

Unit 3. Why was Magna Carta issued in 1215?

Class activity: King John on trial

The classroom will be transformed into a courtroom, where pupils (in groups) will assume the role of the rebel barons to sit in judgement on King John. Using source extracts, each group will draw up a list of charges against King John. They will then report these to the rest of the class. The class will then use their charges to draw up their own mini version of Magna Carta.

Notes: In order to give each group's Magna Carta an authentic appearance, as though they are written on parchment like the original document, the paper used for them can be stained with the juice from cold, damp teabags and left to dry before the lesson takes place.

<p>1. Source: A description in <i>The Flowers of History</i> by Roger of Wendover of the fate of Matilda de Briouze and her son.</p> <p>'In this year [1210]... the noblewoman Matilda, wife of William de Briouze, and her son and heir William... who had been imprisoned at Windsor by order of the English king, died of starvation in that place.'</p>	<p>Charges against King John</p>
<p>2. Source: A description in <i>The Flowers of History</i> by Roger of Wendover of a military campaign led by King John.</p> <p>'About Whitsuntide in this same year [1205], King John assembled a large army as if he was about to cross overseas and, although the Archbishop of Canterbury and many others dissuaded him from it, he ordered a large fleet to be collected at Portsmouth; he afterwards embarked with only a small company on 15th July and put to sea... but, changing his purpose, on the</p>	<p>Charges against King John</p>

<p>third day [after he set off] he landed at Studland near Warham [in England]. On his return he took an immense sum of money from the earls, barons, knights and religious men, accusing them of refusing to accompany him to the continent.'</p>	
<p>3. Source: An entry in royal government records concerning marriage.</p> <p>'Richard de Lek offers [to give] the lord king 80 marks [a sum of money] to have the widow of Stephen de Falconbridge as his wife, with her inheritance and dowry.' [This entry was then crossed through because the widow later offered the king £100 for the right to remain unmarried]</p>	<p>Charges against King John</p>
<p>4. Source: An entry in royal government records concerning widows.</p> <p>'Alice, countess of Warwick, gives £1,000 and ten palfreys that she may remain a widow for as long as she pleases and that the king shall not compel her to marry.'</p>	<p>Charges against King John</p>
<p>5. Source: Entries in royal government records concerning children whose fathers had died.</p> <p>'Philip FitzRobert offers to the lord king £200, 100 bacon hogs and 100 cheeses to have in custody the land of Yvo de Mumby and his heir until the heir be of age [is an adult] and ought to marry.'</p> <p>'Gundreda, widow of Geoffrey Huse offers to the lord king 200 marks [a sum of money] to have the custody of Geoffrey [junior] his son and heir, with all his land.'</p>	<p>Charges against King John</p>

<p>Source: An entry in royal government records concerning the king.</p> <p>'Peter son of William of Derby offers to the lord king 40 marks and one palfrey [a horse]... to have the king's goodwill.'</p>	<p>Charges against King John</p>
<p>Source: A description in the Annals of Waverley Abbey, describing the events of 1215.</p> <p>'In this year [1215] a great discord arose between the king of England and the barons... for in the time of his father and more especially in his own time [the free customs and liberties conceded by previous kings] had been corrupted and diminished. For some [people] had been disinherited without judgment of their peers; some he had condemned to a cruel death... and so instead of law there was tyrannical will.'</p>	<p>Charges against King John</p>