

The Magna Carta

Name: _____ points: + ___/20 grade: _____

In 1215, King John of England issued the **Magna Carta**, a Latin phrase for the Great Charter. He had faced a rebellion by the English barons. He also had failed in foreign policies and had heavily taxed the citizens. The Magna Carta was a document requiring that he and all future rulers would be under a set of laws. The Magna Carta was issued again in 1216, 1217 and 1225 with some changes. Later, English citizens looked on this document as the basis for the English system of common law.

In 1100, Henry I had issued a charter which would have limited taxation and other abuses of power currently practiced. However, he didn't follow the rules of the charter. The barons didn't have enough power to enforce the violations. Later, the barons could gain more power when the king needed money to fund the **Crusades**, an expedition to the Holy Land to free Jerusalem from its captors. The king also needed money to gain the release of Henry's brother, Richard I, who had been captured by the king of Germany during the Third Crusade.

Richard I had been king before Henry I and had died in 1199. His brother John had a rival for the throne in his nephew Arthur. John became king after probably murdering Arthur. A feud with Pope Innocent III damaged John's reputation and popularity. Pope Innocent III excommunicated John from the Catholic Church. He was the first English king to be placed under **excommunication**. Excommunication means that the pope declared that John was no longer a member of the Catholic Church and could not participate in the religious ceremonies.

After a defeat by the French in 1213, King John tried to demand money from the barons who hadn't been involved in supporting him in this war. The **Archbishop of Canterbury**, an official of the Catholic Church in England, brought the barons together to put pressure on John to give in to their demands. Civil war occurred when the negotiations weren't going anywhere. On June 15, 1215, John accepted the terms of the barons at Runnymede near the River Thames. This document was called the Articles

of the Barons. In four days, an official version of this document, called the Magna Carta, was signed.

The Magna Carta failed to bring about peace, but in 1216, after John's death, the advisors to John's successor, Henry III, removed the troublesome parts of the document and reissued it. After another version in 1217, the 1225 'version' was called the true final one.

The Magna Carta was written in Latin. It was the first constitution written in Europe. For many centuries, the rights were given only to the upper classes in England. However, in 1628, the Petition of Right was passed and in 1679, the Habeas Corpus Act. These documents brought to the forefront two of the 63 clauses in the Magna Carta. Clause 39 stated that 'no free man shall be imprisoned or dispossessed except by the lawful judgment of his peers or by the law of the land.' Clause 40 stated 'to no one will we sell, to no one will we deny or delay right of justice.' These two clauses were very important in future laws in England and America.

In 1776, when American patriots decided to demand freedom from Britain, they looked at the Magna Carta as a reference document. Traces of the Magna Carta can be seen in the Bill of Rights and in the United States Constitution, especially in the Fifth Amendment. 'Nor shall any citizens be deprived of life, liberty or property without due process of law.' This amendment sounds very similar to Clause 39 of the Magna Carta. Many state constitutions of the United States have borrowed and use similar phrasing which goes back to the Magna Carta.

1) Which of the following is the meaning of the word 'excommunication?'

- A:** Writing letters to a friend
- B:** Throwing someone out of a church
- C:** Getting rid of an infectious disease
- D:** Not wanting to keep in touch with another person

2) Which of the following kings wrote the Magna Carta?

A: Henry I

B: Richard I

C: Henry III

D: John

3) In which of the following years was the Magna Carta written?

A: 1215

B: 1229

C: 1199

D: 1100

4) In which of the following languages was the Magna Carta written?

A: Latin

B: English

C: French

D: Spanish

5) Which of the following is a true statement?

A: The Magna Carta was the second constitution in Europe.

B: Parts of the United States Constitution are based on the Magna Carta.

C: Both a and b

D: The Archbishop of Canterbury lived in France.

6) Which of the following was king just before John?

A: Henry I

B: Arthur

C: Henry II

D: Richard I

7.)The Magna Carta was a document requiring that he and all future rulers would ?

A: be able to take citizen's property

B: be able to take citizen's land

C:be able to overrule government decisions

D:be under a set of laws.

8.)The **Crusades** were an expedition to the Holy Land to free _____ from its captors.

A:Mecca

B:Medina

C:Jerusalem

D: Rome

9.)The Magna Carta failed to bring about peace, but in 1216, after John's death, the advisors to John's successor, _____, removed the troublesome parts of the document and reissued it.

A:Henry III

B: Arthur

C:Pope Innocent III

D: Richard I

10.)In _____, when American patriots decided to demand freedom from Britain, they looked at the Magna Carta as a reference document.

A:1775

B:1770

C:1776

D:1790