

The 'Glorious Revolution'

Enquiry: How revolutionary was the 'Glorious Revolution'?

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James II

James II was not a popular king. In 1673, he had married a Catholic princess called Mary of Modena; this made English Protestants very suspicious. Once James became king in 1685, this situation became even worse. James II used the 'Godden VS Hales' case to suspend the **'Test Acts'** in 1686. In May 1688, James imprisoned seven Bishops who refused to support his **'Declaration of Indulgence'** to Catholics. When the Bishops were found innocent in court, huge crowds celebrated in the streets. Finally, when Mary gave birth to a son in June 1688, English Protestants panicked. They faced Catholic rule forever!



Invitation to invade

James' newborn son made it possible that there would be a long line of Catholic Kings in England. This terrified the Protestants because it threatened to undo the English **Reformation**. So, in June 1688, the Seven Bishops wrote to the Dutch Protestant Prince William of Orange. They asked him to take the English Crown away from James II.

William landed in Torbay with 500 ships and 20,000 soldiers on 5 November 1688 - this force was four times larger than the Spanish Armada. Towns and villages welcomed William. There was very little fighting or **resistance** to William's invasion.



The Revolution Settlement

James II panicked and left the country in December 1688. Parliament agreed to crown William and his wife Mary (James II's daughter) as joint monarchs in April 1689. Before they were crowned they were read the Bill of Rights. This limited the king's power; it forced him to ask Parliament before he could raise taxes.

William also passed a Toleration Act in May 1689. This gave religious freedom to Protestant dissenters and groups like the Puritans who had been **persecuted** under Charles II's rule. Catholics were deliberately not included.



A 'glorious' revolution?

In the years after 1688, the events were soon being described as a 'Glorious Revolution'. According to this interpretation of events, William of Orange and the Seven Bishops had saved England from Catholic tyranny. Even the wind that blew William's 500 ships to Torbay was described as a 'Protestant Wind'.

Yet the *idea* of a peaceful and **providential** revolution was one that William wanted to create. He brought hundreds of printing presses with him to England. He spread rumors about James II and Catholics. William's **propaganda** helped create the **illusion** of a 'Glorious Revolution'; the reality was far grubbier.



Glossary

Test Acts - a law that prevented Catholics from working for the government.

Declaration of Indulgence - a temporary law giving freedoms to Catholics.

Reformation - when the English Church switched from Catholic to Protestant.

Resistance - trying to stop something from happening.

Persecuted - being punished for doing, thinking or being a certain thinking.

Providential - coming from God.

Illusion - a false image created by visual trickery.

Propaganda - biased information used to promote a political point of view.



Comprehension Questions

1. Why was James II such an unpopular king in England?
2. What did the Seven Bishops do in June 1688?
3. What did William bring with him to England in November 1688?
4. How did the 'Bill of Rights' limit William's power?
5. Why was 1688-89 called the 'Glorious Revolution' by some people in England?

