



Principle Approach® Education

PILGRIM HISTORY PLAYS

PLAY I

PLANTING TIME— THE MAGNA CHARTA

compiled and written by Kay Bullock

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MAGNA CARTA of KING JOHN A.D. 1215

It was on the 15th of June 1215 that King John accepted the forty-eight Articles of the Barons at Runnymede, a meadow of about one hundred acres between Windsor and Staines in the county of Berkshire. These articles were then embodied in a charter which provided the basic fundamental principle of human rights, since known as Magna Carta. On the 19th June 12 copies were sealed and sent to lords of the manors throughout England. Of these, only 4 remain. This translation was taken from the original now lying in Lincoln Cathedral.

John, by the grace of God, King of England, Lord of Ireland, Duke of Normandy and Aquitaine, and Count of Angou: To his Archbishops, Bishops, Abbots, Earls, Barons, Justiciaries, Foresters, Sheriffs, Reeves, Ministers and to all Bailiffs and faithful subjects, Greetings. Know that in the presence of God, and for the health of Our soul, and the souls of Our ancestors and heirs, to the honour of God, and the exaltation of the Holy Church, and amendments of Our kingdom, by the advice of Our reverend fathers, Stephen, Archbishop of Canterbury, Primate of all England, and Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church; Henry, Archbishop of Dublin; William of London, Peter of Winchester, Jocelin of Bath and Gloucestre, Hugh of Lincoln, Walter of Worcester, William of Coventry, and Benedict of Rochester, Master Pandulf, the Pope's subdeacon; Brother Aymeric, Master of the Knights Templar in England; and the noble persons, William Marshall, Earl of Pembroke; William, Earl of Salisbury; William, Earl of Warren; William, Earl of Arundel; Aland de Galloway, Constable of Scotland; Warin Fitz-Gerald, Peter Fitz-Herbert, Hubert de Burgh, Seneschal of Poitou, Hugh de Neville, Matthew Fitz-Herbert, Thomas Basset, Alan Basset, Philip Daubeny, Robert de Roppehay, John Marshal, John Fitz-Dugh, and others, Our loyal subjects.

We have, in the first place, granted to God, and by this Our present Charter confirmed for Us and Our heirs forever — That the English Church shall be free, its rights undiminished, its liberties unimpaired. And that We wish this to be observed appears from the fact that We of Our own free will, before the outbreak of the disputes between Us and Our barons, granted and confirmed by Charter the freedom of elections, which is considered most important and necessary to the English Church. We have also granted to all the free men of Our kingdom, for Us and Our heirs forever, all the liberties underwritten, to have and to hold to them and their heirs of Us and Our heirs. If any of Our earls, barons or others who hold lands of Us by knights service shall die, and at the time of his heir shall be of full age and owe a relief, he shall have his inheritance, on payment of ancient relief. If any such heir shall be under age and a ward, he shall, when he comes of age, have his inheritance without relief or fine.

The guardian of the land of any such heir shall take therefrom only reasonable revenues, customs, and services, without destruction and waste of men or property; and if We shall have committed the wardship of any such to a sheriff, and he commits destruction, We will take amends from him, and the land shall be committed to two lawful and discreet men of that fee, who shall be answerable for the issues to Us.

The guardian, so long as he shall have the wardship of the land, shall keep up and maintain the houses, parks, fishponds, mills, everything pertaining thereto, out of the issues of the same, and shall restore the whole to the heir when he comes of age, stocked with ploughs and grain as the season requires and the issues of the land can reasonably bear. Heirs shall be married without loss of status, and the marriage shall be made known to the heir's next of kin before it be contracted. A widow, on the death of her husband, shall immediately and without difficulty have her marriage portion and inheritance. She may remain in her husband's house for forty days after her husband's death, within which time her dower shall be assigned to her.



INTRODUCTION

NARRATOR I: In these Pilgrim History plays, we start with England. On the Chain of Christianity®, moving westward from the continent of origins or Asia, to Europe the continent of development, and now to England during the reign of King John, 1199 A.D. to 1215 A.D. We start here because our present Liberties began in England by people who were oppressed by the tyrannical rule of kings and the Church of Rome. We also think it necessary to recall the reign of King Alfred, 849 A.D. to 899 A.D., because he was the great Saxon King and a devout Christian who brought forth English laws and customs in the light of the Bible, specifically the Ten Commandments. Alfred also fought off the pagan Danes and began the work of uniting England under the laws that were rooted in Christianity which the Saxon kings had adopted.

NARRATOR II: This certainly sounds like a good idea and a king who had the interest of England at heart in observing the admonitions of the Holy Scriptures especially the Ten Commandments. But what happened after this? Why did not the other monarchs observe these Biblical Laws?

NARRATOR I: Because not all monarchs are alike in this manner, and instead of observing these Biblical Laws, took the opportunity of their sovereignty into their own hands for their own gains. And this is the reason why finally in our own Constitution of the United States of America we have the checks and balances to limit the power of the Legislature, Congress, and the President, who are, as you well know, elected by the people to represent them. King John's great grandfather, King Henry the First, was more just and wise in that he issued a Coronation Charter known as the Charter of Liberties, which has since been regarded as a model of the Great Charter of King John's reign. This Charter said to all King Henry's subjects, "I, through fear of god and the love which I have toward you all . . . take away all the bad customs by which the kingdom of England was unjustly oppressed . . ."

NARRATOR II: Now I can see that it is indeed important to look at this period on the Chain of Christianity moving westward, in *The Christian History of the Constitution of the United States of America*, Vol. I: *Christian Self-Government*, compiled by Verna M. Hall, page 403, as related by John Locke in "Some Thoughts Concerning Education," 1690 A.D. In referring to the Laws of England, he wrote, ". . . I think the right way for a Gentleman to study Our Law, which he does not design for his Calling, is to take a View of our English Constitution and Government, in the ancient Books of the Common Law; and some more modern Writers, who out of them have given an account of this Government. And having got a true Idea of that, then to read our History, and with it joyn in every King's Reign the Laws then made. This will give an insight into the reason of our Statutes and shew the true ground upon which they came to be made, and what Weight they ought to have."

NARRATOR I: That is correct! And now we will show in this play the times in England during the reign of King John and how the beleaguered nobles, barons, and freemen stood up for the Englishmen's Rights and drew up a Paper to solve the many treacheries of King John. So they thought out and wrote down on paper answers to their many problems in customs and laws. Eventually King John was made to stamp his approval upon this Great Paper.



NARRATOR II: But remember, persecution and sovereign rule denied full flower of the idea of the individual rights for four hundred more years. Only in 1620 when the Pilgrims sailed in the *Mayflower* to Plymouth in America were the ideas from this Magna Charta and the Common Law prayerfully and carefully woven into the Mayflower Compact. The colonies endured more persecutions by the mother country, England. Then after a century or more was formed the Bill of Rights and the Constitution of the United States of America.

