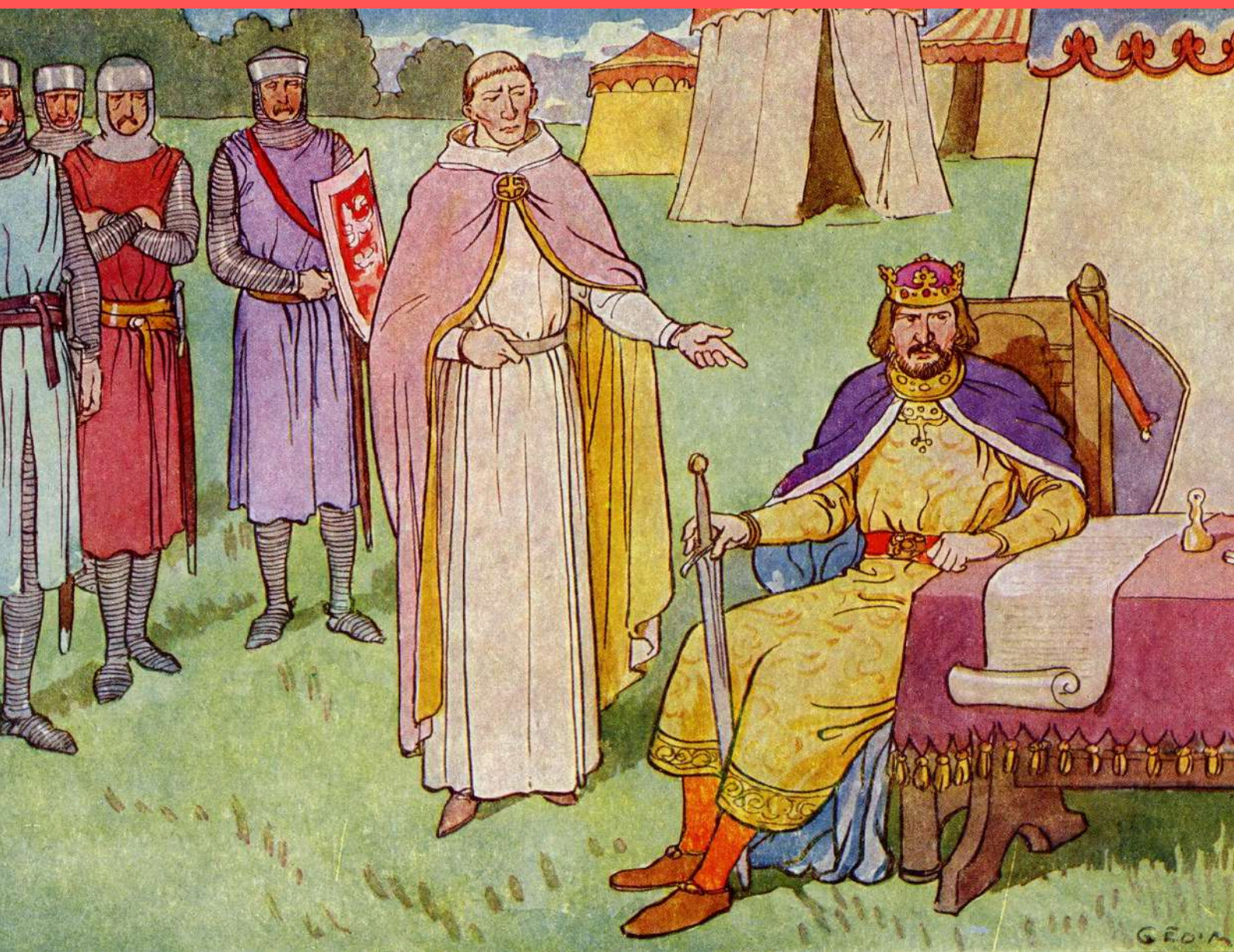


King John and Magna Carta

Teacher guide and resources



Introduction

We've drawn together resources and materials to support the delivery of a rich curriculum.

There's plenty of evidence that pupils relish demanding work.

We believe it's important not to dumb things down.

The KS3 Ambitious Years project is underpinned by three strands of research:



The 'Just Reading' research from the University of Sussex, which showed a significant increase in reading ages for all pupils, particularly the low prior attainers.



Background knowledge is the main driver of language comprehension, whether written or spoken - E D Hirsch



Pupil voice: when asked about the level of work they are given, pupils say they relish demanding work. This high challenge is possible if the classroom is characterised by low threat.

