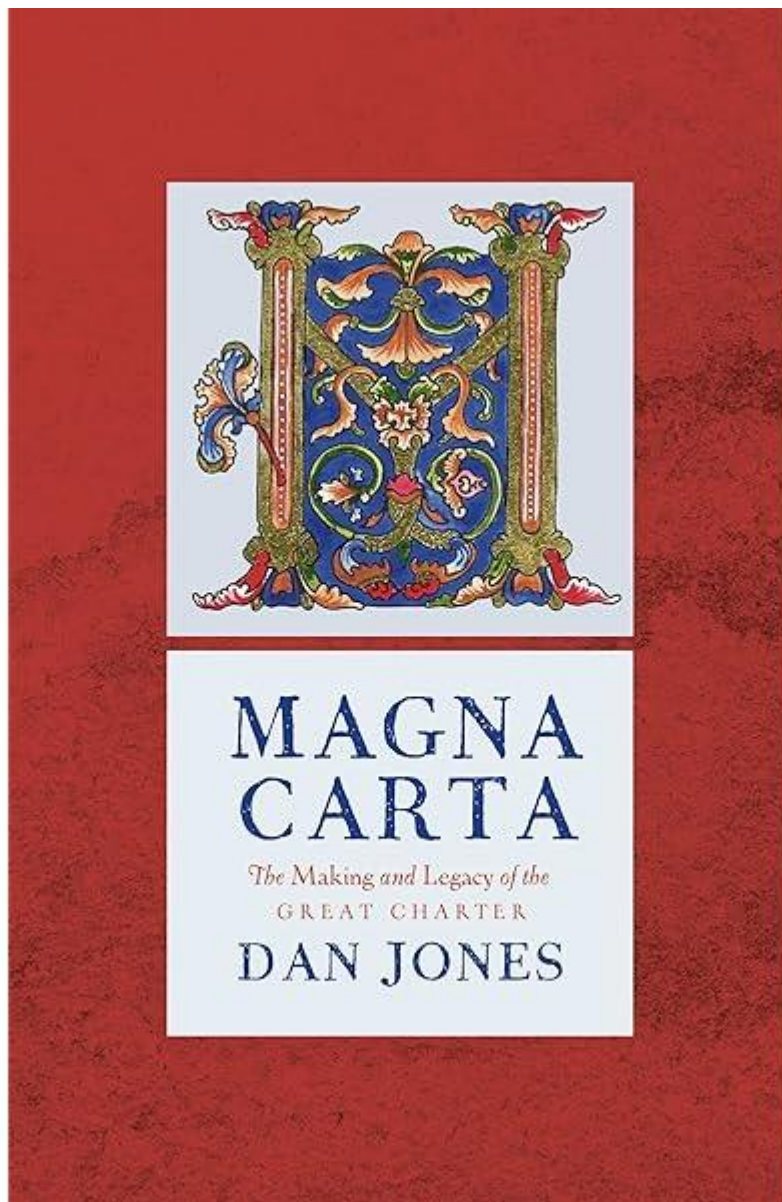


Year 7 enquiry: Who held power in Medieval England?



Timeline

1066: The Norman Conquest of England

1100: Coronation of Henry I as King of England.

1120: The White Ship disaster

1135-1154: The Anarchy, a period of civil war and political instability in England.

1154: Coronation of Henry II as King of England.

1170: Murder of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, in Canterbury Cathedral.

1199: Coronation of King John

1214: King John loses control of Normandy

1215: Signing of the Magna Carta, a key document that limited the powers of the monarch and established certain legal rights and principles in England.

Lesson 1 - Who held power in Medieval England?

Key Definitions:

Medieval – From the Middle Ages; 500-1500

Hierarchy - A system in which people are ranked according to status or power

Feudal System - A social and economic system in medieval Europe

Ask a historian: What was England like after the Norman Conquest?

William of Normandy established total control over England after the Norman Conquest, violently putting down rebellions from Anglo Saxons who were unwilling to be ruled by a Norman invader. William confiscated land and reorganised English society to ensure complete loyalty in his new foreign kingdom.



Task 1 - According to Marc Morris, why did William of Normandy confiscate land and reorganise society? Why do you think this would be important?

Monarch – A King or Queen

Nobility - A class of people with high social or political status.