NARRATOR I: So briefly have we described the occurrences leading to our own freedoms; but now we will show you in this play what happened in the reign of King John, his character and untamed treachery, and the steps the noblemen and freemen endeavored to take to put a stop to tyrannical rule by kings. We first show you a boy of age twelve endeavoring to study the Magna Charta, and how he had a dream in which he was aroused to understand the reason we should know our history.

[curtain]

ACT I: A BOY AND HIS LESSON ON THE MAGNA CHARTA

SCENE: On outside of curtain: A young boy about age twelve is seated and reading his assignment on the Magna Charta. He interrupts his study by slowly blowing up a huge bubble with his bubble gum and plays with his yo yo—repeating over and over again—Magna Charta, Magna Charta—that was then and is not for today! He then jumps up and turns cart wheels and runs around in circles playing with his yo yo. He then attempts to seat himself again and tries to continue with his lesson on the Magna Charta, but yawns and stretches and rubs his eyes in weariness and his head nods. He finally falls asleep on the ground.

[All at once a man appears in costume of King John's era and taps the boy on the shoulder. Startled, the boy appears to awaken with a start.]

BOY: Who are you and where did you come from? Look at those clothes!! How funny they are!! (Said laughing and pointing at the man.)

BARON: Well, you look just as funny to me! And how dare you laugh at me! I am of nobility, I will have you know, and it's up to me to judge! And I could ask you the same questions!

BOY: Well, why don't you introduce yourself!

BARON: I am Sir William of Williamshire, England and have come to warn you that King John will kill us all if we do not submit to his will!

BOY: King John!! (Said with emphasis.) He's only in history books and has nothing to do with today!!



BARON: Young lad, it has! You see, back in the thirteenth century, America was still a wilderness, and we did not even know it was in existence! We were having many troubles. England was not only under a king's rule, but most of England was dominated by the Roman Church and Pope and most of the property was owned by the Roman Church. We were taxed beyond our endurance. There were no schools for the greater population, so ignorance and superstition were very apparent!

BOY: But that was then and now is now; and I don't see why I have to study history that goes way back to your time!

BARON: Well, you will see the whys of knowing history when you are grown up, as there are good laws and bad laws. Usually if one keeps on top of what has occurred before and after the Magna Charta, then you have the implements with which to stem arbitrary rule by good rules chosen by the Individual, not by just a king or a pope. You must be aware of history to be sure that arbitrary rule does not occur again!

BOY: I see! If I don't study history and all, my rights as an American citizen could be taken away from me?

BARON: Absolutely, young lad, and worse, you might not be permitted to learn documented history. But instead you would be taught, and maybe even right now, slanted views which are no more true than that the moon is made of cheese! Let me show you England in the time of King John. England had no Declaration of Independence nor Constitution of the United States of America, but had rule only by a sovereign who could break to suit himself any law that had been made, and even the rich lords and barons and the rest of nobility were powerless. Punishment by torture was common then, and men had no Property Rights. To be able to read or write was unknown to most of the population. In other words, there were no Individual Rights under God. Boys and girls did not have books available to them as I see you have. But since you are asleep, evidently you take all your privileges for granted. If this would continue among the growing boys and girls, there is danger America could collapse under a one-man rule again. Young lad, I am going to show you exactly what it was like in England in the year 1214 a.d., and maybe you will take more seriously your history lessons and study.

[curtain]

ACT II: KING JOHN'S ARRIVAL BACK IN ENGLAND AFTER HIS DEFEAT AT THE BATTLE OF BOUVINES

PLAYERS: KING JOHN
KING'S KNIGHTS AND SOLDIERS
MESSENGER BOY

SCENE: This scene shows backdrop of English shore and boat carrying the King and his knights and soldiers. Scene gives the appearance that the boat from distant ship has just beached on the shore. The knights, soldiers, and the King are departing from the landed boat. There are soldiers waiting with

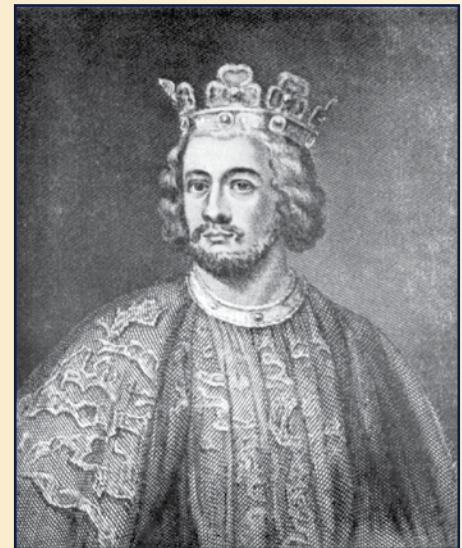


horses for the King and his men to continue homeward to his castle. King John is carrying on a conversation with his favorite knight, Sir Wilfred.

[*Curtain rises.* Have sound effects of waves rolling in on shore, also sound of wind, neighing of horses, and men's voices, as boat is beached.]

KING JOHN: (As he disembarks from landed boat) I never would have been beaten by Phillip the Second if those barons and lords had not deserted me after forty days. You see, Sir Wilfred, they claimed that the terms of their allegiance to me did not compel them to serve me more than forty days.

MESSENGER: (Approaching swiftly) Your Highness, (bowing to the King) welcome back to England! I have brought news to you that Geoffrey Fitzpiers is now dead!



COURTESY OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

KING JOHN

KING JOHN: It is well, he has gone to shake hands in the hereafter with our Primate Hubert, former Archbishop of Canterbury! Now I am truly King! I got my due, though, when I took from Fitzpiers his ten thousand marks! Now he can no longer threaten me! (Said laughing.)

SIR WILFRED: Aye, your Majesty, but there are still the barons and lords that do not agree with your rule as king. They, as Englishmen will fight for their rights. They believe God is Sovereign, and that you have persecuted them beyond what you should!

KING JOHN: Sir Wilfred, I will have them know God made me King to rule as I must! I am not fearful of them!

I will call upon the foreign leagues to help me fight and will pay for their help by taxing my subjects beyond what they ever dreamed! (Said laughing and swinging his sword in the air and making stabbing motions at the same time.)

SIR WILFRED: I believe, your Highness, that your horse is ready to take you back to the castle where you may carry out what you propose.

KING JOHN: By all means, Sir Wilfred, I will show those deserters their reward for losing the battle for me! (With a flourish turns to walk to his mount.)

[*curtain*]



ACT III: BARON EXPLAINS HOW ENGLAND WAS GOVERNED IN THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

SCENE: Outside of curtain is the Baron and the boy who is still having a dream.

