

Political and Social Change

What You Will Learn...

Main Ideas

1. Magna Carta caused changes in England's government and legal system.
2. The Hundred Years' War led to political changes in England and France.
3. The Black Death, which swept through Europe in the Middle Ages, led to social changes.

The Big Idea

Europe's political and social systems underwent great changes in the late Middle Ages.

Key Terms and People

Magna Carta, p. 540

Parliament, p. 541

Hundred Years' War, p. 542

Joan of Arc, p. 542

Black Death, p. 543



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TAKING NOTES

Use the graphic organizer online to take notes on the major events of the later Middle Ages and the political and social changes surrounding them.

If YOU were there...

You are a baron, one of England's great nobles, living in northern Britain. Winter is approaching, and it looks like it will be very cold soon. To prepare for the winter, you send some of your servants to a forest on your land to gather firewood. When they return, though, they don't have much wood. The king has chopped down many of the trees in your forest to build a new castle. Dismayed, you send a messenger to ask the king to pay a fair price for the wood, but he refuses.

How can you get the king to respect your rights?

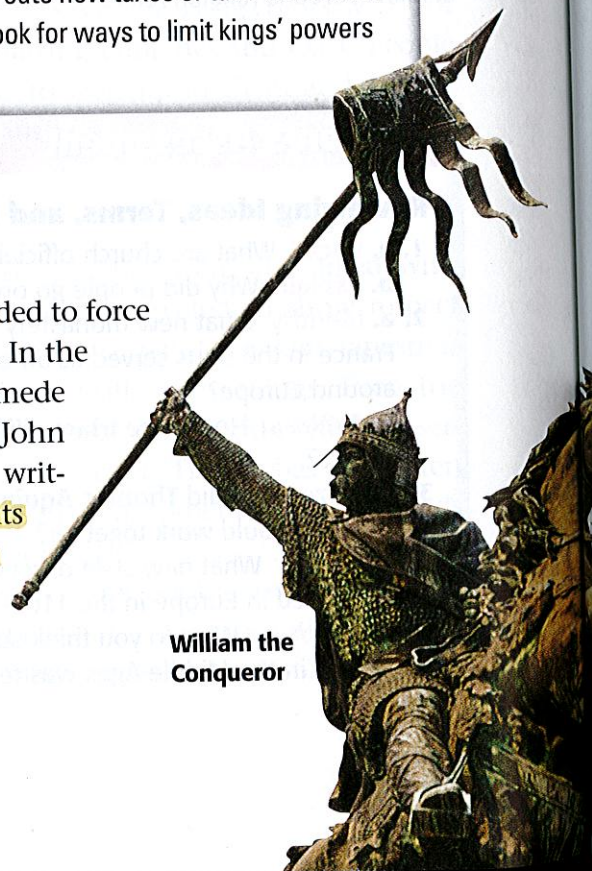
BUILDING BACKGROUND Beginning with William the Conqueror, the kings of England fought to increase their power. By the 1200s, the kings felt that they could do as they pleased, whether their nobles agreed with them or not. The kings' attitudes upset many nobles, especially when kings began to create new taxes or take the nobles' property. Some nobles began to look for ways to limit kings' powers and protect their own rights.

Magna Carta Causes Change in England

In 1215 a group of nobles decided to force the king to respect their rights. In the middle of a field called Runnymede near London, they made King John approve a document they had written. This document listing rights that the king could not ignore was called **Magna Carta**.

Its name is a Latin phrase meaning "Great Charter."

William the Conqueror



Primary Source

HISTORIC DOCUMENT

Magna Carta

Magna Carta was one of the first documents to protect the rights of the people. Magna Carta was so influential that the British still consider it part of their constitution. Some of its ideas are also in the U.S. Constitution.

Included in Magna Carta were 63 demands that English nobles made King John agree to follow. A few of these demands are listed here.



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Demand 31 defended people's right to own any property, not just wood.

Magna Carta guaranteed that everyone had the right to a fair trial.

To all free men of our kingdom we have also granted, for us and our heirs for ever, all the liberties written out below, to have and to keep for them and their heirs, of us and our heirs.

(16) No man shall be forced to perform more service for a knight's 'fee; or other free holding of land, than is due from it.

(31) Neither we nor any royal official will take wood for our castle, or for any other purpose, without the consent [permission] of the owner.

(38) In future no official shall place a man on trial upon his own unsupported statement, without producing credible [believable] witnesses to the truth of it.

—Magna Carta, from a translation by the British Library

ANALYSIS SKILL

ANALYZING PRIMARY SOURCES

In what ways do you think the ideas listed above influenced modern democracy?

The Effects of Magna Carta

Magna Carta required the king to honor certain rights. Among these rights was habeas corpus (HAY-bee-uhs KOHR-puhs), a Latin phrase meaning "you have the body." The right of habeas corpus meant that people could not be kept in jail without a reason. They had to be charged with a crime and convicted at a jury trial before they could be sent to prison. Before, kings could arrest people for no reason at all.

