

KS3 HISTORY

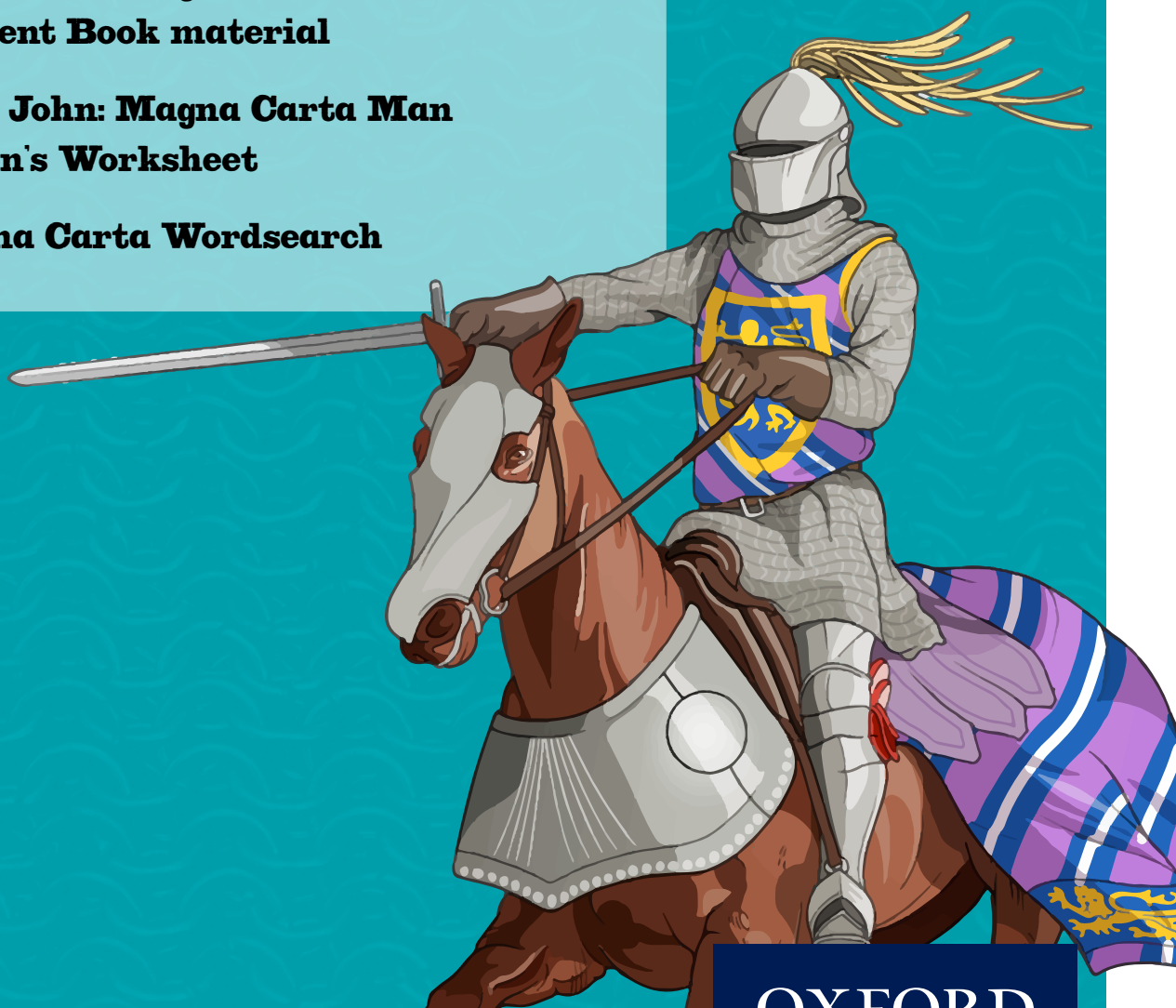
by Aaron Wilkes

Third Edition

FREE Magna Carta resource pack

This pack contains...

- **How great was the Great Charter? An article for teachers by Aaron Wilkes**
- **King John: Magna Carta Man Student Book material**
- **King John: Magna Carta Man Baron's Worksheet**
- **Magna Carta Wordsearch**



OXFORD

Summer 2015

How great was the Great Charter?

**KS3
HISTORY**
by Aaron Wilkes
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This year marks the 800th anniversary of the sealing of Magna Carta, or 'Great Charter'. A new £2 coin, issued by the Royal Mint, commemorates this event. It shows King John holding a quill pen in reference to him signing the document... but the king didn't sign the Charter at all, he set his mark (or royal seal) in wax, which was then attached to it.