BOY: I must say, Baron, that it must have been fun being able to have a horse and ride it. What was so bad about living then?

BARON: Well, I must admit, it was a great deal quieter than the motorcycles and au-tomobiles of your present time, lad. But let me explain the next scene. It's impor-tant to understand historically this particular time and who ruled all of Europe.

BOY: Yes, go on, Baron, I'm listening!

BARON: Remember, that England in the thirteenth century was still under the Church of Rome; therefore the Pope was the supreme authority in both Church and State. This is why in the next scene I show you, that neither the senior monks nor the junior monks can elect the archbishop of Canterbury.

BOY: Why is that?

BARON: The answer is as plain as the nose on my face! Because there is no local self-government in England. Even the king must submit to the authority of the Pope. As I continue to show you, you must understand that the story of the Magna Charta is an important step.

First, it begins to move England away from the control of the Church of Rome and towards becoming an independent Nation.

Second, the action of the Barons in restricting the Divine Rights of King John is the first act in modern history in limiting monarchy which later would lead England into a Constitutional Monarchy.

Thirdly, England's Great Paper is the first written Document of Government identifying and protecting the life, liberty, and property of the individual.

And Fourthly, Magna Charta is an important link in the development of Individual Liberty culminating in the Constitution of the United States of America with its Bill of Rights.

BOY: Very interesting! But show me the next scene before I wake up!

BARON: Well, before I show you the next scene, I must tell you what occurred before the Pope selected the next archbishop of Canterbury. King John now felt he was really King since the death of Geoffrey Fitzpiers. But who was to be the new archbishop of Canterbury? Now this is just what occurred. Some junior monks had a secret meeting and were endeavoring to gain a head start on the senior monks by electing on their own, a certain Reginald, was sent to Rome to get the Pope's approval. But the senior monks and the King found out about their scheme, and they gave in and all the monks



decided to elect King John's favorite, the Bishop of Norwich, as the new Archbishop of Canterbury. In the meantime, however, the Pope, heard the whole story, and denied the election by the King and senior monks, and instead elected Stephen Langton as the new Archbishop of Canterbury.

BOY: So what happened to the monks who did this deed?

BARON: Well! They were banished as traitors. The Pope then threatened the King with an interdict.

BOY: What a word!! What is an interdict?

BARON: An interdict means a denial by which persons are kept from attending divine services or enjoying certain church privileges. In other words, no burials, no marriages, no masses said. Finally, King John was forced to submit to and acknowledge Stephen Langton as the new Archbishop of Canterbury, and the King resigned his kingdom "to God, Saint Peter, and Saint Paul," which meant the payment of an annual sum of money.

BOY: In other words to get the King off the hook, the King had to bribe the Pope.

BARON: That is one way of putting it! So now the Pope took off three sentences one after the other, and empowered Stephen Langton publicly to receive King John into the favour of the church again. This done, King John is acting in his usual way, as this scene shows, with Stephen Langton and Robert Fitzwalter in audience with King John in an attempt to persuade him to change his ways and consider the plight of the English barons, lords, and freemen.

[curtain]

ACT IV: STEPHEN LANGTON'S MEETING WITH KING JOHN

PLAYERS: KING JOHN
STEPHEN LANGTON
ROBERT FITZWALTER
KING'S ADVISORS AND LORDS
PAGE BOY

SCENE: As the curtain rises, this scene opens on castle throne room. The king is seated on this throne with his audience of advisors and lords. A page boy trumpets the arrival of Stephen Langton and Robert Fitzwalter. The two men enter the throne room and bow and kneel to the King as they approach the throne.

STEPHEN LANGTON: Your Honor and Gracious King of England, as your Archbishop of Canterbury, I come representing the barons, lords, and freemen of your realm. Also with me is our Marshall of God and Holy Church, Robert Fitzwalter, who is, your Majesty, defending our Englishmen's rights.



KING JOHN: Speak for yourself, Fitzwalter! Are you also complaining about my sovereignty?

ROBERT FITZWALTER: Your Majesty, I am not complaining of your sovereignty, but to remind you of the Charter of your great-grandfather, Henry the First, the barons, lords, and freemen feel you have not given them the Englishmen's Law and have penalized them beyond endurance.

STEPHEN LANGTON: Your Majesty, that is right. They are taxed beyond the laws of the Charter. Also, you have had your officers and soldiers plunder the Church stores, and have taken away for your soldiers' use the food your freemen need for their families; also they have received no pay for their labors. You have taken the rich lords' daughters to wed them to your noblemen so you may gain more money. I humbly ask you, your Majesty, to please not do these inhuman deeds. Your people, who are Englishmen, are not deserving of such treatment! Please, your Majesty, all we ask is that you give back to your people their Rights as Englishmen, just as your great grandfather, Henry the First, gave them Rights!



STAINED GLASS WINDOW, SEE ILLUSTRATION NOTES

ARCHBISHOP STEPHEN LANGTON
"Architect of Magna Carta"

KING JOHN: Langton, I cannot comply! Why don't you mind your Church, and leave me to govern the State! Be gone now! Or I will call the guards! (Said with the flourish of his hand.)

ACTION: (Both Langton and Fitzwalter leave the throne room after bowing to the King.)

[curtain]

ACT V: GATHERING AT BURY ST. EDMUNDS CHURCH

BARON: Now you can see, young lad, it is very apparent by the action of King John that the Rights of Englishmen are not going to be honored by the King. Robert Fitzwalter, well known as "The Marshall of God and the Holy Church," and Stephen Langton, who had been approved by the Pope as Archbishop of Canterbury in place of Hubert, were not frightened by the King's threats, for they knew that God Almighty and the majority of the nobles would honor the Rights of the Englishmen.

BOY: And the barons and nobles were the Englishmen.

BARON: Right! Therefore, Fitzwalter and Langton decided to proclaim the Rights of Englishmen under God by drawing up a charter in writing so all could see what their Rights were and to endeavor to have King John sign this charter even though it had to be done at the point of a sword! Langton called the Barons and Lords together again at Bury St. Edmunds, where they claimed their Saxon Right to force the King to deal justly with the people. So we go on to the next scene.



Boy: How exciting! I can hardly wait to see what happened next!

[curtain]

ACT VI: DRAFTING OF THE MAGNA CHARTA

PLAYERS: ROBERT FITZWALTER
STEPHEN LANGTON
BARONS AND LORDS
FREEMEN

SCENE: The scene is at Bury St. Edmunds Church where the barons, lords, and freemen are gathering. Robert Fitzwalter and Stephen Langton enter the scene.