There will be vocabulary that pupils won't have necessarily encountered before, so it's important to let them know this is ok, as we'll be reading the passage **twice** and the second time, we'll be unpacking some of the new words and checking them on the knowledge organiser.

Resources

This booklet is made up of 5 Steps. Each Step contains the following elements:

Video links

These 5 min recordings set the scene and provide pupils with background knowledge

Text links

Extracts from a text

Visuals

Each step has an image to add a further dimension for discussion

Pupil booklet & knowledge organiser

This can either be photocopied or used as the basis for pupils' insights and written outcomes in their exercise books

Step 6 provides pupils with guidance to enable them to answer this unit's Key Question.

The text

Dan Jones is a popular historian and a New York Times bestselling writer. His book, *Magna Carta: The making & legacy of the Great Charter*, has a clear yet scholarly narrative that engages the reader with the complex history behind Magna Carta. Not only does his work contain historical details about how and why Magna Carta was created, it contains a full translated version of the document itself.

The page numbers referred to in this unit are taken from:

Magna Carta: The Making and Legacy of the Great Charter

Dan Jones

Publication date: 2014

- Ebook link [here](#) (to find the relevant passages in your Ebook, use the search function)
- Hard copy link [here](#)



Context

- At Key Stage 2 the National Curriculum states that pupils should be taught about changes in Britain. Pupils may have been taught about the Roman Empire's impact on Britain, the arrival of the Anglo Saxons and the conflicts between the Vikings and the English.
- Pupils may have also been taught about major turning points in British History to extend their knowledge beyond 1066.

By the end of the unit, pupils will write a short essay on:

'Why did the barons force King John to agree to Magna Carta?'

Knowledge organiser

Word / Phrase	Explanation
Angevin Empire	Angevin Empire was the lands of the King of England in both England and France.
Arthur of Brittany	Claimant to the English throne. He was the son of John's elder brother Geoffrey and many thought Arthur's claim to the throne was stronger than John's.
barons	The members of the nobility and high society in England who were in conflict with King John. They forced John to accept their demands which became known as Magna Carta in 1215.
Canterbury	A city in south-east England. It is home to the great cathedral church of Canterbury – the most important in England.
Court	The extended household of the king – this often included members of the king's family, members of the nobility, churchmen, servants and bodyguards.
duplicity	Saying different things to two people – double dealing and often involves telling lies.
excommunication	A formal and severe punishment given by the Pope which expels the recipient from the church community.
Henry II	King of England from 1154 to 1189. He was the father of Richard I and John.
Innocent III	Pope between 1198 and 1216 who was in dispute with King John.
John de Grey	King John's preferred choice as Archbishop of Canterbury instead of Stephen Langton (Pope's choice)
King John	King of England from 1199 to 1216 who was forced to sign Magna Carta in 1215.
Normandy	Territory in northern France which was often in the hands of the Kings of England.

Knowledge organiser

Word / Phrase	Explanation
papacy	The office or authority of the pope. The pope, also known as the bishop of Rome, is the leader of the Catholic Church in western Europe.
papal interdict	This forbids a church from performing church services.
Philip Augustus	King of France from 1180 to 1223. He greatly expanded the French royal lands and was a rival to the kings of England.
Plantagenet	The ruling dynasty/family in England between 1154 and 1485.
Profits of justice	A significant source of income for the king that came from punishing crimes. These included fines, forfeitures and settlements.
Richard I	King of England from 1189 to 1199. He famously participated in the Third Crusade and he was the brother of King John.
Runnymede	The location in Surrey where King John met the barons in 1215 and accepted Magna Carta.
Stephen Langton	Archbishop of Canterbury from 1207 to 1228. King John refused his appointment as Archbishop leading to Pope Innocent III placing England under a papal interdict.
see	comes from the Latin for 'seat'. This often refers to the location an important bishop or archbishop would hold their office from. e.g - the See of Canterbury is the location where the Archbishop of Canterbury hold their office. The 'Holy See' is the location of the bishop of Rome (the Pope).
William Marshal	The Earl of Pembroke who was a royal advisor and soldier.

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01

King John and his reputation



1.1 Video

The Last Journey of the Magna Carta King

This documentary retraces the last days of King John. Historian Stephen Church explores the contemporary accounts to build up a picture of one of England's most famous monarchs. King John is often seen as one of England's worst kings after he lost his empire, fell out with the Church and by the time of his death the kingdom had been invaded by the French. It is King John's behaviour and disastrous reputation that led to the barons of England presenting him with Magna Carta in 1215.

