



## Magna Carta: Lesson Plan

Topic	
<p>The Magna Carta was signed between King John of England and rebel barons in 1215 at Runnymede. Its clauses prevented unreasonable taxation, guaranteed the right to fair trial, ensured property rights as well as other privileges, protections, and powers for barons. Although the charter was meant to cause peace, it couldn't stop English civil war from erupting. While it failed as a peace treaty, the document has been cited by many to be the founding of modern democracy, influencing such documents as the United States Bill of Rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.</p>	
Possible subjects/classes	Time needed
Government, History, Politics, Philosophy	45-60 minutes
Video link:	
<a href="https://academy4sc.org/topic/magna-carta-a-major-first-step/">https://academy4sc.org/topic/magna-carta-a-major-first-step/</a>	
Objective: <i>What will students know/be able to do at the end of class?</i>	
<p>Students will be able to...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Explain why and how Magna Carta came about.</li><li>• Identify the ramifications of the Magna Carta.</li><li>• Explain how the Magna Carta has affected modern democracy.</li></ul>	
Key Concepts & Vocabulary	
Democracy, treaty, Bill of Rights, Universal Declaration of Human Rights	
Materials Needed	
Worksheet, printouts of the transcribed Magna Carta	
Before you watch	



Read off the following excerpts from the Magna Carta one at a time. After each quote, have students guess what document they believe it's from. If students are stuck, have them instead list what rights/rules/laws the quotes sound similar to. Have students list their reasoning.

Quote 1: "No free man shall be seized or imprisoned, or stripped of his rights or possessions, or outlawed or exiled, or deprived of his standing in any other way, nor will we proceed with force against him, or send others to do so, except by the lawful judgment of his equals or by the law of the land."

Quote 2: "We will appoint as justices, constables, sheriffs, or other officials, only men that know the law of the realm and are minded to keep it well."

Quote 3: "To no one will we sell, to no one deny or delay right or justice."

Quote 4: "As soon as peace is restored, we will remove from the kingdom all the foreign knights, bowmen, their attendants, and the mercenaries that have come to it, to its harm, with horses and arms."

The point of this exercise is to show how deeply the Magna Carta has influenced not only important documents but daily rights. Therefore, don't correct students should they misattribute the above quotes. Rather, ask for their reasoning behind their logic. Only once you are wrapping up discussion should you reveal the correct attribution.

#### While you watch

Complete the attached Worksheet.

#### After you watch/discussion questions

1. What are some daily protected rights you take for granted? Do they share similarities with those from the Magna Carta?
2. Can you spot three passages from the Declaration of Independence and the corresponding lines from the Magna Carta that influenced them?
3. What are some other documents that you think the Magna Carta has influenced?

#### Activity Ideas



- Find a transcript of the Magna Carta here: <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/magna-carta-1215>. You could have students compare clauses with other documents like the Bill of Rights and pick out what is similar and different.
- More great resources that could be used for activities available here: <https://www.bl.uk/magna-carta>. Depending on what class this is being used in and what time period is being discussed, the Magna Carta can be used to talk about the history of imperialism, various human rights movements, issues related to class and gender in various historical documents, etc.
- After reading the Magna Carta, ask students to develop a similar document to address some of the biggest issues facing democracy today.

#### Sources/places to learn more

1. Chakrabarti, Shami. "Magna Carta and human rights." British Library, 13 March 2015. [www.bl.uk](http://www.bl.uk).
2. History.com Editors, "Magna Carta." HISTORY, A&E Television Networks, 20 September 2019. [www.history.com](http://www.history.com).
3. Howard, A.E. Dick. *Magna Carta: Text and Commentary, Revised Edition*. University Press of Virginia, 1998. ISBN: 0-8139-0121-9.
4. Magna Carta, 1215. Charter, Latin, British Library, Cotton MS Augustus ii.106. 15 June 1215, Runnymede. [www.bl.uk](http://www.bl.uk).
5. Stenton, Doris Mary. "Magna Carta." Encyclopædia Britannica, 31 July 2019. [www.britannica.com](http://www.britannica.com).