STEPHEN LANGTON: We are gathered here to claim again the Charter of Henry the First. As the Law of the Land, you know, this is a modification of that of Edward the Confessor, and combines the old Saxon Laws with changes made by the Normans. Only this time we will put it in writing so all may see it from time to time and it will bear the King's signature and seal! We have decided this has to be done or we are all in danger of not only losing our Englishmen's Rights but our lives! So how many of you have grievances?

ROBERT FITZWALTER: Yes! I will begin, no man should be imprisoned without a fair trial and we must not sell, delay, or deny justice to anyone!

BARONS, LORDS, & FREEMEN: (One by one) I have, for the King's officers have taken away food for his soldiers that I had set aside for my family, and without payment!

ANOTHER: Aye, they burn't down my barn, took my cattle, pigs, and chickens! All because I would not join him in his battle!

STILL ANOTHER: My wife's heart is broken as my daughter was rudely taken without our permission to be wed to one of the King's noblemen so he could gain more money!

ANOTHER: (In a sobbing tone of voice) Yes, even my wife was taken from me to serve in the castle kitchen. Now what can I do to get her back!

A FREEMAN: Also, foreign merchants are in danger of losing their lives. We must free London in order that we may have free trade, and this should also apply to other cities and boroughs!

STEPHEN LANGTON: We have heard and know your many grievances, and now we must do something about it! We will draw up a *written charter* so all may see it. We will present it to the King. And the sooner we do it, the better it will be!



ROBERT FITZWALTER: I will call upon our friend, the Friar, to outline it. Then we will review it and have it ready by the sixth of January to present it to the King!

THE FRIAR: I am ready, your honor, to write down what you want in the Charter.

STEPHEN LANGTON: First we will put in the Charter, that the Church of England shall be free from the King's officers attacking the Church stores, and harassing of the priests and friars shall stop! Also, there shall be no tax or money paid on our kingdom to the King unless it be by the general council of our kingdom; exceptions are a fine paid for a prisoner for a great wrong, or for making the eldest son a knight, and for just one time only, for marrying of anyone's eldest daughter. For these it should be a for reasonable sum of money.

A FREEMAN SPEAKING UP: We should also insert in this written Charter that the City of London shall have its ancient liberties and its free customs by land, as well as by water!

ANOTHER FREEMAN: How about the other cities? Shouldn't we also put in that we will grant that all other cities, boroughs, towns, and ports shall have all their liberties and free customs?

ACTION: (There is a great stirring among the gathering, and one by one they agree that what has been said should be included in the Charter.)

STEPHEN LANGTON: My good countrymen, we all seem to be in agreement on this Charter and the contents. Now the Friar has written down your comments and additions will be made. However, Fitzwalter and I must rewrite it so it will be presentable to the King. But before this is done, we will show it to the lords, barons, and freemen throughout the kingdom, so all may see its contents. Is that agreed upon?

ACTION: (All the barons, lords, freemen rise up and shout in agreement.)

[curtain]

ACT VII: BOY'S RESPONSE TO LESSON ON THE MAGNA CHARTA

SCENE: On the outside of curtain are the Baron and boy both seated on a bench.

BARON: Note, young lad, now you will begin to see in real life some of the freedoms you now enjoy, for this scene is a synopsis showing Robert Fitzwalter, Stephen Langton, and the Friar meeting in the castle of Robert Fitzwalter. The reason for this meeting was to put the Magna Charta in the Latin tongue which most lords and barons understood at that time, because the old Saxon laws to restore to all Englishmen their rights was upper-most in their minds. You must understand that the Latin language was known by those who were most influential in the government of England.

BOY: How strange it must have been to understand Latin!



BARON: What may seem strange to you, was most natural for the nobility of that time! Now pay attention! The Friar had notes on the grievances of the lords, barons, and freemen when they met at Bury St. Edmunds Church. Now it was to be printed by the Friar onto a parchment to show everyone after the King had signed it. By word of mouth the Latin would be transcribed into the dialect of certain parts of England so all could plainly understand the contents of the Charter.

PLAYERS: ROBERT FITZWALTER
STEPHEN LANGTON
THE FRIAR

SCENE: The curtain rises showing a room in the castle with stone walls, and a table with a rug type cover on it. There can be a candle in candleholder, a quill pen, and also an ink well. A chair is placed at the table for the Friar where he will be writing the Charter. There are two long benches upon which Robert Fitzwalter and Stephen Langton are to be seated.

ACTION: (The Friar enters the room and seats himself at the table. The other two men, Fitzwalter and Langton, enter and seat themselves on the benches. The contents of the Magna Charta are on the table where the actor taking the part of the Friar may read from it. There is also a scroll where he will appear to be writing. It may be the same paper he reads from.)

FRIAR: Shall we begin with the Church of England? That is, the Church of England shall be free to exercise its Rights and Liberties? There will be no interference of the King's officers or nobles, nor shall the Church stores be plundered. Also, we shall be assured of all the underwritten liberties to be had and held by freemen of our kingdom for us and for our heirs and by their heirs forever. And number two, because the King has taken upon himself the taxing beyond endurance, we put, there shall be no money or tax on our kingdom paid to the King unless it be by the general council of our kingdom, *except* for a fine paid for a prisoner for a great wrong, or making an eldest son a knight, and *for just one time only*, for marrying of an eldest daughter, and for these purposes it shall be a reasonable sum of money.

FITZWALTER: (He rises from the bench and walks towards the Friar, to emphasize his point). Very well, Friar! Next should be inserted regarding our ports and the customs. Don't you think?

FRIAR: Yes, your Lordship! Since it is the freeman who operate the ports and customs, and so there will be no more interference by the King's officers, I will write it this way, "That the City of London shall have its ancient liberties and free customs, as well as by water, furthermore, we will grant that all other cities, boroughs, towns, and ports shall have all their liberties and free customs."

LANGTON: That is very fair and properly put! Now as the King has taken upon himself to tax property and person in extreme, put in writing the following, "There shall be held a general council of the kingdom concerning a tax or certain sum charged on the person or property. Except in the three cases said in



the preceeding case. For the assessing of taxes, we shall summon the archbishop, bishops, abbots, earls, and greater barons of the realm, *individually*, by our letters. For summoning the others, it shall be the duty of the sheriffs and baliffs that all are to be summonsed forty days before the appointed day of this meeting.”

FITZWALTER: So many innocent persons have been punished and put to death by the King’s officers and sheriffs; therefore, we know how important it is to prevent this happening in the future, so please take this down, young Friar. (Fitzwalter walking toward a window with hands behind his back.) “A freeman shall not be punished for a small wrong done but only according to the size of the offence; and for a great crime and according to the wickedness of it; however his land or merchandize *shall not* be taken from him on account of his crime. A vassal or serf shall be punished in the *same manner*, and he will be allowed to keep his wagons and horses if he falls into our hands as prisoner. None of the punishments shall be taxed except by oath or declaration of honest men of the neighborhood!”