The Last Journey of the Magna Carta King (BBC) (59 mins)



1.2 Text extract

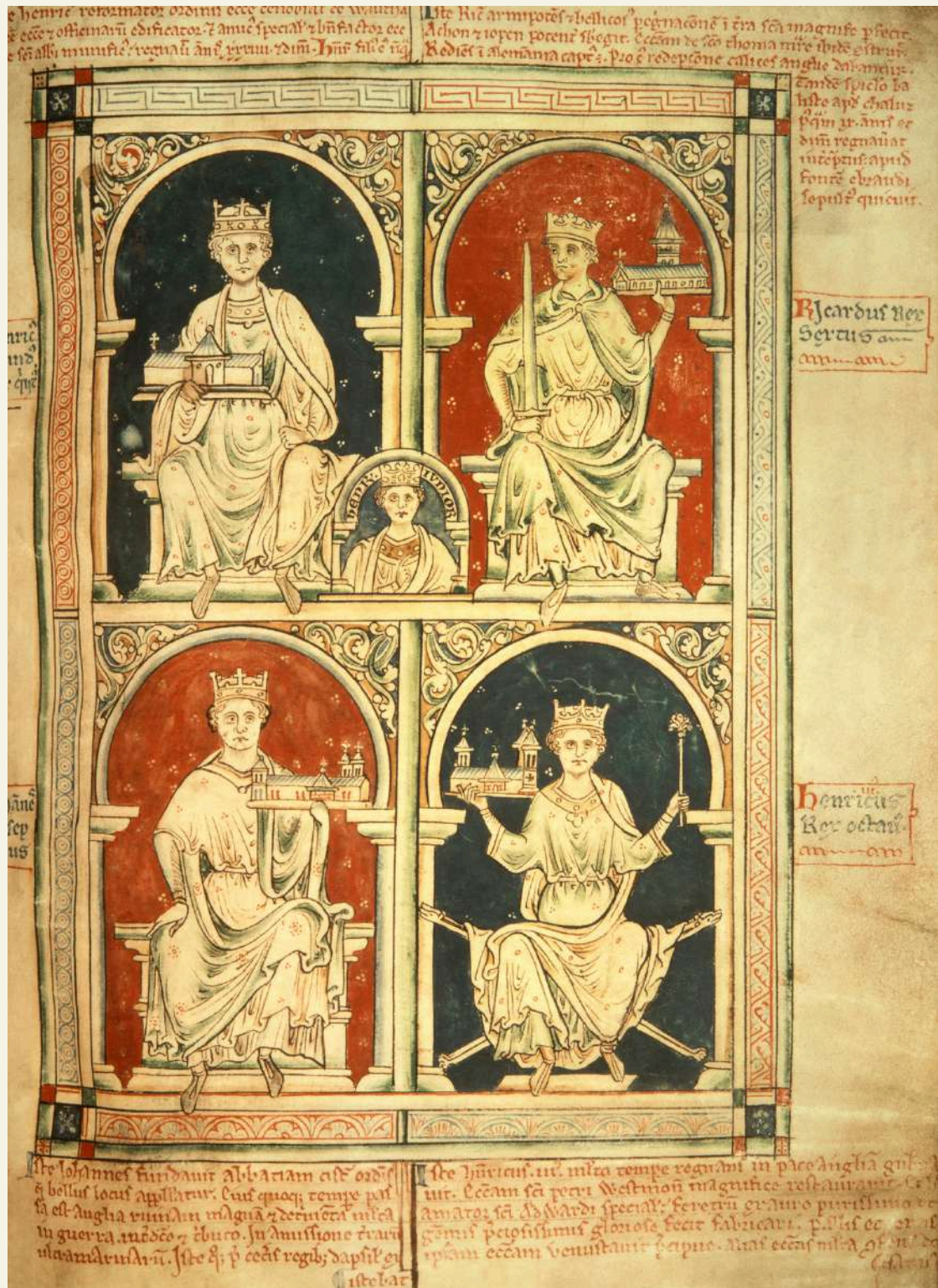
Chapter 3: Empire's End 1199-1204

Read from page 41 on to page 47

By the time John came to the throne, in April 1199, he had already worked up quite a record for duplicity and troublemaking. Sent to Ireland in 1185 as a nineteen-year-old prince, he had offended the local lords as soon as he landed. Gerald of Wales, who accompanied John on the expedition, recalled that he treated the natives 'with contempt and derision, [and] even rudely pulled them by their beard, which the Irishmen wore full and long, according to the custom of their country'. ...

...For the first time in more than half-a-century, a Plantagenet King of England would be obliged to live among the English people.