More importantly, Magna Carta required that everyone—even the king—had to obey the law. The idea that everyone must follow the law became one of the basic principles of English government.

Changes after Magna Carta

Magna Carta inspired the English to find more ways to limit the king's power. A council of

nobles was created to advise the king. **In time, the council developed into Parliament (PAHR-luh-muhnt), the highest law-making body in the United Kingdom today.** Over the years, membership in Parliament was opened to knights and town leaders. By the late Middle Ages, kings could do little without Parliament's support.

The English continued to work to secure and protect their rights. To ensure that everyone was treated fairly, people demanded that judges be free of royal control. Many people believed judges chosen by the king would always side with him. Eventually, in the late 1600s, the king agreed to free the courts of his control. This creation of an independent judicial system was a key step in bringing democracy to England.

READING CHECK

Summarizing How did Magna Carta and Parliament limit the king's power?

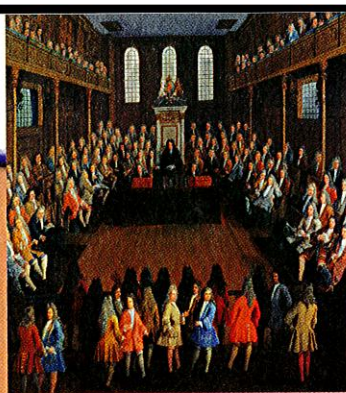
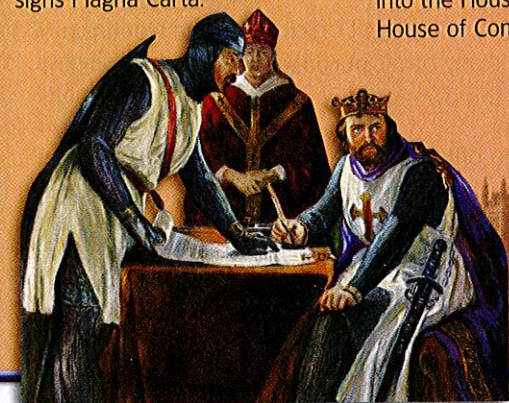
Beginnings of Democracy in England

**QUICK
FACTS**
1230s The first Parliament meets.

1295 Knights, townsmen, and priests are invited to join Parliament.

1200
1450
1700
1215 King John signs Magna Carta.

1330s Parliament is divided into the House of Lords and the House of Commons.

1679 The Habeas Corpus Act reinforces the ideas set up in Magna Carta.

1688 English judges win independence from royal control.

**ANALYSIS
SKILL**
READING TIME LINES

How long after Magna Carta was signed was habeas corpus made into law?

**THE IMPACT
TODAY**

The French honor Joan of Arc with a national holiday on the second Sunday of May.

The Hundred Years' War

Although Magna Carta changed England's government, it had no effect outside of that country. Kings in other parts of Europe continued to rule as they always had. Eventually, however, these kings also had to face great political changes.

The Course of the War

One of the countries in which political change occurred was France. In 1328 the king of France died with no sons, and two men claimed his throne. One was French. The other was the king of England. In the end, the French man became king.

This did not sit well with the English king, and a few years later he invaded France. This invasion began **a long conflict between England and France that came to be called the Hundred Years' War.**

At first the English armies did well, winning most of the battles. After nearly 100 years of fighting, however, a teenage

peasant girl, **Joan of Arc**, rallied the French troops. Although the English eventually captured and killed Joan, it was too late. The French drove the English from their country in 1453.

Results of the War

The Hundred Years' War changed the governments of both England and France. In England, Parliament's power grew because the king needed Parliament's approval to raise money to pay for the costly war. As Parliament gained more influence, the king lost power.

In France, on the other hand, the king's power grew. During the war, the king had become popular with his nobles. Fighting the English had created a bond between them. As a result, the nobles supported the king after the war as well.

READING CHECK **Contrasting** How did the governments of England and France change after the war?

The Black Death

While the English and French fought the Hundred Years' War, an even greater crisis arose. This crisis was the **Black Death**, a deadly plague that swept through Europe between 1347 and 1351.

The plague originally came from central and eastern Asia. Unknowingly, traders brought rats carrying the disease to Mediterranean ports in 1347. From there it quickly swept throughout much of Europe. Fleas that feasted on the blood of infected rats passed on the plague to people.

The Black Death was not caused by one disease but by several different forms of plague. One form called bubonic plague (byoo-BAH-nik PLAYG) could be identified by swellings called buboes that appeared on victims' bodies. Another even deadlier form could spread through the air and kill people in less than a day.

