



Year 3

Law and Power Reading Booklet

Summer 1

Lesson Series:

1. Henry II and English Common Law
2. Henry II and Thomas Becket
3. The Crusades and Richard the Lionheart
4. King John and the Magna Carta
5. Simon de Montfort

Name: _____

Class: _____

Lesson 1 - Henry II and English Common Law

Henry II inherited the throne in 1154, at the age of 21. He was the first Plantagenet monarch. Henry II was a great reformer and his reforms changed the monarchy's relationship to the church, state and society.

Some historians have argued that he developed much of the legal system as we know it in Great Britain. Although laws existed in England prior to his reign, (as previously learned about during the Romans and Anglo Saxons), Henry II was one of the first to write the laws down in documents.

This created a unified legal system, known as English Common Law. He believed that the state should be responsible for ensuring the laws were followed. During his reign he sought to take control of criminal and civil law, taking power away from powerful barons who previously ruled in their localities.



Lesson 2 - Henry II and Thomas Becket

Henry II made his friend, Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury (the head of the English church), but frequently argued with him over whether priests should be tried in Church courts, or the Crown court (as laid out in the Constitutions of Clarendon).

This ongoing argument led to one of the most famous misunderstandings in English history: four knights misheard Henry II and believed they were ordered to murder Becket. The king, Henry II, went on a pilgrimage to Canterbury to show he was sorry - walking barefoot and allowing the priests to whip him in front of Becket's shrine. The Pope made Becket a saint and Henry II had to give up on the Constitutions of Clarendon and finally give in to the power of the church.



Lesson 3 - The Crusades and Richard the Lionheart

The Holy Wars, also known as crusades, were a series of invasions of Muslim controlled territory in the Holy Land, in particular Jerusalem, by European Christian armies. The Holy Land (modern day Israel) is where Christianity originated, but is also a sacred land for Islam. In the 7th century, the Holy Land was taken over by the Islamic Empire.

There were four major holy wars from the 11th to the 13th centuries, as the Holy Land swung back and forth between Muslim and Christian control. Richard I fought in the Third Holy War. Sultan Saladin was the leader of Egypt and Syria and he led the fight against the Europeans. In the third Holy War, Richard I and Saladin reached an agreement that Jerusalem could stay under Muslim control.



Lesson 4 - King John and The Magna Carta

Whilst Richard the Lionheart was fighting in the Holy Wars, his brother John seized power. John claimed that Richard had died, but this was not true. In 1199 Richard died in France, and John became King of England.

King John is remembered as one of the most troublesome kings in English history. He fell out with the church, fell out with the barons, raised taxes, seized people's property, and imprisoned people without trial and possibly murdered his own nephew, Arthur. He lost every war he fought in France, and to fight these unsuccessful wars, King John raised money through taxing his barons.

The barons decided they had had enough and forced King John to make a series of promises about how he would rule England. These included the right to a fair trial; not interfering with the affairs of the church; and limiting his ability to raise taxes. This document established the legal rights of English subjects and was known as the Magna

Carta. The Magna Carta is remembered today as one of the most important documents in history and a symbol of liberty.



Lesson 5 - Simon de Montfort

A year after Magna Carta, King John died fighting a war against his barons. His son, Henry III, ruled for fifty years. He made many of the same mistakes as his father, and in 1264 a 'Second Barons War' broke out. The barons were led by a knight called Simon de Montfort, who beat Henry III at the Battle of Lewes and imprisoned the king.

In order to decide what to do with the king, de Montfort asked every county in England to send two knights to represent them. Towns could also send two commoners. This group of representatives were given the name 'Parliament', from the French 'parler' which means 'to talk'.