LANGTON: Well done! We are writing history in this document! Let’s continue the next, “That the earls or barons shall not be punished *but* by those over them who are their peers or equals.”

FRIAR: Aye! That shall be written and well taken, and then some day will be heeded even by a king!

LANGTON: Yea, Friar! How about the knights? This has happened to knighted lords also! So write, first, “No constable or bailiff of ours shall take corn or other belongings of any man unless he at that time gives him money for it, or if the seller hath put off payment until some future time of his own free will. And next put, “no constable shall make seizure of goods of any knight to give money for castleguard, if he himself cannot do it, or if by another man, in case he cannot give the money through any reasonable cause.”

FITZWALTER: We shall also add, that “no sheriff or bailiff of ours or any other shall take horses or carts of any freeman for carriage, without the consent of the said freeman.”

LANGTON: (Getting up from a bench and stretching) Right! and “Neither shall we nor our bailiffs take any man’s timber for our castles or other uses, unless by the consent of the owner of the timber!”

FRIAR: Your Honor, I shall insert that in the next paragraph, as I believe the freemen have made special complaints about the stealing of their timber.

LANGTON: Yea, young Friar! A special paragraph should be inserted regarding stolen lumber by the officers and constables!

FITZWALTER: Recall how King John has summoned his officers to put out eyes, severe limbs with no pity on a man’s own wholebeing, when he wants to force goods and money from an Englishman! So, Friar, please insert a short but most needed paragraph, thus, “Nothing from henceforth shall be given or taken for a Writ of Inquisition (that is, *written inquiry*) of life or limb, but it shall be granted freely and not denied.”



LANGTON: Also, in remembrance of what the King did to poor Arthur, rightful heir to the throne, just think what the King could do and has done to a freeman imprisoned, by bodily harm and torture and death. So to right this grievance and for Englishmen's Rights, we will also make a positive point by inserting this paragraph, young Friar, "No freeman shall be taken or imprisoned or put out of possession wrongfully or denied actual possession, or outlawed or banished, or in any way destroyed, nor will we pass upon him, nor will we send upon him, unless by the lawful judgment of his superiors, or by the Law of the Land."

FRIAR: I have that, kind sir! Now I should continue with the next paragraph if you please. "We shall sell to no man, we will not deny to any man either justice or right. . . ." Does that suffice your Honor?

LANGTON: You have taken your notes in accordance with the grievances heard at our gathering at Bury St. Edmunds. Now we will continue with the next issue, "If any one has been dispossessed or deprived by us, without the lawful judgment of his peers, of his lands, castles, liberties, or right, we will forthwith restore them to him, and if any dispute arise upon this head or leader, let the matter be decided by the five and twenty barons hereafter mentioned for the preservation of the peace. . . ." Also, Friar, in the next paragraph we need to insert, "All unjust and illegal fines made by us, and all americiaments, that is, fines, inflicted on an offender at the discretion of the court imposed unjustly and contrary to the Law of the land, shall be entirely given up, or else be left to the decision of the twenty barons hereafter mentioned for the preservation of the peace or of the major part of them, together with the aforesaid archbishop of Canterbury, if he can be present, and others whom he shall think fit to invite. . . ."

FITZWALTER: In closing, I will quote to thee its deserving peace and prosperity again, "All the aforesaid customs and liberties, which we have granted to be holden, or continued unbroken, in our kingdom, as much as it belongs to us, all people in our kingdom, as well the clergy and people, shall observe, as far as they are concerned, towards their dependents." Now then, make another paragraph here and closing with the time and place of the signing to be left to the decision of the King or the demand if he refuses this, of the lords, barons, and freemen. "And whereas for the Honor of God and the Amendments of the faults, of our kingdom, and for better quieting the discord that has arisen between us and our barons, we have granted all these things aforesaid, willing to render them firm and lasting, we do give and grant our subjects the underwritten security, namely, that the barons may choose five-and-twenty barons of the kingdom whom they think convenient, and cause to be observed, the peace and liberties we have granted them, and by this our present Charter confirmed in this manner. . . . Given under our hand, in the presence of the witnesses above named and many others. We will meet at the time and place whenever King John so chooses, as long as it is within a reasonable time. Otherwise, we together with the lords and barons will have to choose the time and place."

LANGTON: Well, gentlemen, that covers all our present grievances, don't you think?

FITZWALTER: Aye, your Lordship. And now to present it to the King.



FRIAR: I understand the King is not in his castle. I will endeavor to find out from my good friend, Friar Joseph, at the castle, the King's whereabouts, and we will seek him out wherever he hides!

LANGTON: Thank you, kind Friar! We will then await your word as to where to take this Charter for the King to read. So I must bid you both farewell, and may God go with you both and protect you!

ACTION: (Langton and the Friar leave the scene, and Fitzwalter rolls up the Charter and to protect it, hides it in a secret hiding place by removing a loose large stone in the wall and inserts the Charter in the hole, replacing the stone in wall.)

[curtain]

BARON: Now lad, did you see what was happening in this last scene in the construction of the Magna Charta?

LAD: I can see that after many years of persecution by kings and popes, that the barons, lords, and nobles are rising to claim Rights that are inherited and Godgiven.

BARON: Right! Even the lords and nobles see that justice must not only be done to them but to the vassals and serfs under them! And what else do you see in this draft of the Magna Charta?

LAD: I see for the first time the people will have good laws in writing and available to them to insist that wrong be not continued and more respect for the individual be insisted upon.

BARON: Well done, lad! Now let's go to the next scene to see if the King can be persuaded to sign this Charter!

[curtain]

ACT VIII: THE TREACHERY OF KING JOHN

BARON: When King John heard what the barons and lords had sworn to do, he fled to London and hid himself in a place where he thought he would be safe. The barons and lords, however, had now drawn up the Charter as we have already shown in Act Two, Scene One. And were anxious to show it to the King, before any more time went by. The barons had friends at the castle and word was given out where King John had fled. So the barons and lords traveled to London. It was the sixth of January when the barons and lords met with the King. After the King had read the Charter, he decided it would be safe for him to say he would grant and sign the Charter at Easter. He did this so he could raise up an army in the meantime and large enough to beat Langton and all the barons and lords. But, as we will see, this did not happen.

LAD: This King was not only mean, he was sly and told a lot of lies, didn't he?



BARON: Right! Now we go to the next scene. The time is January 6, 1215.

