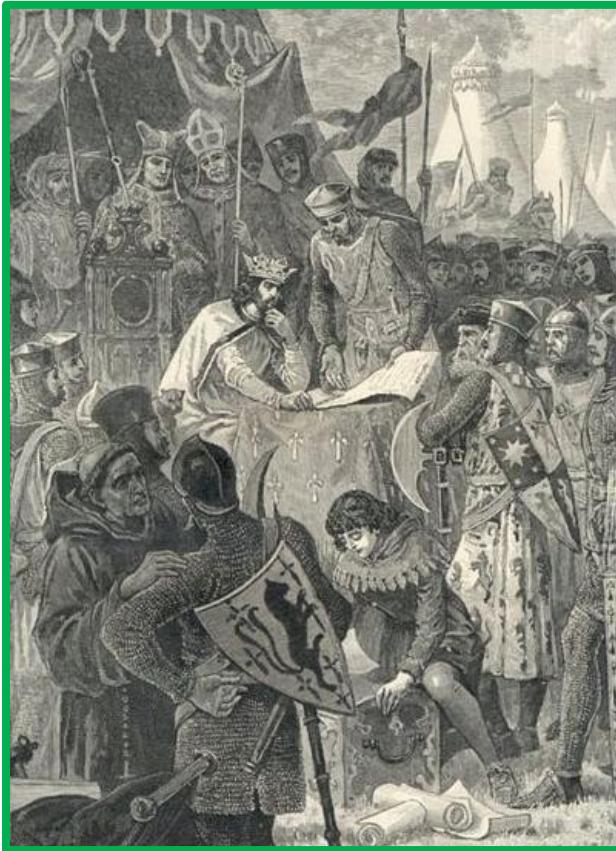


THE MAGNA CARTA



After King Richard the Lionheart died in battle during the Crusades in April, 1199, his younger brother John became the new King of England. Over the early years of his reign, a combination of higher taxes and unsuccessful wars led many English barons to become upset with King John. Barons were the wealthy landowners in the Feudal System who provided soldiers for the king.

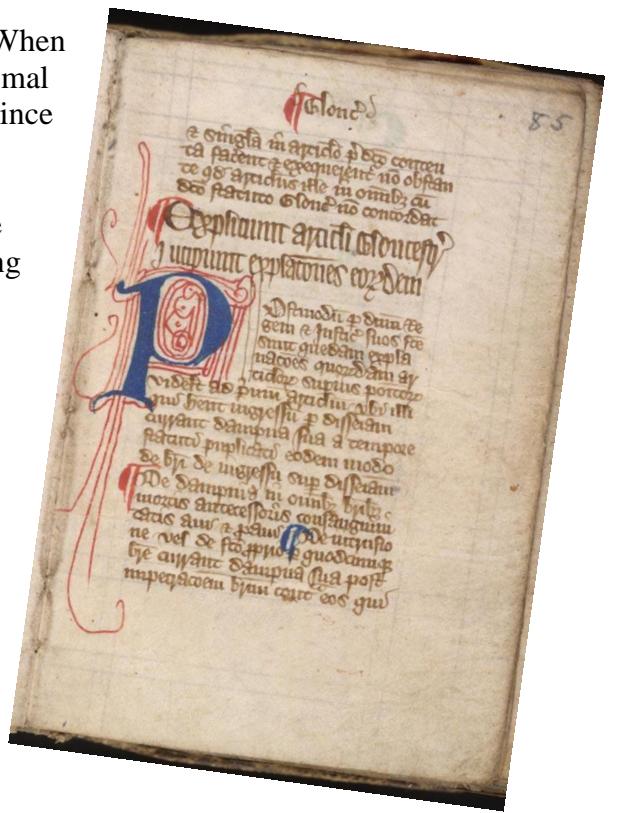
In this age, a King had to be strong. Kings were expected to protect their people, maintain law and order and ensure that people were treated fairly. In return for this, the barons and the rest of the country would serve the King.

King John failed to do this. He was often rude to people, spent money on wars that he never won and wanted higher taxes than many of his citizens could afford. The baron's didn't know what John was likely to do next. He was very unpredictable, and that could only mean trouble in Medieval Times.

Eventually, England's barons were fed up with King John. When compared to his heroic older brother, John seemed like a dismal king. Many barons even thought that John had murdered Prince Arthur, Richard's son, so that he would be king.

The barons believed that John would continue his expensive wars against France and raise taxes on them. To prevent King John from doing as he pleased, the barons got together and drafted the Magna Carta. This set of rules that England's kings would have to obey protected the rights of the barons and limited the king's power. It was sealed under oath by King John at Runnymede, on the bank of the River Thames near Windsor, England on June 15, 1215.

The document was an important part of the process that led eventually to constitutional law and the rights of all citizens. Within days of signing it, however, King John was ignoring its rules and complaining that he had been forced to sign it. Still, several of its clauses remain part of English law to this day and it remains a symbol that even rulers are bound by the law.



Name _____

THE MAGNA CARTA

Directions: After reading about the Magna Carta, answer the questions below in complete sentences.

1. Why were England's barons angry with King John?

2. What did the barons hope the Magna Carta would do?

3. What evidence does the article provide that John was not a very good king?

4. What can you infer from the text about King Richard the Lionheart?

5. What do you think John's reaction to the Magna Carta was? Explain your answer.

6. What connection to America's government does the Magna Carta have?

THE MAGNA CARTA

Directions: After reading about the Magna Carta, answer the questions below in complete sentences.

1. Why were England's barons angry with King John?

England's barons were upset with King John because he was raising taxes higher than many could afford and continually losing wars with France. He was also rude and unpredictable.

2. What did the barons hope the Magna Carta would do?

England's barons hoped that the Magna Carta would force King John to work with them to determine tax rates and the rules of England.

3. What evidence does the article provide that John was not a very good king?

The test described how a Medieval King needed to be strong and John was not this way. He was rude and unpredictable when barons needed him to be strong and steady.

4. What can you infer from the text about King Richard the Lionheart?

You can infer from the text that Richard the Lionheart was brave, both because of his name, the fact that he died fighting the Crusades, and that he is described as heroic.

5. What do you think John's reaction to the Magna Carta was? Explain your answer.

Open to many possible student answers provided they support their response with evidence from the text.

6. What connection to America's government does the Magna Carta have?

Open to many possible student answers provided they support their response with evidence from the text. They should recognize the rule of law, limits on the president's power, and how the president must work with Congress as connections to the Magna Carta.

