

Video Transcript: Simon de Montfort

(Music)

1. Narrator: Stories from Parliament: Simon de Montfort.
England 1263. It is 48 years since Magna Carta was sealed by King John. Now his son Henry is on the throne but tensions between the king and the barons continue. Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester, is married to the king's sister Eleanor. De Montfort is one of the most powerful men in England and he is angry.
Just five years earlier King Henry made a promise to de Montfort and the Barons in Oxford. Here he agreed to place the power of the kingdom under a council of 15 barons. De Montfort has heard that Henry plans to break this promise. Now he waits for news with his wife Lady Eleanor.
2. Simon de Montfort: Has the messenger come?
3. Eleanor: Not yet but I'm sure it is a false rumour my lord. King Henry made his promise.
4. Montfort: Eleanor your brother is desperate for money. The council have refused to raise taxes again, but it is rumoured he simply asks the sheriffs to find the money another way. He will do whatever it takes. His promises mean nothing.
5. Eleanor: But the council has said...

6. Montfort: The king does not listen to the council. The king is not listening to anyone. The agreements he made in Oxford mean nothing to him.
7. Eleanor: But he knows that the people will raise their voices in anger if he breaks his promise.
8. Montfort: The king cannot hear the voices of the people, however loud they shout. But one day I swear he will hear them. One day we will find a way to bring not just barons, but representatives of the people from all across the country and then the king will hear them speak and we will make him listen.

FX : Door knock. Door opens.

9. Messenger: My Lord news from London.
10. Montfort: Speak.

FX : Footsteps approaching.

11. Messenger: The promise is already broken.
12. Eleanor: My brother has gone against his word?
13. Messenger: Yes my lady.
14. Eleanor: Then my lord. You know what you have to do.
15. Montfort: I must march against the king your brother.
16. Eleanor: Yes.
17. Montfort: There will be war.
18. Eleanor: You are a better man than Henry. A stronger man. The people know that. They will follow you. The time is right, Simon. Fight the king and make him listen to the people.

FX : Drum beats.

19. Montfort: You! Take a message to Gilbert the Red. Tell him to call a meeting of the barons. Together we will raise an army and the king will hear our voice and feel our anger.

FX : Drums reach a crescendo. Then silence.

20. Narrator: London. The Earl of Clare, known as Gilbert the Red, has called a meeting of the barons. All are agreed that the time has come to stand against the king, but not all are sure that Simon de Montfort is the right man to lead a rebellion.
21. Baron 1: I have no love for de Montfort. They say he is only interested in securing his own wealth and power.
22. Baron 2: If de Montfort leads our army and defeats the king then who knows how much power he will seize for himself.
23. Baron 3: He's already married to the king's sister. Perhaps he believes that one day he could become king himself.
24. Baron 1: Gilbert the Red. What do you say?
25. Gilbert: Simon de Montfort must be our leader. Our soldiers admire him...and besides, the people love him.
26. Baron 2: The people! Who cares about the people?
27. Gilbert: De Montfort cares. He stands up for England and the people know it. That is why he will... that is why he must lead us.

FX : Fanfare trumpets, horse's hooves, marching.

28. Narrator: Spring 1264. De Montfort's army is on the move. On May the 14th they face the king's army at Lewes. The Bishop of Chichester visits the king trying to prevent a terrible battle.
29. Henry: Our army outnumbers his two to one. He will not beat us. Not today.
30. Bishop: Montfort is a strong leader.
31. Henry: Montfort is injured. I have been told that he cannot even ride a horse. How will he lead his men into battle with a broken leg?
32. Bishop: He will find a way to lead them your majesty and they will follow him.
33. Henry: And my men will follow me. Steward. More wine.

FX : Wine is poured.

34. Bishop: So what shall I tell Montfort?

35. Henry: Tell him to prepare to die.

(Music)

36. Narrator: The Battle of Lewes drags on but Simon de Montfort leads his troops well – he has given them a cause to fight for.

37. Montfort: We fight today so that the voice of England can be heard.

FX : Cheers

38. Montfort: And when we win this day our voices will ring out across the years so that Henry and every king and queen who follows him will hear us.

FX : Cheering troops, charging horses, trumpets, clash of steel on steel, cheers and cries of battle.

39. Narrator: De Montfort's men fight ferociously and destroy the king's army. Finally the king is captured and those of his men who are still alive and have not been seized flee the battlefield.

FX : The sounds of battle subside.

40. Eleanor: And so my lord. You have the king in your power. What happens now?

41. Montfort: A parliament my lady. That is what happens. We will make a new parliament and this time it will not be filled with barons and lords. This parliament will have representatives from every corner of England.

FX : Music under creates a bridge to: de Montfort's voice starts to echo and now he is in a huge space making a speech to a vast crowd.

42. Montfort: There will be knights from every county and citizens from towns and cities and these men will be chosen by the people. And when our new parliament speaks this time the king will listen.

FX : Cheering. Music.

43. Narrator: December the 14th 1264. The call goes out 'Choose two representatives and send them to London'. Simon de Montfort's Parliament doesn't last long and it is by no means perfect, but on 20th January 1265 when the representatives sit down together for the first time the country takes one more step on the long road to parliamentary democracy.

FX : Drums.