

Module 5: Examining the World to Discover Truth

Topic 2 Content: "Roundheads" and "Cavaliers"

Introduction

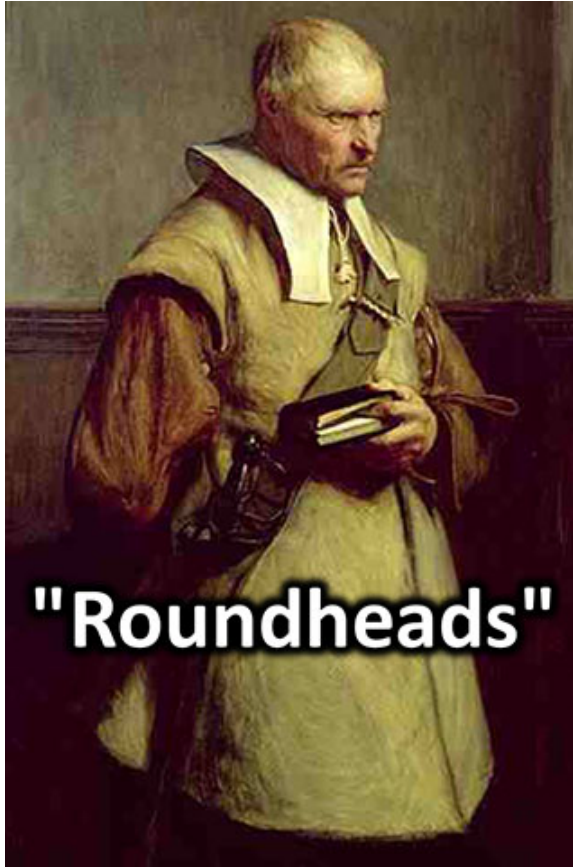


The turbulent events between the English Civil War and the Restoration had a meaningful impact on the lives and perspectives of the English people at the time. In this topic, you will read poetry by writers who came from both political camps. Hover your cursor over the two sides of the political upheaval to learn more about the "Roundheads" and the "Cavaliers." As you review these two groups of political interests, keep in mind that many people of the lower classes did not get to choose sides, especially when they were forced on pain of death to fight in battle. In other words, if they refused to join the battle, they would be killed by either the Parliamentarians or Royalists who threatened them.

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"Roundheads"



The Parliamentarians

The term *Parliamentarian* describes a person who favored government rule by the Parliament and rejected the authority of traditional monarchs. English Puritans at this time were largely Parliamentarian, and they joined Presbyterians, Anglicans, and people of other religious groups in opposing the reigning king.

Because some Puritans shaved their heads or wore their hair shortly cropped and flat against the head, the term "Roundhead" came to refer derisively to Parliamentarians in general. While the stereotypical image of a "Roundhead" features not only the hairstyle but also plain clothing, most Parliamentarians did not fit perfectly into this mold. In fact, Oliver Cromwell himself wore his hair at a medium length.

One of the most famous Parliamentarians was John Milton, author of the epic classic *Paradise Lost* and avid supporter of Oliver Cromwell. Another important Parliamentarian was Andrew Marvell, a writer, politician, and close friend of John Milton.

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"Cavaliers"



The Royalists

The term *Royalist* describes a person who supported the concept of a king's divine right to rule and pledged allegiance to the reigning monarch. Royalists were typically conservative Protestants or Catholics, and Royalist officers tended to be upper-class young men in their early thirties.

When Royalists were dubbed "Cavaliers" by their Parliamentary opponents, it was meant as a derogatory, or insulting, term. Unlike the "Roundheads" however, the "Cavaliers" soon embraced their new title. Today they are most associated with their long hair and stylish clothing of heeled boots, lace cuffs, and floppy hats with broad brims and large, wispy feathers. However, in their time they were associated with their political and social behavior, criticized by opponents as selfish, godless, or nonchalant.

Some famous "Cavalier" writers remembered today include the poets Sir John Suckling, Richard Lovelace, and Robert Herrick.

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