**Grades 8-9**

**Magna Carta**

**King John the Lackland (1199-1216)**

**In his early age John was given the nickname of Lackland because being the youngest in his family, he didn’t have his own lands, unlike his eldest brothers. He became an English King in 1199. He seems to have been cruel to everybody and to have no friends. He hadn’t been king for a very long time, when he lost not only Normandy, so that the English kings were no longer Dukes of Normandy, but the other parts of France that had belonged to his mother Eleanor.**

**He was the most unpopular king: he lost most of his French possessions; he broke his father’s heart (misbehavior), he rebelled against his brother, quarreled with the Pope, etc.**

**During John’s reign the nobles had to suffer from all kinds of feudal laws. In 1215 the barons made him sign and seal a Great Charter, often called by its Latin name, the Magna Carta. Magna Carta has since become the foundation stone of all Western liberties and democracies.**

**Pressed by the demands of war, King John imposed high taxes that irritated many of his most powerful subjects. Magna Carta was to become part of the English constitution inheritance, because the baronial claims for liberties were in time translated into the universal language of freedom and justice. It was the beginning of limiting the prerogatives of the Crown. During the struggle for the Great Charter the legions of barons openly opposed the King – disobeyed him, didn’t pay taxes, raised an army of knights, enjoyed support of townsmen. In Magna Carta he had promised certain rights to the people, so that they might live in safety under good government.**

**Magna Carta**

**Magna Carta  = Great Charter**

**61 articles**

**What: Document – signed by the king to give lords/nobility more power.**

**Who: King John the Lackland.**

**When: 1215.**

**Why: dissatisfaction with the king.**

**Where: Salisbury/Runnymede.**

**Significance: beginning of the constitutional monarchy in Britain**

**It’s important to point out that by limiting the King’s power, Magna Carta proclaimed the power of law over the free people of the country.**

**1. Everyone is under the Law.  Law is above the King.**

**The King is under the Law too.**

1. **To none we will deny the right of justice.**

**No free men shall be taken, imprisoned, or saved by the judge (without the lawful judgment or court  decision)**

**“Common Law” - legal system of England.**

1. **Church will be free.**

1. **No seizing of land before paying back the debts.**  **Lands restored, if they were taken**

1. Ancient liberties:
   1. **The church was free to make religious (ecclesiastical) appointments**
   2. **Larger than normal amounts of money (taxes) couldn’t be taken without the consent of the Great Council. No extra taxes.** **The king could not make the people pay taxes without the consent of the Great Council.**
   3. **No free men could be punished unless by the decision of the Court (Common Law).** **No one was to be punished for any wrongdoing without a proper trial according to the law of the land.**

**Legal decisions based on the precedent. Precedent- somebody stole 2 cows, punished with a 1 year imprisonment; a century later somebody stole a cow too, people in the court decided on the same verdict (i.e. –a 1 year imprisonment) looking back on the details of the past.**

**There is a little island on the Thames, near Windsor, called Magna Carta Island or Runnymede, and on it John met the barons to put the seal on a lamp of wax to show that he signed and consented to keep the promises set out in the Charter.**

**Magna Carta (**[**Latin**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latin) **for "Great Charter", literally "Great Paper"), also called Magna Carta Libertatum ("Great Charter of Freedoms"), is an** [**English**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_England)[**charter**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charter) **originally issued in 1215. Magna Carta was the most significant early influence that led to the rule of** [**constitutional law**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitutional_law) **today. Magna Carta influenced the development of the** [**common law**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Common_law) **and many constitutional documents, such as the** [**United States Constitution**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Constitution) **and** [**Bill of Rights**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Bill_of_Rights)**, and is considered one of the most important legal documents in the** [**history of democracy**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_democracy)**.**

**Magna Carta was originally written because of disagreements among** [**Pope**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Innocent_III) **,** [**King John**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_of_England) **and the** [**English barons**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Baronies_in_the_Peerage_of_England) **about the rights of the** [**King**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_monarchy)**. Magna Carta required the King to respect certain** [**legal procedures**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legal_procedure) **and accept that his** [**will**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Will_(philosophy%2529) **could be** [**bound by the law**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rule_of_law)**. It protected certain rights of the King's subjects allowing them to appeal against unlawful imprisonment.**

**The Magna Carta was the first document which was forced onto an English King by his subjects to limit his powers by law.**

**US President John Fitzgerald Kennedy built the monument in Runnymede.**