1.3 Image



Plantagenet Kings – Henry II, Richard I, John and Henry III. From Matthew of Paris' *Historia Anglorum* (1250s)

1.3 Image

- This illustration was created by the monk Matthew Paris for his chronicle *Historia Anglorum*. The chronicle was probably written between 1250 and 1255 and when many people could still remember John's reign.
- The image depicts the Plantagenet Kings:
 - > Henry II (1154-1189) top left – John's father,
 - > Richard I (1189-1199) top right – John's brother,
 - > John (1199-1216) himself – bottom left and
 - > Henry III (1216-1272) bottom right – John's son.
- The image represents their status as kings and also shows some of their key roles e.g defenders of the church, military leaders (especially Richard I – who was a key participant on the Third Crusade, and upholders of justice).
- John's actions and behaviour across his reign earned him a reputation for being an unjust tyrant who failed to defend his realm and keep the support of his barons. However, this reputation has been exaggerated overtime.

1.4 Questions and reflections

It's helpful for pupils to make a summary of what they have learnt so far in this step using the points below:

- Who was King John?
- What have you learnt about his character?
- Thinking about his characteristics – do you think this would make him a good or bad king? Why?

02

King John, greed and the raising of taxes

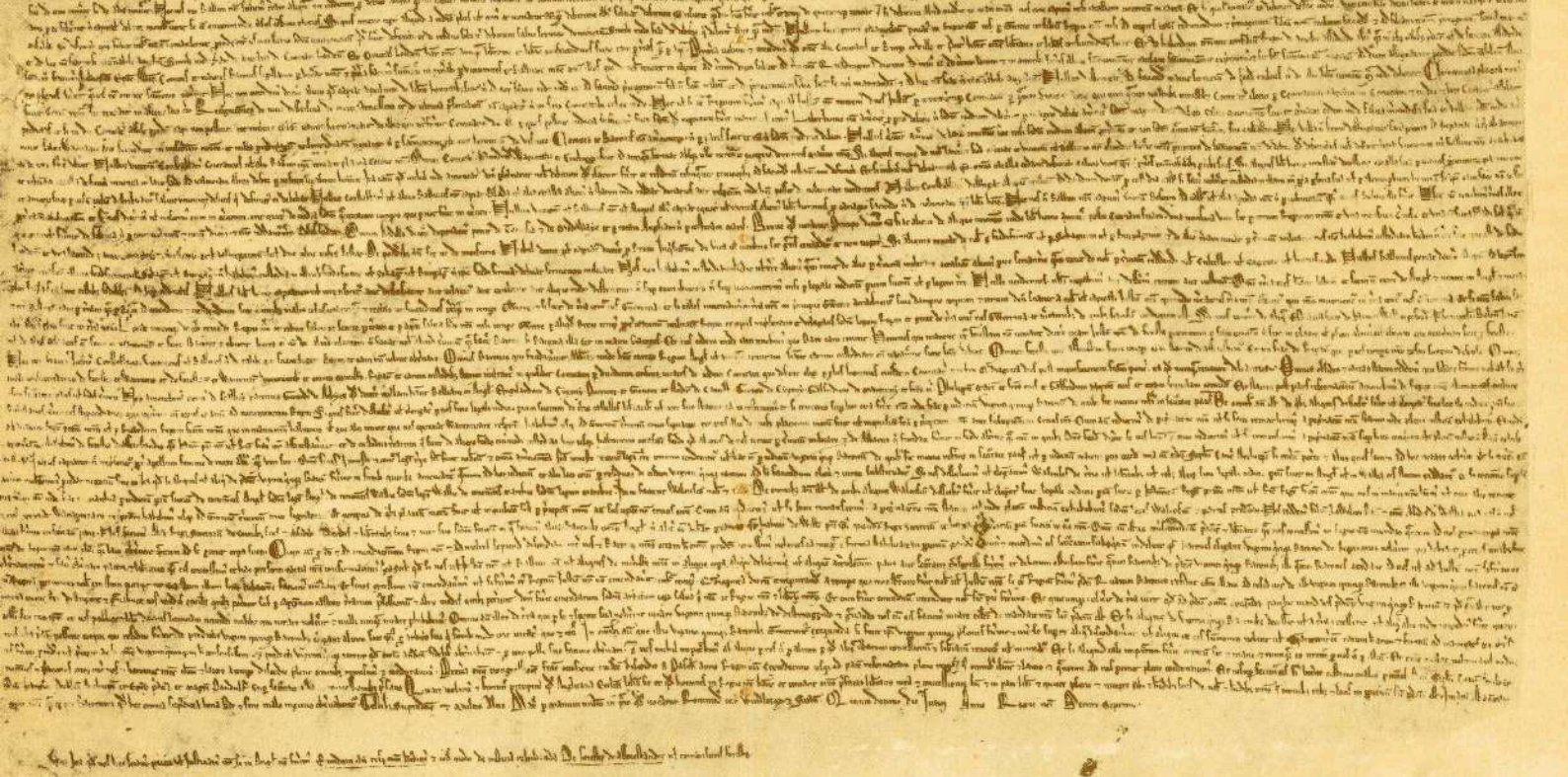


2.1 Video

Taxes for foreign wars

- Video summary: The video looks at the myth of Robin Hood and the Sheriff of Nottingham and where this story comes from. The sheriffs were key parts of the government and King John used them in local areas to collect taxes from the people.
- It makes the connection between the loss of the English lands in France and the taxes King John wanted to raise to get those lands back. However, the barons and the local taxpayers were not so keen and King John's tax raising policy made him very unpopular!

Who was the real Sheriff of Nottingham? | King John and Magna Carta (YouTube) (3 mins)



2.2 Text extract

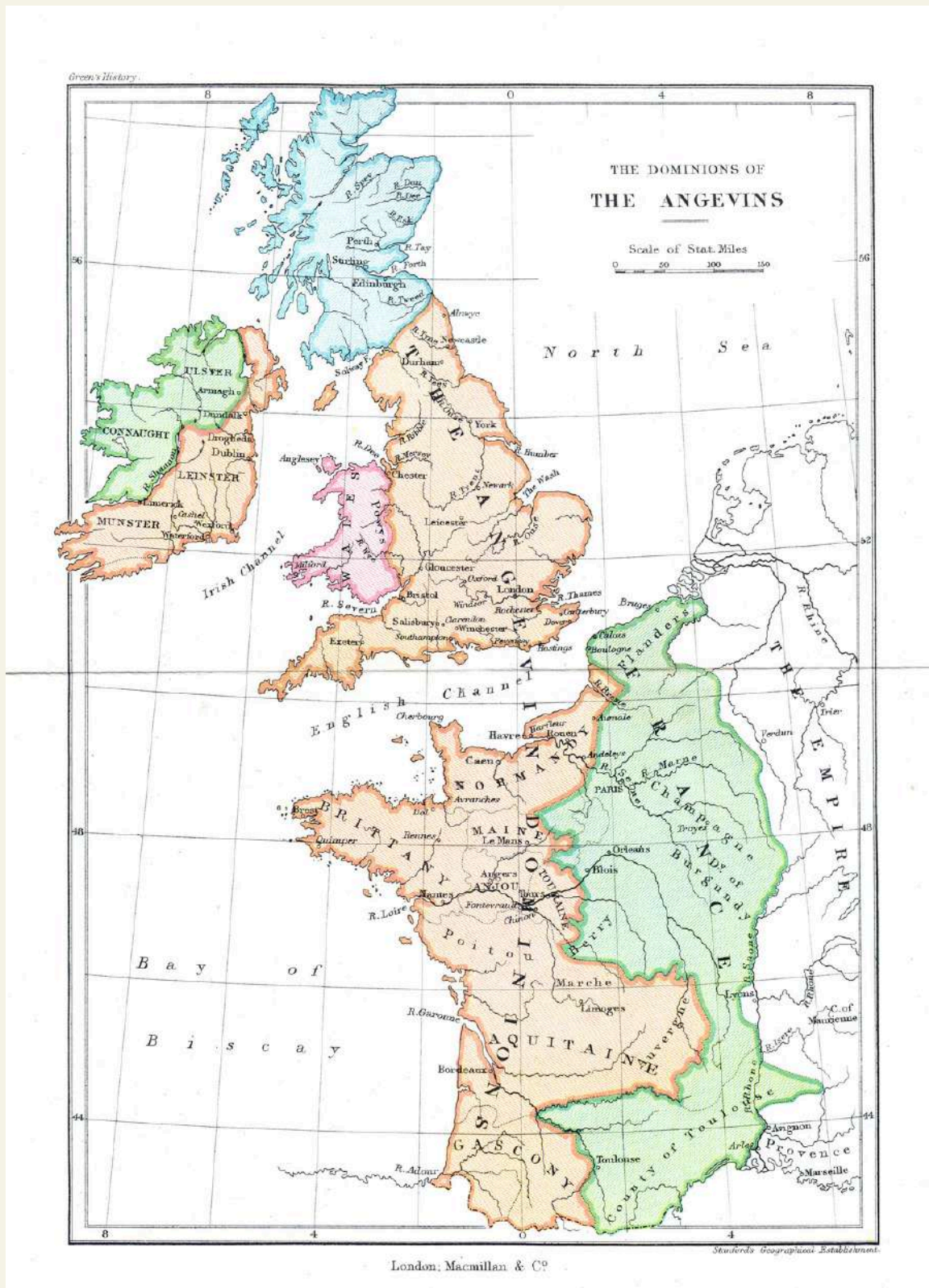
Chapter 4: The King in His Kingdom 1204-1205