Aaron Wilkes, Castle High School

As expected, and the commemorative coin is an example of this, all sorts of events, articles and news features have been scheduled this year to celebrate this significant event. But why is Magna Carta such a significant document? What relevance has it in today's world? And why is it important for educators to ensure that Magna Carta is taught in our classrooms?

What is significance?

To my knowledge, there's never been an absolute definition of what 'significance' really means. So determining what makes a 'significant' event, individual, development or issue can be problematic. Several 'models' for significance have been suggested (see Christine Counsell or Rob Philips, for example) and, in my experience, teachers will generally go with a 'best fit' approach and define it themselves.

Personally, I go with the following five criteria when assessing historical significance:

- Was it important at the time?
- How deeply have people's lives been affected?
- How many lives have been affected?
- For how long have people's lives been affected?
- Is it still relevant in today's world?

So, with this in mind, how do we assess Magna Carta?



A significant document?

I think it's fair to say that the English lords who raised an army, cornered King John and asked him to sign an agreement limiting his power had no idea of the long-term impact of their actions. And let's get one thing straight – the barons certainly weren't acting on behalf of the wider population or 'the people'... they were looking after themselves and their kind! It's true that the barons hoped Magna Carta would have a long-term future for them, and preserve these rights for their children and their children's children. We must remember that Magna Carta listed the rights for free men (people like the barons themselves), not for peasants – and as most people were peasants at the time, they got little out of it! So the barons were acting in their own self-interest... but this self-interest would have a major impact on all our interests in years to come.

We must remember though, that Magna Carta was significant at the time, mainly due to the fact that it introduced the idea that there are certain rules and regulations that even kings must accept... and that they couldn't do whatever they wanted! For example, Article (or Chapter) 39 states that 'No free man shall be arrested or imprisoned... or exiled or in any way victimised... except by lawful judgement of his peers or by the law of the land.' So, this short statement actually establishes the principle of the 'rule of law' in this country and protects individuals from a ruler treating his subjects in an arbitrary fashion.

Teaching about Magna Carta

I've taught students about Magna Carta in all sorts of ways, using all sorts of techniques – and it's been included in several schemes in a variety of ways. I've taught it as part of a topic on King John himself, as part of the scheme called 'Who Rules', as part of a 'Power through the ages' theme and even as one of a series of lessons on 'Significant events in British history'. And it's a relatively straightforward topic in which to find a 'hook', too – there's always a soap opera with a character who is hoping for a 'fair trial'!

But, wherever and however it's taught in your scheme, I think it's equally as important to stress to students not only the relevance of Magna Carta, but the irrelevance of lots of the clauses contained in the document. Indeed, the vast majority of clauses are no longer on the statute book – and it's certainly not this single document that includes all our rights and all the laws of the land (as some students think). In my opinion, the key to teaching Magna Carta successfully is to emphasise what the document went on to inspire.

Indeed, this idea of the 'rule of law' and the guarantee of certain rights was the inspiration for several declarations in relation to human rights and 'proper' government. For example, Magna Carta was cited in the early 1600s during Parliament's squabbles with Charles I, and it clearly inspired the Bill of Rights in 1689. On a global scale, Magna Carta's message that kings must rule according to law played its part in late eighteenth-century revolutionary France, and the US Bill of Rights of 1791 includes a clause directly derived from Magna Carta, promising that 'no person shall be... deprived of life, liberty or property without due process of law'. Words to that affect appear in Articles 9, 10 and 11 of the 1948 UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, too.

So, in terms of those five criteria for historical significance, I think it's fair to say that Magna Carta is a significant document. But just as important is Magna Carta's story – how it came to be sealed at Runnymede in June 1215; John's subsequent attempts to wriggle out of it; his son's eventual acceptance of it and the establishment of the first Parliament. And it's this story, in conjunction with the fact that Magna Carta is still such an important and relevant document after 800 years, that means that the topic of 'Magna Carta' should always take its place in any comprehensive scheme of work in all our schools.

Best wishes

Aaron L. Wilkes.

Aaron Wilkes is Head of History at Castle High School and author of [KS3 History](#). Magna Carta is covered in the Student Book, Teacher Handbook and Kerboodle for *Invasion, Plague and Murder: Britain 1066–1509*, from Aaron's KS3 History course.

Other Free Magna Carta related resources from *Invasion, Plague and Murder: Britain 1066–1509* include:

King John: Magna Carta Man Student Book material

King John: Magna Carta Man: Barons Worksheet

Magna Carta Wordsearch

To find out more about KS3 History by Aaron Wilkes, visit www.oxfordsecondary.co.uk/ks3history.

6.4A Where did our Parliament come from?

Kings had always asked rich, powerful landowners (called barons, earls, lords, and nobles) for advice on things like raising money or going to war. When kings met with advisors it was often called a **Great Council**. Sometimes there were arguments at these meetings... but the king nearly always got his own way!

