21st Century Magna Carta
KS2 & 3

Curriculum areas: Citizenship, History

Aim:
To consider the nature of Magna Carta and its legacy by supporting students to explore the clauses still in place today and consider what they would include in their own twenty-first century version. This is of particular interest in 2015, when the 800 year anniversary of the sealing of Magna Carta will be celebrated.

Included in this pack are several optional additional short exercises. To print only the 21st Century Magna Carta lesson plan, print pages 1-6.

Background
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 citizen’s rights. These were revised over time and new versions were issued.

In 1215 the rights included in Magna Carta only applied to specific groups of people. However they have influenced the development of universal rights in many countries.

Only three of the original clauses remain on the statute book, outlined below along with the overarching key principle of Magna Carta:

- **Key Principle:** Everyone, including the monarch, should obey the law of the land.

This is the most significant effect of Magna Carta as it put in writing for the first time the principle that the monarch was not above the law; in governing the country, the monarch must stick to the law.
- **Clause 1**: *The freedom of the Church of England to govern itself is guaranteed for all time.*

This meant that the monarch could not interfere with the running of the church; it could manage its own affairs. However, since the reformation the Monarch has been the Head of the Church of England.

- **Clause 13**: *Privileges given to the City of London and those of all other cities, boroughs, towns, and ports are guaranteed and cannot be changed by the monarch.*

This ensured that cities and other communities had their own local government and a say in how they are run within the law of the land.

- **Clauses 39 and 40**: *Anyone accused of a crime has the right to be tried by his equals.*

This will seem the most relevant to many people as they concern a fundamental right that confirms justice for every citizen regardless of rank or status. This clause is still invoked when there are discussions about changing or adapting the justice system.

A full modern translation of the three extant clauses can be found here: [www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-19761919](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-19761919)

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**Lesson Structure**

Introduce Magna Carta by showing the short video drama from the Stories from Parliament series. This can be viewed together at the beginning of the lesson in around seven minutes, or if you are short on time, students can watch from home online in advance. The film can be found by using the ‘Emergence of Parliament’ topic filter on [www.parliament.uk/education](http://www.parliament.uk/education)

To extend this lesson, having viewed the film, you could first complete one of the ‘Recall’, ‘Historical Viewpoints’ or ‘History Film Poster’ activities included in this pack, before moving on to this 21st Century Magna Carta activity. Each one can be used as quick fire activities to support recalling the key points of the story as part of a broader lesson, or can be extended into their own stand-alone lessons. The History Poster activity is also suitable for homework.
**Pop Quiz**

Having watched the film, test the student’s knowledge by asking the following questions which can be answered verbally or in writing, individually or in groups:

1. ‘Magna Carta’ is Latin for… (Great Charter)
2. Who was King at the time of Magna Carta? (King John)
3. Who were the Barons and why were they unhappy? (Local land owners. The king was taxing them heavily and stealing their lands)
4. Who became involved in the argument from the Church of England? (Stephen Langton Archbishop of Canterbury)
5. What did Robert Fitzwalter call his troops? (The Army of God)
6. How did King John react when he heard that the rebels had advanced towards London? (He continued to raise taxes believing that the people would support him)
7. Where was Magna Carta agreed? (Runnymede near Windsor)
8. When was Magna Carta agreed? (June 15th 1215)
9. How did King John endorse (show that he accepted) Magna Carta? (By placing his seal on the document)
10. How many clauses (rules) were in Magna Carta? (63)

**Discussion**

Having reinforced the key facts of the story, ask the class to share why they think Magna Carta is so important, drawing out the following:

- It established for the first time that the king is not above the law
- It gave rights to (a select group of) people including the right to a fair trial
- It gave limited rights to women (widows could not be forced to marry against their will)
- It was the start of a process that eventually led to democracy as we know it today

End by making the point that some parts of the charter are still in place even today, 800 years later!
Exercise: Creating a Magna Carta for the 21st Century

Hand out copies of the activity sheet in this pack, either one each or for using in small groups.

The first task is to put a tick or cross against the clauses (and the overall principle of the charter) to indicate if the student(s) agree that they should still be enforced. If the class is in groups, give them a short amount of time to discuss what the clauses mean and whether they agree.

Key points

Back as a whole class, use a show of hands to see who agreed or disagreed with each clause and take some feedback from around the room.

Remind the students that every UK citizen still has these rights and ask the class – if you could create three new ‘rights’ today that would last for the next 800 years, what would they be?

Their task now in their groups is to discuss and agree what rights they would choose to add to a 21st Century Magna Carta. Just like with the 1215 clauses, each will need careful consideration before accepting or rejecting.

Point out that the new clauses should concern important fundamental principles. Suggest some possible key areas for discussion – you can put these onto a white board as prompts if the groups get stuck in their discussions:

- Guaranteeing freedom of speech: whose and to what extent? Should there be any limits?
- The freedom of (or any limits) relating to use of the internet and social media
- Equality for different groups for example male and female rights and opportunities, and those relating to ethnic and cultural groups
- The right to free education/healthcare or other public service
- The right to vote for representatives in Parliament (democratic representation)

These are only suggestions. Students should explore any area that they feel is important to include in fundamental principles to be enshrined in a new Great Charter.

