

Simon de Montfort assembly plan

Aim: To use the Simon de Montfort Stories from Parliament film to introduce the story of the UK's democratic past and present. This is of particular interest in 2015, when de Montfort's Parliament of 1265 will be 750 years old.

Background

The story of Simon de Montfort and the 1265 Parliament has had a strong influence on the development of England and later the UK as a democratic nation; and on the spread of Parliamentary democracy across the world.

Born out of a power struggle between the king and the barons, Simon de Montfort's Parliament represents a crucial step on the path to Parliamentary Democracy. For the first time, de Montfort's Parliament brought people from towns and cities together, an approach that can still be seen in the make-up of the current House of Commons today, where 650 Members from across the UK meet.

Host the assembly in three steps:

1. Introduce the story of Simon de Montfort by talking about broken promises. Point out that a promise is a kind of contract, an agreement on which all sides base their future actions. Say that a broken promise is the starting point for the story of Simon de Montfort and his role in the journey to parliamentary democracy. Show the Simon de Montfort film on the Parliament.uk/education website.
2. Reflect on the twists and turns of the historical journey to democracy underlining how the freedoms we enjoy today were brought about by promises that were broken, battles that were fought and war-lord barons looking after their land and money. Through this messy process an idea of government by the people for the people began to emerge and take hold. Ask

the group what they know about the House of Commons today. Draw out points such as: it is still based in London, it is made up of 650 members, all elected by the people in their local area (constituency), introduce the name of your own constituency and/or MP.

3. Conclude by saying that although it can be easy to take our democratic process for granted, it has been bought at great human cost over the years. Young or old it is our democracy - and yours to shape in the future. What could you do to be a part of it? – prepare to vote, start a campaign, speak to their local MP?