This all changed in 1215 when King John ruled. The rich landowners rebelled and forced him to sign the Magna Carta, which said that the king couldn't do whatever he wanted! However, King John died in 1216 and his son became King Henry III when he was only nine years old. So what happened next? Would young Henry also agree to follow the rules laid down in Magna Carta... or would he just ignore them and rule however he wished? And how is all this linked to **Parliament** and the way Britain is ruled today?

Mission Objectives

- Examine why King Henry III argued with the barons.
- Discover the origins of Britain's Parliament.

The boy king

To begin with, young King Henry regularly met with the Great Council and took advice. But Henry didn't stay a boy forever – and when he got older, and got married, he began to ignore advice and ran things how he wanted. As you might imagine, this annoyed members of the Great Council. The cartoon below sums up their complaints.



Enough is enough!

By 1258 the barons had had enough. They were fed up with high taxes and the fact that Henry listened more to his wife than to them. So the barons threatened to fight King Henry unless he agreed to meet up to discuss things. At a meeting in Oxford, the barons showed Henry a document called 'The Provisions of Oxford' (see **Source B**). As you can see by reading the document, if Henry agreed to this, the barons would have a lot more power... but Henry felt he had no choice – and signed it.

However, the king's son, 19-year-old Prince Edward, was furious that his father had been treated this way... and swore to get revenge!

Be a Top Historian

Top historians know that some things **develop slowly over time**. Parliament is a good example of how something that began in medieval times evolved over several centuries into the important body that it is today.



SOURCE A: This picture shows Henry III meeting with Parliament. By 1258 the barons were utterly fed up!

The Provisions of Oxford

- The king cannot make decisions without the Great Council's agreement.
- The Great Council should choose the king's main advisors.
- A Parliament consisting of fifteen members of the Great Council, plus twelve other barons, has to meet at least three times a year.

Signed,

Henry III and the Great Council

SOURCE B: The Provisions of Oxford was signed in 1258. The word 'parliament' is from the French word 'parler', which means 'to talk'.

Wise Up Words

Great Council Parliament

Work

- Write a sentence or two to explain the following terms:
 - Great Council
 - Provisions of Oxford
- Make a list of things that made Henry unpopular with his barons.
 - Which of these things do you think upset the barons the most? Make another list, putting them in order. Start with what you think annoyed the barons the most.
 - Can you connect the different problems in any way? Explain how some of them are linked.

6.3 King John: Magna Carta man
Barons Worksheet

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HISTORY
by Aaron Wilkes

Imagine you are a baron in England in 1214. Write a letter to King John explaining why you're angry with him. Use the framework below to help organize your letter:

My Castle,
Herefordshire,
2 February 1214

Tower of London,
London

Dear King John,

I am writing to tell you how angry I am! I think you have made so many mistakes!
Your first mistake was...

Another mistake you have made is...

I think the biggest mistake you made is...

I think this because...

I am really happy about you decision to sign the new Magna Carta because...

My favourite rule is...

I think the new parliament will be good for England because...

Yours,

Hungry for More?

Can you find out where the Magna Carta is currently? Why are sources like the Magna Carta important to modern historians?

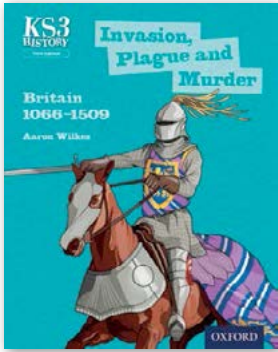
Magna Carta
Wordsearch

800
years of
Magna
Carta

- 1 King John ☐
- 2 Magna Carta ☐
- 3 Taxes ☐
- 4 Barons ☐
- 5 Knights ☐
- 6 Merchants ☐
- 7 Fair trial ☐
- 8 Church ☐
- 9 France ☐
- 10 Pope ☐
- 11 Royal Seal ☐
- 12 Democracy ☐
- 13 Rules ☐
- 14 Nobles ☐

S	H	F	R	U	L	E	S	S	A	L
N	C	R	T	R	T	W	T	T	A	D
O	R	A	D	T	R	N	R	I	S	E
R	U	N	T	A	A	A	R	T	E	M
A	H	C	C	H	C	T	H	P	L	O
B	C	E	C	A	R	G	O	T	B	C
T	E	R	N	I	I	P	N	R	O	R
A	E	G	A	N	E	E	T	O	N	A
M	A	F	K	T	A	X	E	S	I	C
M	L	A	E	S	L	A	Y	O	R	Y
N	H	O	J	G	N	I	K	D	M	N

Hint:
The words
might be hidden
diagonally or
backwards



To find out more visit www.oxfordsecondary.co.uk/ks3history