Baron -A member of the nobility; a land owner

Clergy - People ordained for religious duties, especially in the Christian Church. E.g., Priests or Bishops.

Peasants - Poor farmers or workers who have low social status

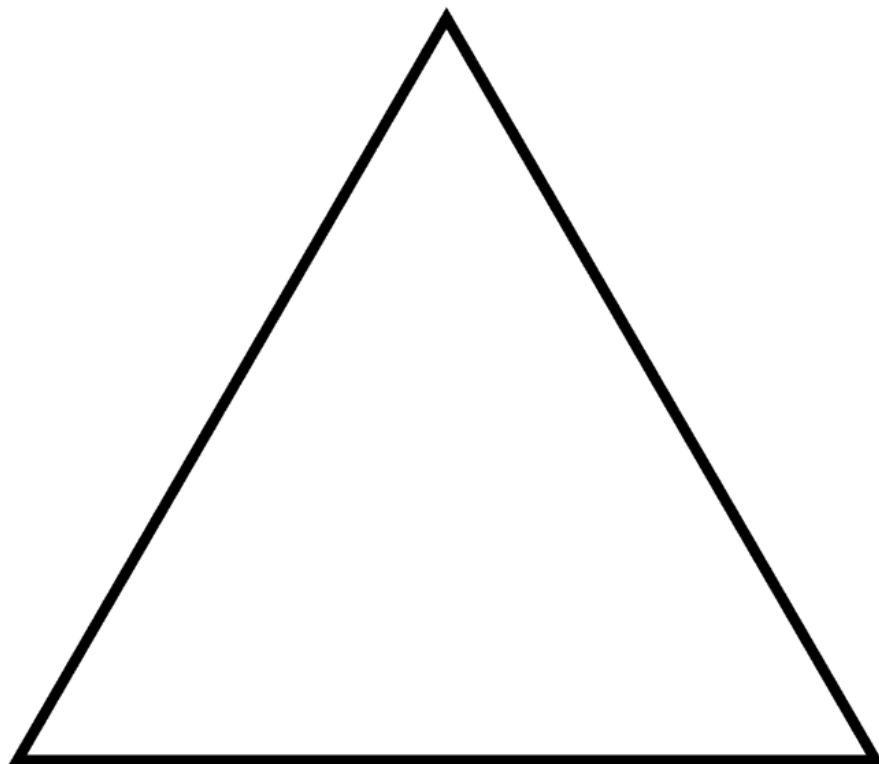
Villein - A peasant who is legally tied to the land they work on and must get their Lord's permission to leave or marry

When he conquered England, King William took control of all of the land in the country. He then gave large areas of land to noblemen, including the **clergy** and **barons**, in return for their loyalty. This social hierarchy in medieval society is often called the **feudal system** by historians. The king was at the top of society, and therefore at the top of the **feudal system**. He had the power to collect taxes, make laws and raise an army.

The **nobility** were below the king in the hierarchy. The nobility included the **clergy**, **Lords** and **barons**. William replaced almost all of the Anglo-Saxon nobility with Normans. The nobility would give some of their land to **knights**, who would raise an army to fight for the king when needed. Noblemen would also let **peasants** live and work on the land, in return for taxes and food.

Peasants were the largest and lowest group in medieval society, making up over 90% of the population. Some peasants were **villeins** and they were at the bottom of the system. Being a **villein** meant they were legally tied to the land they worked on and could only leave with their **Lord's** permission. Villeins could also only marry with their Lord's permission! They survived off the food they harvested on their Lord's land, if they had a bad harvest, they faced possible starvation. There was a belief in medieval England that you would stay at the society level you were born into. So, if you were born a peasant, you would almost always stay a peasant. Peasants' lives were heavily controlled by those above them in society: the nobility, the King and the Church.

Task 2: Using the key words, create a Feudal System diagram. Include the definitions of each social group and the relationship between each group.



Task 3: Explain how the feudal system ensured loyalty to the King.

Challenge: Explain how the feudal system led to inequality in medieval England

In our previous unit we looked at some powerful medieval women; medieval women's lives were as varied as they are today, with some noble women and royalty leading lives in which they could have great power and influence. However, for the majority of women, their freedom and rights were much more limited than men's.

