



# Was King John a bad King?

## Story

Paragraph title	The story of King John's reign	Summarise in 1 or 2 bullet points.
	<p>In 1199, King John inherited the English throne from his brother Richard I. It was rich, with lots of trade routes, and even owned a sizeable part of French lands. However it soon went very wrong for King John.</p> <p>He firstly went to war with the French king to protect his lands. He thought the French barons would help him, as he married a French princess, Isabella of Angouleme, but he was wrong. By the end of his reign, he had lost almost all of England's lands in France.</p> <p>He was also in a lot of debt, though it wasn't all his fault. His brother Richard had run up a large bill paying for his crusades. However he taxed the barons heavily to pay for this, and his own French wars. This upset them, particularly as he was defeated.</p> <p>Additionally he quarrelled with the Pop about who was to be the next Archbishop of Canterbury. The Pope banned all church services in England and John was excommunicated. This meant that his barons didn't have to listen to their oaths of loyalty to him, allowing them to rebel.</p> <p>By 1215, the barons had had enough. They believed that John was ruining the country and being disrespectful to them and their position. About 40 barons marched their armies to London. Eventually, the king was forced to negotiate with them, and they met at Runnymede by the River Thames. They forced the King to sign charter with all of their demands.</p> <p>Reluctantly, the king agreed to all 63 promises. In return, the barons agreed to be loyal to King John. While he signed the document, called the Magna Carta, he died in 1217 so he didn't live long enough to see it through.</p> <p>The Magna Carta still has importance today, as it is seen as the founding of the English Parliament and democracy.</p>	

## Source

**A**

### Painting from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century

This painting shows King John (under the tent) putting his seal on the Magna Carta. Today, this painting hangs in the Houses of Parliament.



**B**

From the *Barnwell Chronicle*, written by monks in Barnwell Abby, Cambridgeshire, at the end of the 1220s.

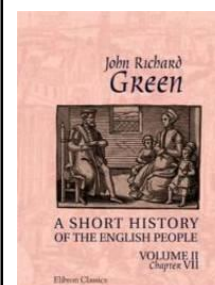
John was a great prince but hardly a happy one and he experienced ups and downs. He would of thought of himself as happy and successful had he not lost his continental possessions and suffered the Church's excommunication.

**C**

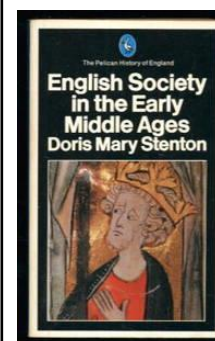
Written by Matthew Paris in 1235. Matthew was a monk based in St Alban's Abbey, Hertfordshire

John was a tyrant, not a king; a destroyer, not a governor, crushing his own people and favouring foreigners. He lost lands in France through laziness. He was unstable and unfaithful.

## Scholarship



““John was a thoroughly bad lot. He was cruel and beastly, a tyrant not a king, a destroyer instead of a governor, a lion to his own people but a lamb to foreigners and rebels. He had many enemies and killed people with his bare hands. He was the worst king ever to have sat on the English throne.” (J. R. Green 1875)



"John sat as a judge; he was kind, compassionate and wise in many cases. But no king of England was ever so unlucky. Despite John losing of the lands in France he did a great deal to improve the security of England from foreign invasion and by the time of his death the pope had become a powerful supporter of England.” (D. M. Stenton, 1951)