PLAYERS: KING JOHN AND HIS COUNCIL
STEPHEN LANGTON
ROBERT FITZWALTER
BARONS
LORDS AND FREEMEN
KING'S GUARD AT KING'S HIDING PLACE

SCENE: Stephen Langton and Robert Fitzwalter with barons and lords are arriving at King John's hiding place in London. All are dressed in armor. Each has his sword and are marching in to meet with the King. A guard is at a closed door guarding the King. And is taken by surprise as the barons approach.

GUARD: (Drawing his sword out of his scabbard) What is thy business and who do you think you are to come so boldly upon me!

LANGTON: We come to confer with King John, as we know he is here. We demand audience with the King, or we will pierce thee through with our swords!

GUARD: My life is not safe if I fight you off, nor if I let you through this door, as the King will also kill me! Go on in as I am more on your side than with this wicked monarch I serve!

ACTION: (With great noise and determination, the barons and lords with Langton and Fitzwalter enter the hiding place of the King and because they are use to bowing to their King, do so; but the King rises in surprise to greet them.)

KING JOHN: Well! Welcome Langton and Fitzwalter and company! So good to see you again! It must be hard for you to be apart from your sovereign for any length of time. (Said in a sarcastic tone of voice) Now what is thy complaint?

LANGTON: Your Majesty, we are forced to come before you in regards to our Englishmen's Rights, which you still sorely overlook! It has reached the point where we demand you look at the Charter we have drawn up on parchment which revives the old Saxon Laws. This is the Charter your great grandfather drew up, but since, it has been sorely neglected and not kept by your Majesty!

KING JOHN: (Stroking his beard) Langton, I do not have my lords here nor the equipment to sign your Charter. Let's say we do it this coming Easter time, and meet in a more appropriate place to sign such an important paper! Is that agreed upon?

FITZWALTER: So be it your Majesty, we will bring it to Oxford and have you sign it there! We beg you to not delay in this longer!



LANGTON: We bid you adieu your Majesty, and we will bring the Charter for you to sign at Easter time at Oxford, A fitting place for an important event.

ACTION: (After the barons and Langton and Fitzwalter departed, the King is pacing the floor with his hands folded behind him and speaks to his favorite knight.)

KING JOHN: Sir Wilfred, I'll tell you what we can do. Let's raise such a large army before Easter that instead of my signing their Charter, I can destroy them all! Tell the guards and soldiers to kidnap the young men of the countryside and train them to fight for me. Now be quick about it, as time has a way of fleeting too fast! We'll show them who will rule! (Said stamping his feet and throwing his arms in the air, and pacing the floor back and forth.)

[curtain]

ACT IX: EASTER TIME

BARON: The time is Easter, 1215. The place is Oxford, England.

SOUND EFFECTS: (Hear the gathering of 2,000 knights, galloping and neighing of horses, and the clashing of metal against metal armors of the knights and their swords. Hear the gathering of the knights with their esquires! Their armour is glistening in the sun and their horses neighing as they sniff the air! There is a stimulus of freedom in the air! The Archbishop of Canterbury, Stephen Langton, and Robert Fitzwalter, known as the "Marshall of God and Holy Church" are there to meet with King John and show him the contents of the Charter and therefore have him sign it. Will he sign it as he promised he would?)

BARON: Now take notice lad, as the curtain opens on scene of room in castle at Oxford, King John is standing at the end of a table. His advisors are also standing around him and Langton and Fitzwalter enter the room with the Charter which is a rolled up parchment scroll. They bow in honor to the King.

LANGTON: Your Majesty here is the Charter in writing for you to read and to sign and stamp on the royal seal in approvement. We leave it here and our esquire with it, so he may bring it back with your signature after you have read it.

KING JOHN: By all means, I must read it, but whether I will sign it depends on its contents. Go now, and your esquire will return it to you!



SCENE: Langton and Fitzwalter bow in farewell to the King and leave the room. King John scrutinizes the contents of the Charter. But when finding out its terms, he throws it up into the air and exclaims wildly in a loud tone of voice.

KING JOHN: Do they now expect me to sign this paper? Well, they have their nerve! Do they think I would sign a paper that would make me a slave? Who do they think I am? Well, I'll have them know I can do just exactly what I please! Because the subjects have no rights that I am bound to respect!! Esquire! Take this impertinent paper back to your masters and tell them I refuse to conform to their decrees!! Once and for all!!

ESQUIRE: (Looking startled and alarmed and picking up the pages of scroll and bowing to the King, backs out through the door, leaving the King in a rage.)

[curtain]

ACT X: MESSENGER OF ASSURANCE

BARON: King John now knows he has no alternative but to heed the warnings of the Archbishop of Canterbury and Robert Fitzwalter, the Marshall of God and Holy Church, also, most of the lords and barons and freemen. The King is in fear of his life now, and knows this will not continue if he does not submit. In the meantime messengers have been sent out to notify the countrymen of the upcoming meeting for the signing of this Magna Charta. This King's tyranny is drawing to a close. The only way to notify the country people in those days was either by a foot messenger or by horseback. Horseback was faster than any means of travel then, my lad. Therefore, a knight, who was dedicated to bringing into existence again the Rights of Englishmen, offered to notify the country people of this very good news. Since fear and insecurity were prevalent in those days, what a relief it must have been to know justice might once again be the rule of the day. Many were the ones notified that day in old England but we will show only one instance of the carrying out of the good news. Now lad, recall how the King would take the daughters of rich lords and barons and have them marry his noblemen for a goodly sum of money, and take the sons for knighthood, and force the parents to pay dearly for this. So also did the King take the sons and daughters, and wives of the plain country people for military duty, chores in the castle, and the daughters at times for rewards to the lower class in the castle for unmentionable means. So it is no wonder this particular yeoman that I will show you next, was in fear for his family upon hearing the approaching horse, for he did not know who the rider would be because usually it was one of the King's men and that meant bad news!

So the time now is early Spring of 1215.



PLAYERS: YEOMAN
VOICE OF YEOMAN'S WIFE
KNIGHT

BARON: Hear the approaching of a horse! See a yeoman in front of his dwelling ploughing the ground by hand. He now stops to wipe his brow from the exertion. All at once see him stop! See the expression of anxiety crossing his face! He looks toward his dwelling and lifts his voice in a warning to his wife and children. (Note: When the sound of the horse and rider approach, the backdrop can hide the horse while a knight in armour appears as though he has just tied his horse to a tree and he comes, striding slowly without being forceful, approaches the yeoman, and greets him.)

YEOMAN: (Before the knight approaches, he runs to the door of his dwelling to open it and calls out to his wife in a warning tone of voice) Elizabeth! Hide thyself and the children! I hear a horse approaching and it might be the King's sheriff again!

YEOMAN'S WIFE'S VOICE: Aye, Henry! I will hide and the children with me!

