting, and the urging and Levying of Ship-money notwithstanding both which, Merchants Ships and Goods have been taken and destroyed both by Turkish and other Pirates.
- '2. The multitude of Monopolies, Patents, and Warrants where-'by Trade in the City and other parts of the Kingdom is much de-'cayed.
 - '3. The fundry Innovations in matter of Religion.
- '4. The Oath and Canons lately enjoyned by the late Convocation whereby your Petitioners are in danger to be deprived of their 'Ministers.
- '5. The great concourse of Papists, and their Inhabitations in London, and the Suburbs, whereby they have more means and opportunity of Plotting and Executing their designes against the Resiligion established.
- '6. The feldom Calling, and fuddain diffolutions of Parliaments, without the redrefs of your Subjects Grievances.
 - '7. The Imprisonment of divers Citizens for non-payment of Ship-Zzzzzzz 'money,

A Petition of the Londoners to the King to call a Par-





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1264	Historical Collections.
	'money, and Impositions, and the profecution of many others in the Star-Chamber, for not conforming themselves to Committees in Patents of Monopolies, whereby Trade is restrained.
	'8. The great danger your Sacred person is exposed unto in the present War, and the various sears that seized upon your Petitio ners, and their Families by reason thereof, which grievances and sears have occasioned so great a stop and distraction in Trade, that your Petitioners can neither Buy, Sell, receive, or pay as formerly and tends to the utter Ruine of the Inhabitants of the City, the decay of Navigation, and Cloathing, and the Manusactures of this Kingdom.