Read from page 50 on to page 56

The loss of Normandy is often described, rightly, as one of the great turning points in England's medieval history. It was obviously a terrible military defeat for John, an illustration of his low stock as a leader and a blow to his reputation. There were also financial implications. The wealth – and thus the military power – of the King of France, Philip Augustus, had been growing steadily since the 1190s, boosted by territorial acquisitions including the rich Flemish County of Artois and the Vermandois. ...

...The consequences of this urge for revenge and restoration would be very severe, both for John and for the English kingdom in which he was now so firmly stuck.

2.3 Image



Angevin Empire

2.3 Image

- The Angevin Empire was the lands of the King of England in both England and France. Ever since the Norman Conquest in 1066 English kings had had an interest in France.
- The map shows the extent of the Angevin Empire in the 12th Century – this was created by King John's father – Henry II. After Henry II's death in 1189, this passed to Richard I.
- John succeeded to the English throne in 1199. However, within a few years John had lost all but the south of France to the French.

2.4 Questions and reflections

It's helpful for pupils to make a summary of what they have learnt so far in this step using the points below:

- Why do you think the loss of Normandy was a major problem for John?
- How do you think John replaced the finances lost from losing Normandy?
- What impression did you get from hearing about people like the Sheriff of Nottingham?
- Why was France now in a stronger position?
- How do you think the English barons who lost lands in France feel about this? Who might they have blamed?

03

King John and his dispute with the Church



3.1 Video

King John and the Church

- Video summary: This video explores King John's relationship with the Church. Like most medieval kings in this period, John was in constant dispute with the church over the appointment of church officials like bishops and archbishops. King John wanted to establish his own authority and control of the Church in England. He wanted to appoint John de Grey as the new Archbishop of Canterbury. The Pope, Innocent III, wanted Stephen Langton.
- King John, in his attempt to get his way, forced churchmen, like priests and abbots, out of the church at Canterbury and seized the wealth of the church. As a result of his behaviour, John was excommunicated. This upset his people, including the barons, even further.

[King John and the Church | Magna Carta \(YouTube\)](#) (9 mins)



3.2 Text extract

Chapter 5: Interdict and Intimidation 1206-1212

Read from page 62 on to page 69 (although reading page 60 will provide additional context)

John's rage at being thwarted was always spectacular. He was not cowed by the fact that his opponent in this instance was God's anointed vicar-in-chief. In response to Langton's consecration, John seized all the lands belonging to Canterbury and threw the monks who had dared defy him out of England. ...

...All that now remained for John was to return to France, try to destroy the armies and castles of King Philip Augustus and recover the lands beyond the Channel that had been lost in 1204. It was to be his undoing.



The monks of Canterbury expelled by John

3.3 Image

King John's behaviour during his dispute with the Church is very controversial. He decided to remove the monks and churchmen of Canterbury in an attempt to force the church to accept his appointment, John de Grey, as archbishop. John de Grey was the bishop of Norwich and a favourite of King John. However, this move upset the Pope, who decided to excommunicate John for his actions. This image, created in 1904, imagines what this event may have been like.

3.4 Questions and reflections

It's helpful for pupils to make a summary of what they have learnt so far in this step using the points below

- What more have you learnt about King John and his character?
- Why were some English church officials and the Pope in Rome unhappy with King John?
- Why was some English church officials and the Pope in Rome unhappy with King John?



04

Runnymede and Magna Carta



4.1 Video

Magna Carta

- Video summary: This documentary from Professor Robert Bartlett recaps on many of the reasons for Magna Carta – John’s behaviour, losses in France, abuse of taxes and poor relations with the Church.
- Robert Bartlett explains how one of our most famous documents came into being at Runnymede in 1215. The video shows why the barons of England demanded John agree to Magna Carta and the limiting of his absolute power.

[The Magna Carta | History - The Plantagenets \(BBC\)](#) (6 mins)

4.2 Text extract

Chapter 7: A Meadow Called Runnymede 1215

Read from page 90 on to page 93 (although you may want to read from page 84 for further background and detail).

