

# The Royal Prisoner

## Introduction

This programme has three main components: a classroom introduction, a castle-based activity, and a classroom conclusion. It takes at least 1½ hours for one class to work through this basic programme. To it can be added a museum-based activity and/or a costume session, but you will need to make a longer visit. The programme works best if you can bring one class at a time, as this allows us to be flexible over timing. However, it is possible to organise a programme for two classes simultaneously, if you allow two hours and stick rigidly to timings.

## Aims

The visit is an opportunity to find out about Charles I's imprisonment at the castle and how he tried, and failed, to escape. This may be only a minor episode of the Civil War conflict, but it is an episode that has been recorded in enough detail to communicate the hopes, pleasures, fears and anxieties of real people facing real important issues. The use of the castle site and museum displays links the event with some of the evidence that survives. The activity makes use of map-reading, observation and problem-solving skills.

## Preparation

It is best if a class comes to the activity knowing nothing of the king's imprisonment - and especially nothing of Firebrace's escape plans. Ideally, the class should have reached the point of Royalist defeat and the king's surrender in their Civil War studies, but this is not essential; the activity stands on its own to some extent. Please brief any helpers you bring so that they don't prematurely reveal any escape plans and their outcome.

The ability to use a simple plan would be helpful - though escape routes can also be discussed using an aerial picture of the castle. Sketch-plans for use during the visit will be provided.

## Programme

The classroom introduction begins with a look at Civil War armour. The rest of this session deals with the king's imprisonment and the problems involved in trying to escape. Using this information and their observations during a tour of the castle, pupils work in pairs to devise an escape plan. Back in the classroom, their plans are discussed and compared with Firebrace's plan. The programme ends with an explanation of how Firebrace's plan went wrong.



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## Follow-up

Write out escape plans, to be submitted to the king.

Write entries in their diaries, for 21 March 1648, for the king, Firebrace, and Worsley or Osborne, explaining what they did the previous night and their personal view of it.

Use the *Charles in Captivity* documents pack sent to your school in April 1994. The code letters and the newsletter were all written after his first attempt to escape. What do they tell us about the king's imprisonment and the network of royalists prepared to help him?

Devise a board game based on the king's imprisonment. It could involve getting the king out, or getting a message smuggled in or out of the castle.

## Visit arrangements

You will need to book free admission to the castle, the use of the Education Room, with English Heritage at Osborne House (tel: 280201).

English Heritage have important safety regulations which are printed in their 'Free Educational Visits' booklet: **The ratio of teachers or other adult supervisors to pupils must be at least 1 : 15. Group leaders must take responsibility for their group. Remember that there are steps, narrow walls and steep drops, which can be dangerous. Teachers must stress this to children before the visit, and ensure that they are closely supervised at all times while on site. Check with your LEA about insurance and Health and Safety requirements.**

Please make sure that all adults are well briefed on the programme, the purpose of the visit, and supervision responsibilities. Remind children that the castle is exposed and can be surprisingly cold and windy; children need to have adequate clothing and appropriate footwear.