YEOMAN: (Going back to his ploughing. The knight steps out from behind the backdrop appearing to have just tied his horse to a tree and walks slowly in the direction of the yeoman.)

KNIGHT: Greetings kind sir, I am not of the royal household, but one of the castle owners and come to do no harm!

YEOMAN: It would be well, sir, if you assure me, as I have nothing left to give thee as the King's officers have already taken my grain and fruit I had grown for my family! So I assure you I have nothing left!

KNIGHT: I have come with good news, not bad news! I come to tell you that we knights, and those in authority such as the Archbishop of Canterbury and our Minister of God, Sir Robert Fitzwalter, also the lords, barons, and freemen have drawn up a Charter to restore our Rights as Englishmen, for the King to sign.

YEOMAN: Say not so! And how will ye get the King to sign such a Charter restoring our Englishmen's Rights?

KNIGHT: (Pulling his sword from the scabbard and putting the point into the ground) By the point of our swords! Before he kills us all, he will be made to sign this Charter!

YEOMAN: (With a big sigh of relief) So be it honorable knight! And it well may mean I can no longer fear for the safety and welfare of my family! What a relief that will be!

KNIGHT: The King keeps putting off signing this Charter, so now with the lords, barons, knights, and freemen, we will force the King to appear on June 15, 1215 at Runnymede to sign this Charter. I must be on my way again to notify others of this news, so farewell kind sir, and may God keep thee!



YEOMAN: May his Lordship be blest as you continue to bring this good news to me and my family! And God speed as you go forth on your journey with this news!

[*curtain*]

ACT XI: SIGNING OF THE MAGNA CHARTA AT RUNNYMEDE

BARON: Note this, lad! Word has gotten out that King John has disagreed wholly with this Charter and vowed he would not sign it. He has not been able to raise an army as he planned. This wretched King found himself helpless before the anger of the nation he had wronged. Therefore, he found no other alternative than to say he would sign it. Even with his hatred towards the paper he humbly complied by saying instead, “He was ready and willing to grant the demands of his loving subjects whenever they should appoint the time and place.”

So the barons appointed the fifteenth of June, 1215 the Year of Our Lord, as the time, and the place to be the Meadow of Council or Runnymede. So this scene, lad, will be in pantomime and open on the meeting of the barons, lords, friars, and the King with his twenty-four bishops and nobles, of which all but two were heart and soul with the barons. The King encamped on the left bank of the river, and men from each of the contracting parties met on a little island between the hosts.

PLAYERS: KING JOHN
KING JOHN’S BISHOPS AND LORDS
LANGTON
FITZWALTER
BARONS AND LORDS
FREEMEN

This is an important time for England. What is happening? Hear the galloping of horses and the clanking of the armor of knights, barons, and lords, and the others as they come on horseback from the City of Paines to meet at Runnymede to demand their Saxon Rights and limit the power of a tyrannical king.

[*curtain rises*]

SCENE: [*In pantomime*] A canopy with table and a throne type chair. The important barons and lords are approaching the canopy where there is a table and chair. In comes the King who is seated by his page boy. Fitzwalter now approaches with the Charter and hands it to the King. Fitzwalter then rests the point of his sword on the table in front of the King, and looks on as the King with half smile and unsteadiness takes the feathered quill pen from the page boy and dips it into the ink well and quickly signs the Charter ending with laughing and shaking his head. Then looking at the sword, he stamps the Royal Seal on the scroll. Langton then takes the Charter and inspects the King’s signature and seal and it is passed around for all to see.

[*curtain*]



“Seated in royal majesty, the king grants Magna Carta to his rebellious barons. This nineteenth-century engraving gives full rein to the Victorians’ image of kingship, endowing John with an ascendancy he surely could not have felt at Runnymede.”

—*Magna Carta: Liberty under the Law* (see Illustration notes)

ACT XII: SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MAGNA CHARTA

BOY: Well! At last! The barons and nobles have forced the King to sign the Great Charter! Now were all their problems solved when this was done?

BARON: Hardly, lad! But a big step had been taken in that it was in writing and presented to the subjects of King John.

BOY: As I saw, King John was a tyrannical sovereign, but when did the final crises of his reign begin?

BARON: Remember the first act in this play when King John was returning from battle which he lost to the King of France? Well, the barons had refused to follow their King to battle for the many wrongs done to them and the subjects of England, and then John prepared to march against them to force



obedience. But the barons rallied around Stephen Langton, who produced to them a copy of Henry the First's Charter of Liberties. After they had read this Charter of Liberties was when the barons resolved to fight for these Liberties even unto death!

Boy: Yes, and also the merchants of London turned against King John and opened the gates of London to those who resisted the King's tyranny. So I can see that John had no other way out but to agree to meet at Runnymede and sign the charter upon the demands of the barons and nobles. . . .

[curtain]

ACT XIII: REACTION OF KING JOHN AT WINDSOR CASTLE AFTER HE SIGNED THE MAGNA CHARTA

PLAYERS: KING JOHN
KING'S GUARD

SCENE: In his castle bedroom, the King is rolling on the floor and ranting and raving at the same time knawing on straw that is strewn on the floor.

KING JOHN: I won't be a slave to this Charter and I'll show those nobles who is above them by ordering foreign soldiers from abroad so I can murder them!

[curtain]

ACT XIV: EVENTS AFTER THE MAGNA CHARTA WAS SIGNED

SCENE: As the curtain rises again after the last short scene, we see two scenes: On one side is King John and his favorite knight. On the other side of a partition are Stephen Langton, Robert Fitzwalter, and several noblemen. King John is plotting with his favorite knight as follows:

KING JOHN: I know now how I can get even with Langton and the rest. While the barons are holding their great tournament at Stamford in celebration of this so-called Charter, we will summon abroad for foreign soldiers, and send a message to the Pope for help so we may take London by surprise! Won't that be wonderful, Sir Wilfred! (Said laughing and stalking back and forth clapping his hands.)