The negotiations at Runnymede were not easy, and the whole process was almost certainly extremely irksome to John, whose mood is captured – perhaps fancifully, but quite believably all the same – by the Benedictine chronicler Matthew Paris, who wrote that when the king was entreating with his opponents he behaved calmly, but behind the scenes ‘he gnashed his teeth, rolled his eyes, grabbed sticks and straws and gnawed them like a madman’. ...

...Within six weeks John had overturned the deal that was made at Runnymede and the war that everyone tried to avoid was sweeping throughout England.

4.3 Image



4.3 Image (cntd)

- This is an image of the Magna Carta viewing room at Salisbury Cathedral. The copy at Salisbury is the best preserved of the remaining original copies of Magna Carta. Magna Carta was a royal charter sealed by King John at Runnymede on 15 June 1215. John had experienced a turbulent reign after becoming King in 1199. He lost most of his lands in France to the French King, he fell out with the church and his barons due to his unjust behaviour. Magna Carta, drafted by Archbishop Langton, was an attempt to broker peace between John and his barons.
- The barons demanded a 'Charter of Liberties' and Magna Carta included protections for the barons against wrongful imprisonment, defences of Church rights, measures to ensure justice was impartially administered and placed limits on the money that could be demanded as payment to the Crown.
- The King's seal would have been attached to the bottom of the document to show it has been granted royal approval. However, within days of sealing Magna Carta, John had overturned many of the measures within it.

4.4 Questions and reflections

It's helpful for pupils to make a summary of what they have learnt so far in this step using the points below:

- What was Magna Carta?
- Why did King John agree to it?
- Why was Magna Carta a significant document? What did it do?

05

Magna Carta overturned – War in England 1215-1216



5.1 Video

John's renewed war with the barons

- After King John overturned Magna Carta, the barons of England went to war with him once more. King John was initially successful, and this video shows where John goes to and the castles he takes from the barons.
- However, the video explains that John faces difficulties. Many barons continue to rebel against him and then England is invaded by the French heir, Louis the Lion. The overturning of Magna Carta has brought war to England again!

[The Last Journey of the Magna Carta King \(BBC\)](#) (watch 07.00-12.52)

5.2 Text extract

Chapter 9: War and Invasion 1215-1216

Read from page 113 on to page 119

As a result, civil war resumed. By now, many of the English barons had given up believing that John might be reformed, tamed or otherwise controlled. Certainly, John's own behaviour did not suggest a penitent soul: he had taken to threatening Archbishop Langton (who held Rochester Castle and refused to give it up, resulting in its siege) and from 17 September he was seizing baronial property by force. John's opponents there began once again to resist his rule. ...

...John's dying wish was that his son Henry, then nine year old, should be his successor. He could scarcely have bequeathed any more troubles on the boy.



Rochester Castle

5.3 Image

- The castle at Rochester saw the renewed war between King John and his barons after John overturned Magna Carta. John's forces managed to capture the castle from Archbishop Stephen Langton. The medieval chronicles described a brutal fight at Rochester Castle. John's forces captured Rochester Bridge, the castle bailey and they used siege engines and miners to bring down walls and turrets.
- King John was successful in taking the castle in December 1215. However, he did not hold on to it for very long. In 1216 the castle was taken by Louis the Lion during his invasion of England.

5.4 Questions and reflections

It's helpful for pupils to make a summary of what they have learnt so far in this step using the points below:

- What happened after King John overturned the agreement he had made with the barons in Magna Carta?
- How did John behave after Magna Carta? Why do you think he behaved like this?
- Why do you think the English barons invited Louis the Lion to become their king?

06

Why did the barons force King John to agree to Magna Carta?

Conclusion

This part draws together the threads of what pupils have learnt in this unit so that they can answer this question:

‘Why did the barons force King John to agree to Magna Carta?’