Some of the rules women were expected to live by included:

- Having their parents' permission to marry
- Requiring special permission to own a business
- Unable to leave their husbands via divorce
- Unable to own property unless they were widowed
- Unable to inherit their parents' land unless they had no living brothers

Challenge: Why do you think only noble women could hold power and authority?

Lesson 2 - Why did the medieval Church hold so much power?

DO NOW - Draw the feudal system on your mini whiteboard and label each section. Underneath, explain how the feudal system made sure people remained loyal to the King.

Key definitions

Tithes - A tax collected by the Church

Medieval Church – The Catholic religion and its believers in the Middle Ages. (Not to be confused with church, which means a building where Christians got to worship)

Task: As we read, highlight examples of the Church being important to medieval life.

After the Roman Empire fell in the fifth century, the **Medieval Church** gained more importance and authority. People believed that the **clergy** (the Church's leaders) were the ones who could open the gates to heaven for them, and this idea filled them with respect, wonder, and sometimes fear. The **Medieval Church** began to grow in strength and influence, eventually becoming the most powerful force in Europe. Similar to the Romans, they had their main centre in Rome, and their leader was like an emperor – the **Pope**.

Following the **Norman Conquest**, King William I ordered a huge building scheme to have churches built across the country. Over 7,000 were built! The **Pope** (the head of the Catholic Church) had supported William's claim to the English throne and the Catholic faith was very important to William.

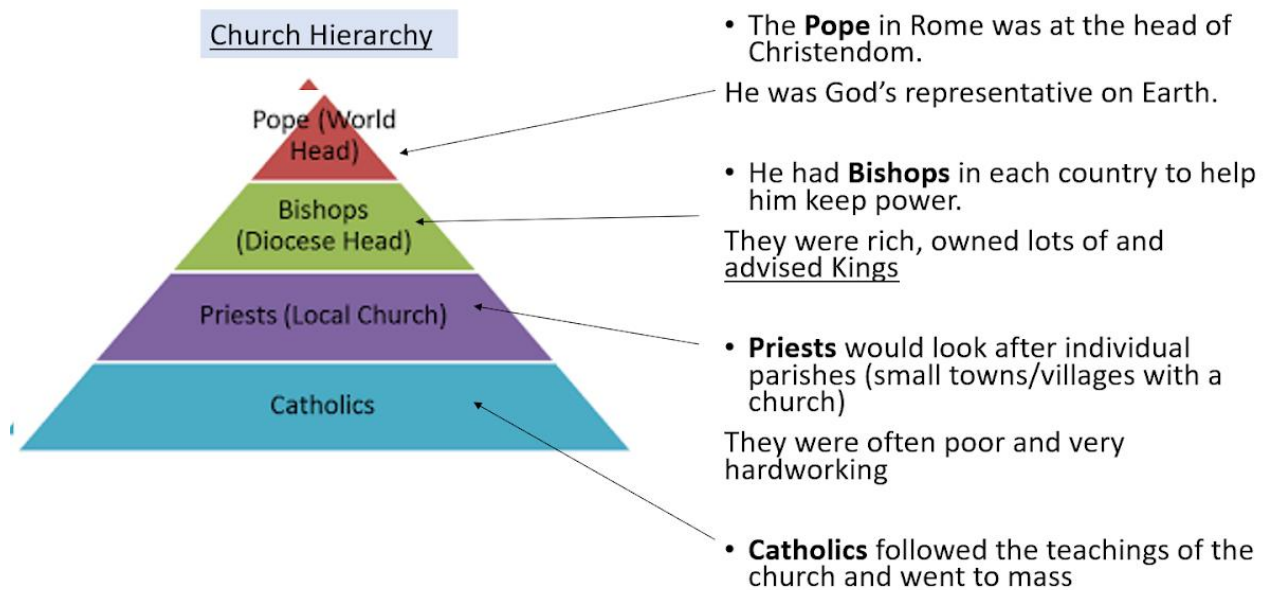
From this point onwards, the Catholic Church would play a central role in people's lives; everyone in medieval England would attend church. Within the community, the Church and clergy were responsible for treating the sick, providing education and collecting **tithes** (taxes). **Tithes** made the Church extremely wealthy, often the Church was wealthier than the King in the medieval period. People also had to pay the Church for baptisms, weddings and funerals - which were all essential in order to get to heaven!