If anyone has been dispossessed or deprived by Us, without the legal judgment of his peers, of lands, castles, liberties, or rights. We will immediately restore them to him, and if any dispute shall arise thereupon, the matter shall be decided by judgment of the twenty-five barons. Likewise, We shall have similar respect in rendering justice with respect to the disafforestation or retention of chase forests which Henry Our father or Richard Our Brother afforested, and to wardships of lands belonging to another's fee, and to alibys founded in another's fee than Our own, whereto the lord of that fee asserts his rights. When We return from Our crusades, or if We remain behind from it, We will immediately grant full justice to the complainants in these matters. **N**o one shall be arrested or imprisoned upon a woman's appeal for the death of any other person than her husband. **A**ll fines unjustly and unlawfully given to Us, and all fines levied unjustly and against the law of the land shall be entirely remitted or the matter settled by judgment of the twenty-five barons, together with the aforesaid Stephen, Archbishop of Canterbury, if he himself can be present. **I**f We have dispossessed or deprived the Welsh of lands, liberties, or other things, without legal judgment of their peers, in England or Wales, they shall immediately be restored to them. The same shall the Welsh do to Us and Ours. **B**ut with regard to all those things of which any Welshman was dispossessed or deprived, without legal judgment of his peers, by King Henry Our father or Our Brother King Richard, and which We hold in Our hands or others hold under Our warranty, immediately after Our return from Our crusade, or if by chance We should remain behind from it, We will do full justice according to the laws of the Welsh and the aforesaid regions. **W**e will immediately restore the son of Llywelyn, all the Welsh hostages, and the charters which were delivered to Us as security for peace. **W**ith regard to the return of the sisters and hostages of Alexander, King of the Scots, and of his liberties and rights, We will do the same as We would with regard to Our other barons of England. **A**ll the customs and liberties aforesaid, which We have granted to be enjoyed by Our people throughout Our kingdom, let all Our subjects, whether clerks or laymen, observe, toward their dependents. **W**heras We, for the honour of God and the amendment of Our kingdom, and in order the better to allay the discord arisen between Us and Our barons, have granted all these concessions aforesaid, We, willing that they be forever enjoyed wholly and in lasting strength, do give and grant to Our subjects the following security, to wit, that the barons shall elect any twenty-five barons of the realm, who shall, with their utmost power, observe, hold, and cause to be observed the peace and liberties which We have granted unto them and by this Our present Charter have confirmed, so that if We, Our Justiciary, bailiffs, or any of Our ministers offend in any respect against any man, or shall transgress any of these articles of peace or security, and the offence be brought before four of the said twenty-five barons, those four barons shall come before Us, or Our Chief Justiciary if We are out of the kingdom, declaring the offence, and shall demand speedy amends for the same. **W**e have also wholly remitted and pardoned all ill-will, wrath, and malice which has arisen between Us and Our subjects, both clergy and laity. Moreover, We have fully remitted and, as far as in Us lies, wholly pardoned to and with all, clergy and laity, all trespasses made in consequence of the said disputes from Easter in the sixteenth year of Our reign till the restoration of peace. Over and above this, We have caused to be made in their behalf letters patent by testimony of Stephen, Archbishop of Canterbury, Henry, Archbishop of Dublin, the Bishops above-mentioned, and Master Ranulph, for the security and concessions aforesaid. **W**herefore We will, and firmly command that the English Church shall be free, and that all men in Our kingdom shall have and keep all the aforesaid liberties, rights, and concessions, well and peaceably, freely, quietly, fully, and wholly, to them and their heirs, of Us and Our heirs, in all things and places forever. **G**iven by Our hand in the meadow which is called Runnymede, between Windsor and Staines, on the fifteenth day of June in the seventeenth year of Our reign.



SCENE: On other side of partition, Langton and Fitzwalter are having a discussion.

FITZWALTER: We cannot trust the King even though he has stamped the Seal of England on the Charter. We must request that the King dismiss all his foreign troops, and we must hold possession of the City of London for two months.

LANGTON: By all means Fitzwalter! And I will guard the tower of London and have five and twenty of us form a lawful committee to watch the keeping of the Charter and we must make war upon the King if he breaks it.

FITZWALTER: Also, we know the King has wind of our upcoming great tournament at Stamford. This we must cancel so we can chose a desired time to see the King so appointments with him must be made from time to time to check on him and his behavior.

[curtain]

ACT XV: EVENTS LEADING TO THE DEATH OF KING JOHN

SCENE: Page boy enters in front of curtain holding up a sign that reads: “Events leading to King John’s end.” Two students bring out a big black board showing a map of England, and showing the western part of France. The page boy describes the following events pointing out the locations with his pointer:

PAGE BOY: The King and his foreign troops took Rochester Castle, which was occupied by knights and soldiers and the King would have hanged them all but the foreign soldiers were fearful what the English people might do to them and so interfered and saved the knights; but the King was bound to satisfy his vengeance, so he put to death all the common people and he ravaged the whole eastern part of his own dominions with fire and slaughter up into the northern part of England. So again, because the people took sides with the barons, the Pope laid England under an interdict again. But it did not much matter now because the people had grown so use to this now that the interdict was ignored, and the churches were kept open and all church activities went on as usual.

Now Louis, son of the French monarch, was called upon by the barons to take the Crown of England, because they could no longer deal with their own outlaw of a King, who was continually running hither and yon. But the barons found out they should not submit to Louis as their Monarch when they learned from the dying declaration of a French lord, that when England was conquered, the barons would be banished as traitors and their estates would be given to some of the French nobles.

In the meantime, King John’s fortunes were at a turning-point. Although King John had some success in taking some towns, his end was now near. In crossing a dangerous quicksand, called the wash, not far from Wisbeach, the tide came up and nearly drowned his army. He and his soldiers escaped, but as he looked back from the shore when he was safe, the roaring waters swept down on his wagons,



horses, and men and carried them and his treasure in a raging whirlpool from which nothing was saved. Later, after three days of fever, the King finally died at the Castle of Newark upon Trent on the eighteenth day of October.

[curtain]

ACT XVI: FINAL SCENE

BARON: Now lad, I would like to point out to you that though England did much to establish the Rights of the Individual as law, they still had to be granted to the citizens by a Monarch. Whereas America established a Christian precedent by being the first nation to define the Rights of the Individual as God-granted and therefore the sacred property of the Individual. *So the preservation and protection of this property was defined as the chief end of government.* So my young American lad, appreciate your America and the opportunities it affords while you still have the chance, and never neglect your studies whilst thou are young and eager!! (Baron disappears back of curtain opening, and the boy is still sound asleep when his mother comes to awaken him.)

MOTHER OF BOY: John, John! Wake up lad! It's time for your dinner!

BOY: (Boy wakes up and looks very startled. He rubs his eyes, and immediately rises and collects his book on the Magna Charta carefully tucks the book under his arm and calls—) Mother! You wouldn't believe the dream I had. It was so like real and all on the Magna Charta. Boy, I need to get into history more! As it's very important for America's future. I can hardly wait to study and research history more so we may ever be free from tyranny!

MOTHER: John, are you feeling alright? This is refreshing news that you want to study history more, as your marks have not been good at all in the subject of history. Your father will be pleased you have had a change of mind.

ACTION: (Mother and son depart arm in arm behind the backdrop of stage.)

[final curtain]



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ILLUSTRATIONS

King John—Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

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"King John grants Magna Carta to his Barons." Nineteenth-century engraving by John Hamilton Mortimer, from the Art Collection of the Folger Shakespeare Library, p. 22.

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