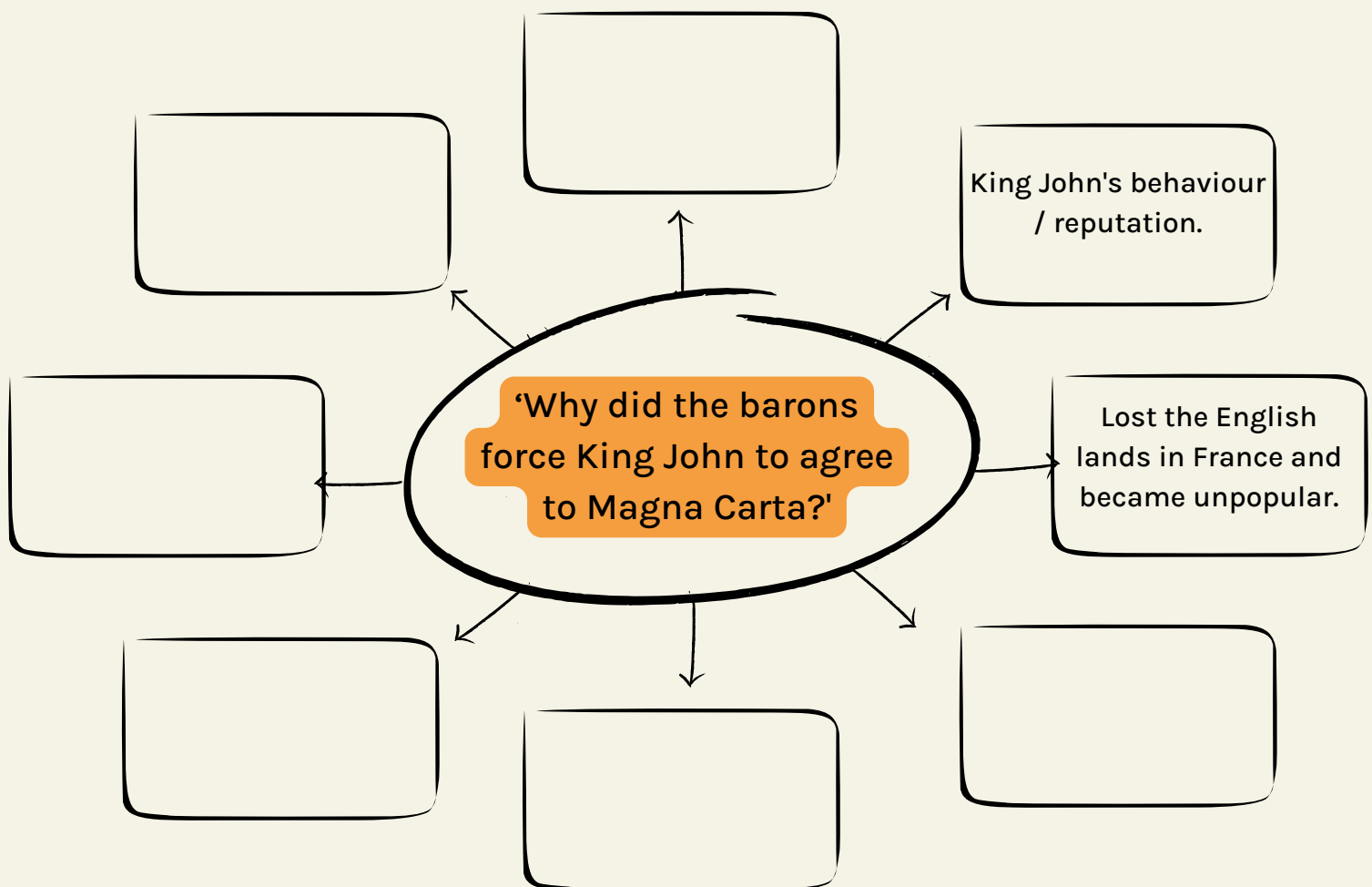
The headlines of what pupils have learnt:

- Who was King John?
- King John’s reputation across his reign
- King John and the loss of French land
- The issue of raising taxes
- King John’s relationship with the Church
- The sealing of Magna Carta at Runnymede
- The overturning of Magna Carta and renewed war with the barons

Using the notes of key points from each part, get pupils in their own words to answer the question ‘Why did the barons force King John to agree to Magna Carta?’.

The mind map will help them in preparing for their written response.

Mind Map



**Anthony Done**

Anthony Done is the Subject Leader of Humanities (History and Geography) at Rochdale Sixth Form College where he has held the role since Autumn 2021. Before this he held the position of Teacher of History from joining the College, as an NQT, in 2016. Rochdale Sixth Form College is part of the Altus Education Partnership Trust which includes the Sixth Form College, two secondary schools and two primary schools. As of November 2024, Anthony is the Faculty Lead for History for Altus supporting all the schools with the delivery of History. His most recent work has been to review the History curriculum being delivered across the Trust and he will be working with all colleagues to build a well sequenced History curriculum from Primary to Sixth Form. Anthony's other experiences include being a Parent Governor at Wardley CofE Primary School in Salford between 2021 and 2025.



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The Ambitious Years

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