Life in medieval England could be hard, especially for peasants, following the teachings of the Church (and paying tithes!) was the only way to get their reward in heaven.

Task: Answer the following questions in full sentences:

1. What were tithes?
 2. Where was the centre of the Catholic faith?
 3. Who is the leader of the Catholic Church?
 4. Explain why the Church was so important to medieval life. Give specific examples of the Church's role in medieval society and explain why this would have been important.
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Just like the Feudal System, the Catholic Church also had its own **hierarchy**.



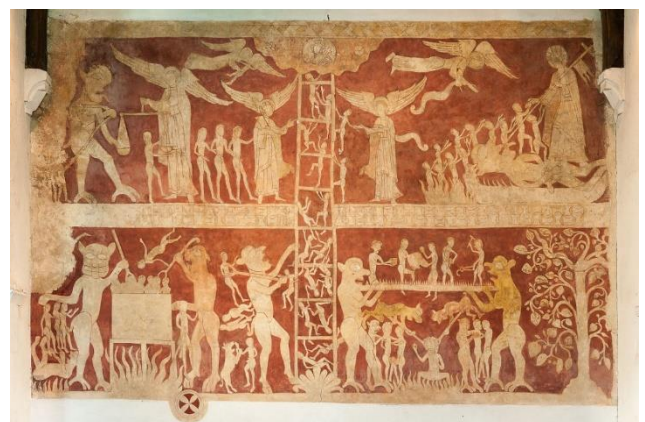
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Task 5: Where would a monarch be placed within the Church hierarchy? Can you think of any possible problems with where the monarch is on the Church hierarchy?

In theory, as the head of the feudal system the King was the centre of all authority and held ultimate power over his people and the land. However, in year 7 we will explore different challenges to the power of the monarchy during the medieval period. *Could a religion become more powerful than a monarch? Could a woman hold power as a monarch? Does a monarch ever have to listen to his people?*

Challenge: Using the information below, explain the purpose of Doom Paintings and why they used images instead of words

Doom paintings were special pictures in medieval churches that showed a big event in Christianity called the 'Last Judgement'. In these paintings, they often had pictures of Jesus and angels deciding if people go to Heaven or Hell based on their actions. These paintings were not just decorative; they served as a way to educate the mostly **illiterate (unable to read)** medieval population about Christian beliefs and the consequences of their actions in the afterlife. The vivid and sometimes frightening imagery was meant to inspire fear and encourage people to sin free lives.



Lesson 3 and 4 - What can the 'Anarchy' tell us about medieval power?

Do now - If this is the answer – what was the question?

1. The Pope
2. The King
3. Peasants

Definitions

Medieval – From the Middle Ages; 500-1500

Inherently – An essential or completely natural quality

Task 1: Discuss in pairs and create a mind map in your book – what makes a good monarch?

What makes a good monarch?

Ask a historian: What made a good **medieval** monarch?

In the Middle Ages, power was **inherently** male, and it was believed that only men could hold positions of authority. This belief is evident in the imagery used on the Great Seal of England during that time. On one side, you would see a king sitting on his throne, symbolising his role in delivering justice to his people. On the other side, the king would be shown riding a formidable warhorse with his sword drawn, representing his readiness to protect his kingdom in battle. Women were not allowed to serve as judges or lead armies into combat. A woman, therefore, could not rule. That, at least, was the unspoken assumption. *Helen Castor – Historian and author of 'She-Wolves'*



GREAT SEAL OF EDWARD II.

Task 2: What qualities does Helen Castor say are essential to being a powerful medieval King?

