

Magna Carta

<p>Historical Background</p>	<p>The Magna Carta, signed by King John in 1215 under civil war threat, led to the rule of the constitutional law in the English-speaking world. Tyrannical rule caused English barons' resentment as the king demanded too much money in taxes. After disastrous war in France, the barons marched against the king and captured London. The document was agreed upon and sealed by the king at Runnymede (beside the River Thames). The charter was a compromise, which contained important clauses to bring about reforms in judicial and local administration.</p>
<p>Main ideas</p>	<p>The Magna Carta provided the foundation for individual rights in Anglo-American jurisprudence. The document has 63 clauses, including provisions for limiting royal taxes, reforming laws and judicial procedures. The charter gave the barons the right to declare war on the king if he did not follow its provisions. It stated that people could not be punished for crimes unless they were lawfully convicted. It provided certain guarantees for the people as a whole. The Magna Carta formulates the following human rights and principles:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the right of the church to be free from governmental interference, 2. the rights of all free citizens to own, inherit property and be protected from excessive taxes, 3. the right of widows with inherited property to choose not to remarry, 4. principles of due process and equality before the law, 5. provisions forbidding bribery and official misconduct.
<p>Worldwide Impact</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An important legal document in the development of modern democracy - a crucial turning point to establish freedom, a symbol in the battle against oppression. 2. A significant document for the people of the 1200s proved to be even more important to subsequent generations. 3. The first step in establishing England's constitution. Later many other countries used the principles of the Magna Carta in their constitutions. 4. The Magna Carta shaped the wording of the fundamental laws of England's colonies in North America. The basic rights later embodied in the Constitution of the United States and the Bill of Rights echo the charter.
<p>Criticism</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Magna Carta did not put an end to royal tyranny. Kings continued to make war for their own glory rather than for the public good. Taxes continued to rise. 2. The Magna Carta corrected King John's abuses of power against the barons, Church officials, merchants and other "free men" who together made up about 25% of England's population, though it virtually ignored the remaining 75% of the population. 3. This document did not merely reflect social divisions, it actively re-enforced them. It discriminated against unfree peasants and women, and gave less to people than they hoped for.