The Black Death killed so many people that many were buried quickly without priests or ceremonies. In some villages nearly everyone died or fled as neighbors fell ill. In England alone, about 1,000 villages were abandoned.

The plague killed millions of people in Europe and millions more around the world. Some historians think Europe lost about a third of its population—perhaps 25 million people. This huge drop in population caused sweeping changes in Europe.

In most places, the manor system fell apart completely. There weren't enough people left to work in the fields. Those peasants and serfs who had survived the plague found their skills in high demand. Suddenly, they could demand wages for their labor. Once they had money, many fled their manors completely, moving instead to Europe's growing cities.

READING CHECK Identifying Cause and

Effect What effects did bubonic plague have in Europe?

SUMMARY AND PREVIEW Magna Carta, the Hundred Years' War, and the Black Death changed European society. In the next section, you will learn about other changes in society, changes brought about by religious differences.

Section 4 Assessment

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ONLINE QUIZ

Reviewing Ideas, Terms, and People

- a. Identify** What document did English nobles hope would limit the king's power?

b. Explain How was the creation of **Parliament** a step toward the creation of democracy in England?
- a. Identify** Who rallied the French troops during the **Hundred Years' War**?

b. Elaborate The Hundred Years' War caused much more damage in France than in England. Why do you think this was the case?
- a. Describe** What was the **Black Death**?

b. Explain How did the Black Death contribute to the decline of the manor system?

c. Elaborate Why do you think the Black Death was able to spread so quickly through Europe?

Critical Thinking

- Evaluating** Copy the diagram below. Use it to rank the significance of the effects of Magna Carta, the Hundred Years' War, and the Black Death. Next to the diagram, write a sentence to explain your choices.

Most Significant

1.

2.

3.

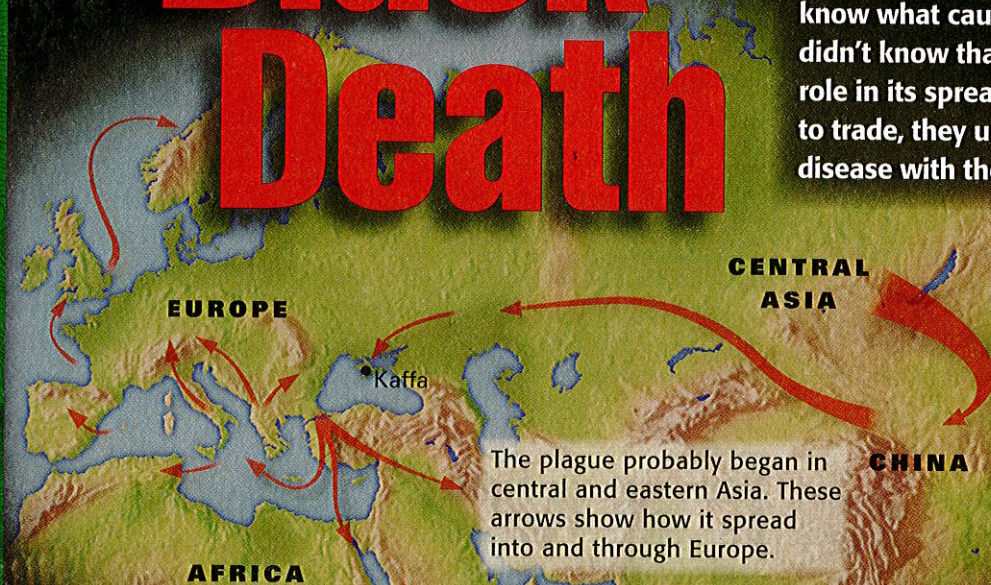
Least Significant

FOCUS ON WRITING

- Rating Importance** After reading this section, you'll probably want to add King John to your list. You should also start to think about which people were the most important. Rank the people on your list from most to least important.

The Black Death

"And they died by the hundreds," wrote one man who saw the horror, "both day and night." The Black Death had arrived. The Black Death was a series of deadly plagues that hit Europe between 1347 and 1351, killing millions. People didn't know what caused the plague. They also didn't know that geography played a key role in its spread—as people traveled to trade, they unwittingly carried the disease with them to new places.




This ship has just arrived in Europe from the east with trade goods—and rats with fleas.

The fleas carry the plague and jump onto a man unloading the ship. Soon, he will get sick and die.

VIDEO

Traders Carry
the Plague

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The plague is so terrifying that many people think it's the end of the world. They leave town for the country, spreading the Black Death even farther.

People dig mass graves to bury the dead. But often, so many victims are infected that there is no one left to bury them.

The garbage and dirty conditions in the town provide food and a home for the rats, allowing the disease to spread even more.

So many people die so quickly that special carts are sent through the streets to gather the bodies.

**GEOGRAPHY
SKILLS**

INTERPRETING MAPS

1. How did the Black Death reach Europe from Asia?
2. What helped spread the plague within Europe?