

Video Transcript: Magna Carta

(Music)

FX : Angry voices getting louder during the narration

1. Narrator: Stories from Parliament: Magna Carta. England, February 1215 and all is not well. Across the country from North to South the voices of angry barons can be heard. The cause of their anger: one man.
2. Fitzwalter: King John.
3. De Clare: He demands even higher taxes to pay for his futile wars in France.
4. Baron 3: And if we do not pay up he takes what he wants. We have to find a way to stop him raising taxes whenever he chooses.
5. Fitzwalter: And taking our lands.
6. De Clare: Stealing our lands.
7. Baron 3: He promised that all this would stop.
8. Fitzwalter: He always promises.
9. De Clare: His promises mean nothing. We must do something to make him keep his word.
10. Baron 3: We are the baron lords of England yet he shows us no respect.
11. Fitzwalter: He can arrest us and hold us prisoner without a fair hearing.

12. De Clare: Our widowed sisters and mothers can be forced in to a marriage just because the king orders it.

13. Baron 3: Our rights and freedoms should be protected by law.

14. De Clare: King John believes he is above the rule of law.

15. Fitzwalter: Then we must have new rules, which even a king must obey.

16. Narrator: And it is not just the barons who believe it is time to act. The Archbishop of Canterbury himself intervenes...

(Music)

17. Archbishop: He may be above the laws of men, but no one is above the laws of God.

FX: Voices echoing in a large space

18. Dean: Pray silence for Stephen Langton, the Archbishop of Canterbury.

19. Archbishop: My lords. You have come here today from all corners of England. Tell me, what are your concerns? Robert Fitzwalter Lord of Dunmow Castle speak first.

20. Fitzwalter: My Lords, when our king raises taxation yet again he offends the people. When he seizes lands that do not belong to him he offends the barons and when he seizes the wealth of the church he offends God.

FX : Shouts of agreement

21. Archbishop: Richard de Clare. Earl of Hertford. You wish to speak.

22. De Clare: My Lord Fitzwalter is right, but what can we do? The King cannot be reasoned with. He's too powerful.

23. Fitzwalter: Then we must find a way to limit his powers.

24. De Clare: How will we do that? There are no rules which a king has to obey.

25. Fitzwalter: We will make new rules.

26. De Clare: He won't listen to us. He refuses to recognise our rights... We have no voice.

27. Fitzwalter: Then we must declare our rights and find a voice.

FX : Cheering

28. Fitzwalter: We must send a clear message to the king. He must agree to limit his power.

29. De Clare: And if he does not agree?

30. Fitzwalter: Then together we will raise a great army. We will take London and leave him no choice.

FX : Cheering, drum beats

31. Narrator: But even when he knows that the Barons are taking action, King John continues to raise taxes and seize lands which do not belong to him.

(Music)

32. Chamberlain: Your Majesty, the rebels advance towards London.

33. King John: Really? Let them advance where they like. I have nothing to fear from Robert Fitzwalter and his rabble.

34. Chamberlain: They gather support Your Majesty. The closer they get to London the stronger they become.

35. King John: I told you. I have nothing to fear. The people of London will stand by their king.

36. Chamberlain: I'm not so sure Your Majesty. Fitzwalter calls his troops The Army of God. I believe the people of London are on his side.

37. King John: I don't care! I don't care whose side the people are on. I will not submit. No king of England will ever obey rules laid down by traitors.

38. FX: Door knock. Running footsteps approach.

39. Chamberlain: A messenger from London Your Majesty.

40. King John: Approach. Speak.

41. Messenger: Your Majesty. Fitzwalter is in London.

42. John: And?

43. Messenger: The people cheer him.

44. King John: They cheer a rebel traitor who dares to stand against his king?

45. Messenger: Yes Your Majesty.

46. Chamberlain: Perhaps, Your Majesty, it is time to talk to the rebels.

47. King John: Never! I am the King of England. I do not talk to traitors.

48. Narrator: But King John will talk. He has no choice and on the 15th of June 1215 at Runnymede near Windsor the two sides meet.

FX : Fanfare of trumpets

49. Narrator: The barons present the King with a document. 63 rules have been written down on parchment. This will become one of the most important and famous documents in history. People will call it The Great Charter: Magna Carta.

FX : Drum beats under

50. Fitzwalter: You will no longer force widows to marry against their will.

51. King John: Agreed.

52. Fitzwalter: You will not raise taxes without the agreement of the barons.

53. King John: Agreed.

54. Fitzwalter: No free man can be imprisoned without being charged.

55. King John: Agreed.

56. Fitzwalter: Every man has a right to a fair trial.

57. King John: Agreed.

58. Fitzwalter: And twenty five barons will watch you carefully to make sure that you obey these rules.

59. King John: (*pause*) Agreed.

60. Narrator: King John places his royal seal on the document so that the whole world will know that he has agreed to obey these new rules. Of course this document doesn't put an end to the quarrels between kings and barons. Some of the rules are quickly changed and many are broken or ignored, but on the 15th June 1215 something important has happened. Magna Carta has shown for the first time that it is possible to lay down rules which even a king must obey. Some of those rules apply to this day.

FX : Drum beats