Students should consider:

- What would make the biggest difference to their lives and the lives of others?
- What would bring about the kind of society they would like to see?
- This is their opportunity to explore major change - encourage them to think radically!
Discussion

Once all smaller groups have agreed three clauses, come back together as a class. Each team must present their three clauses and their reasons for choosing them. You will find duplication around the room. Make a list of all the different clauses that come back to create one class 21st Century Magna Carta.

Evaluation

Looking at the list, are there any that people strongly feel should not be included – why? Or are there any big gaps – what would they add?

Extension or homework tasks

Take the story further by watching the Stories from Parliament Simon de Montfort episode, which follows de Montfort’s journey to setting up the 1265 Parliament, bringing together regional representatives for the first time. The film and resources are available online – www.parliament.uk/education

The 63 clauses of Magna Carta were pulled together in one document (included in this pack). The class could take their clauses and design their own document on paper or digitally, to reflect its modern nature. Who would they ask to ‘seal’ their Magna Carta?

As a homework task, students could write an account of the importance of Magna Carta, drawing out why it is considered such a crucial document. They should include a brief resume of the story covering why and how Magna Carta came about, before commenting on its importance and relevance today.

Alternatively students could prepare an election speech or create an election leaflet setting out their ideas for one or more of the 21st Century Magna Carta clauses to promote their big idea. How can they illustrate their idea with images and a snappy title and sub heading?

To extend this lesson further, having first viewed the film, you could first complete one of the ‘Recall’, ‘Historical Viewpoints’ or ‘History Film Poster’ activities included in this pack, before moving on to this 21st Century Magna Carta activity. Each one can be used as quick fire activities to support recalling the key points of the story as part of a broader lesson, or can be extended into their own stand-alone lessons. The History Poster activity is also suitable for homework.
### 21st Century Magna Carta

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Principle</th>
<th>1215 Magna Carta principles and clauses still in place today</th>
<th>Do you agree?</th>
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### 21st Century Magna Carta clauses – What would you add?

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Recall exercise

Aim:
To use the graphic novel artwork as an aid to recalling the key facts of the stories.

Background
The short films use specially commissioned artwork in a graphic novel style to bring the stories to life. We have provided these images in this pack which can be used to create storyboards, like a short cartoon strip, to be discussed or labelled to help students recap and retell the stories.

Exercise
Display or give out copies of the illustrations included at the end of this pack.

Go through each image asking key questions such as:

- Who are the characters in this scene?
- What are they doing?
- What attitudes do the characters have?
- What is the outcome of the scene?

If helpful give out copies of the scripts and refer students to appropriate sections.

Extension or homework task
Students can write brief captions for each scene explaining what is happening. They can also add speech and thought bubbles to give more detail, creating their own versions of the dialogue or using appropriate extracts from the scripts.
History posters

Aim:
To relate the events in the Magna Carta film to modern democracy through the medium of film-style posters.

Background
The activity can use a variety of visual media as appropriate and be undertaken individually or in small groups.

Finding the essence
Students sum up the importance of the story in a title and single sentence like a film title and tag line. You’re looking for things like:

- Magna Carta – the rule of law begins
- King John – even a king must obey the law
- 1215 – step one of our democratic journey

Creating posters
Working individually or in small groups students work on their slogans, refining them to ensure that they are short, snappy and memorable. If they can’t choose one title, they can use a democratic vote to decide.

If you are running this session as a full lesson, develop the film metaphor by asking them to work on film posters of their chosen story using their tag line and appropriate images. They can use libraries or the internet to research images, or use illustrations from this pack.

The elements of the poster should include: The title, tag line, one or more powerful images and an additional line of text about democracy today

The last line should cause people to consider the importance of Magna Carta such as: Our rights were born on just one piece of parchment

Extension or homework task
Students write a short personal reflection under the heading ‘Why this story matters’. Alternatively you may want to turn this on its head and ask ‘Does this story matter?’ and encourage students, as many historians do, to argue that Magna Carta plays a limited role in this story and its impact may have been overestimated.
Curriculum links

Stories from Parliament films and lessons can be used with a variety of ages, but have been specifically designed to support the KS3 History curriculum in its broad aims that students,

- ‘…should extend and deepen their chronologically secure knowledge and understanding of British, local and world history, so that it provides a well-informed context for wider learning. Pupils should identify significant events, make connections, draw contrasts, and analyse trends within periods and over long arcs of time.’
- ‘…should pursue historically valid enquiries including some they have framed themselves, and create relevant, structured and evidentially supported accounts in response. They should understand how different types of historical sources are used rigorously to make historical claims and discern how and why contrasting arguments and interpretations of the past have been constructed.’
- ‘…gain and deploy a historically grounded understanding of abstract terms such as ‘empire’, ‘civilisation’, ‘parliament’ and ‘peasantry’
- ‘…understand the methods of historical enquiry, including how evidence is used rigorously to make historical claims.’

The story of Magna Carta film and resources has been created to specifically meet the following criterion in the Subject Content:

- the development of Church, state and society in Medieval Britain 1066-1509

And these non-statutory examples:

- the struggle between Church and crown
- Magna Carta and the emergence of Parliament


They also support the Citizenship curriculum in its aim that pupils should be taught:

- the development of the political system of democratic government in the United Kingdom, including the roles of citizens, Parliament and the monarch
- the operation of Parliament, including voting and elections, and the role of political parties
- the precious liberties enjoyed by the citizens of the United Kingdom
