

# The Magna Carta

King John of England oppressed his subjects and raised taxes to record levels. In response, his nobles forced John to sign the Magna Carta in 1215. It guaranteed certain basic rights to certain classes of people. Over time, all English people claimed these rights. Here are some provisions of the document.

1. The English Church shall be free and enjoy her rights and her liberties untouched. . . . We [the king, representing royal authority] have also granted to all the free men of Our kingdom, for Us and Our heirs forever, all the liberties herein, to have and to hold to them and their heirs of Us and Our heirs.
12. No tax shall be imposed in our kingdom unless by common counsel of the kingdom. . . .
13. The City of London shall enjoy all her ancient liberties and freedom from customs duties. . . .
14. To obtain the common counsel of the kingdom concerning assessment of taxes, the king will summon the high clergy, great barons, and fief-holders to meet on a fixed day and place. . . .
20. A free man shall pay only a small fine for a small fault, and for a great crime according to its magnitude. . . . No fines will be imposed except by the oath of honest men of the neighborhood as to the person's guilt.
21. Earls and barons shall be fined only by their peers, and only in proportion to the magnitude of the offense.
22. No royal official shall take the possessions of any man without paying for them on the spot, unless the seller freely consents to later payment.
39. No freeman shall be imprisoned, deprived of his property, outlawed, banished, or in any way destroyed, nor will the royal government prosecute him, except by the lawful judgment of his peers or by the law of the land.
40. To no one will We [royal authority] sell, to none will We deny or delay, right or justice.

**ANSWER QUESTIONS ON A SEPARATE SHEET OF PAPER WITH YOUR NAME AND PERIOD ON IT.**

1. What is the significance of Provisions 12? Does it remind you of a phrase used during the American Revolution?
2. Why is it important that the king receive the counsel (advice) of clergymen (churchmen), noblemen, and landowners (fief-owners) before creating (assessing) taxes, as noted in Provision 14?
3. What is the significance of Provision 39 -- even to this day?
4. What limits does the monarch place on himself in Provision 40?
5. How do you think the Magna Carta was used by later peoples seeking to establish their liberty? Explain your answer.
6. What role do you think the Magna Carta has played in American history? Explain your answer.