

Magna Carta assembly plan



Aim: To use the Magna Carta Stories from Parliament film to introduce the story of the UK's democratic past and present and in particular the rule of law. This is of particular interest in 2015, when Magna Carta will be 800 years old.

Background

Magna Carta has had a strong influence on the development of rights in England and later the UK; and has influenced the development of democratic rights across the world.

Sealed by King John in 1215, this important document became known as The Great Charter or, in Latin, Magna Carta. It contained sixty-three clauses which outlined universal rights – some are still in place today, including the right to a trial by jury – in 1215 this would have been a trial by your 'equals'. The clauses were revised over time and new versions were issued.

Host the assembly in three steps:

1. Arrange with colleagues beforehand that you will enter the assembly hall and tell them that you don't like where they are sitting and they should move! To really create a buzz, you could even take something from one of your colleagues – a handkerchief, a book or a pen for example, without asking – demand a fee for its return. You could also demand a 'tax' for the privilege of attending your assembly!
2. When the reaction has died down, explain that in the past Monarchs of England could behave in a similar way. But things started to change. And in 1215 an important document was sealed. Show the Magna Carta film by searching 'Emergence of Parliament' in the topics filter:
www.parliament.uk/education
3. Conclude that Magna Carta stated that no king was above the rule of law and set out some key rights. Ask them to reflect on the range of democratic bodies we now have to represent us and our rights - in Parliament where elected Members represent constituencies (areas of the UK), in local councils, in trades unions and devolved assemblies. You may even have your own democratic bodies fighting for school rights – for example a school council. Challenge the students to consider their involvement in democratic bodies and processes – what could they do to get involved or educate themselves about their rights? Prepare to vote, join their school council, start a local campaign or speak to their MP?