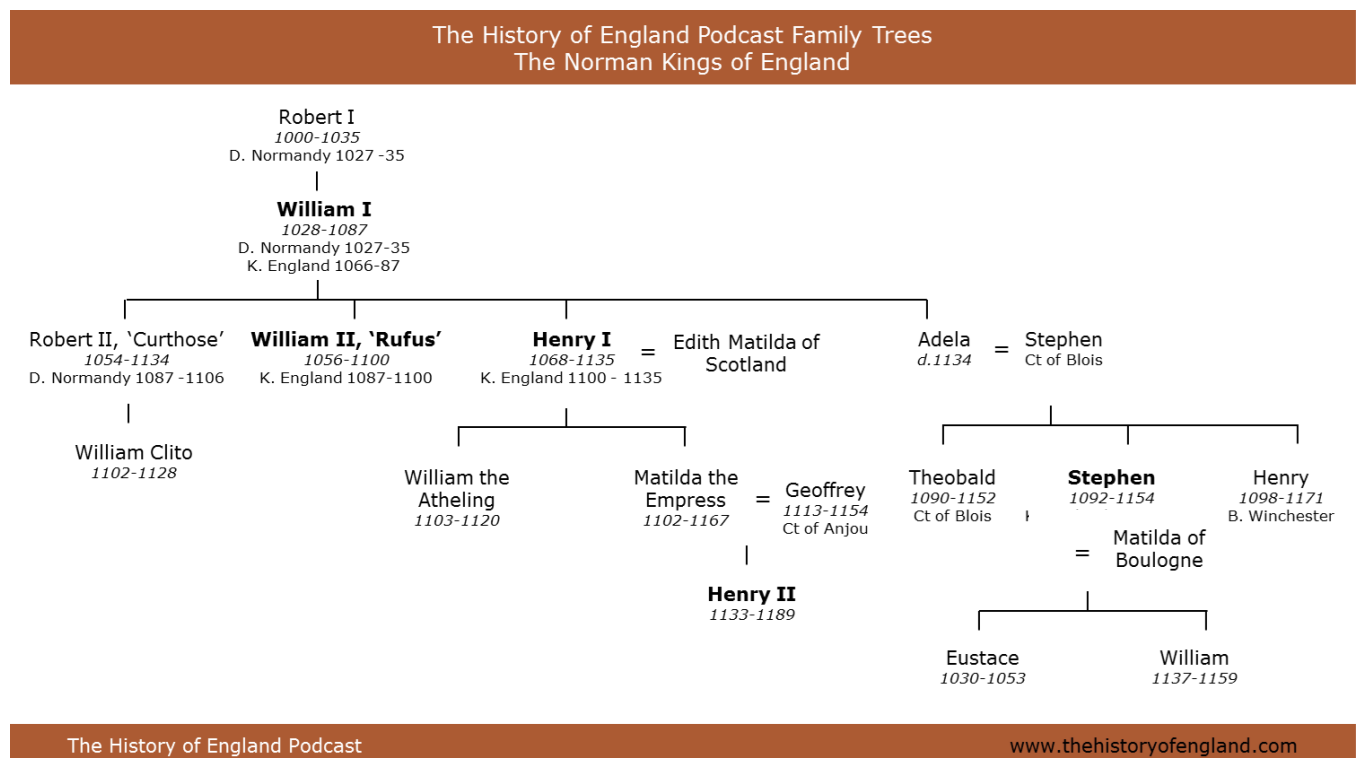
Henry 1st and medieval power



Henry I was the son of William the Conqueror and was a strong monarch who brought stability to England. He helped to reduce the tensions between English and Norman society after the Norman Conquest- he even married an English woman! However, this stability was threatened by a disastrous shipwreck in 1120....

Ever since the Norman Conquest, the King of England had also been the Duke of Normandy and the majority of the nobility in England were French speaking Normans. Many of them split their time between Normandy and England and on the evening of the 25th November 1120, a ship set sail from the coast of Normandy, filled with 300 members of the Norman nobility. However, shortly after the ship set sail, disaster struck. The ship struck a rock which immediately capsized the vessel, plunging the passengers onboard into the freezing waters of the English Channel. There was only 1 survivor. The disaster was a huge shock to King Henry, not only had he lost many of his loyal nobles, but his only son and heir William was one of the victims of the tragedy. Henry was devastated at the loss of his son, and the stability Henry had brought to England was suddenly under threat without an heir to continue his reign....

Task: Look at the family tree below. What options does Henry have?



Task: As we read the story of Henry's decision highlight or underline examples of power being held by the following:

The monarch, nobility, the Catholic Church, the people.

In 1127, after the death of his son and heir, the king ordered his barons to swear allegiance to his daughter Matilda. She would be named as his heir and become the first Queen of England. The barons were bound by their loyalty to the King to swear that they would support Matilda, even though the idea of a female ruler was something that was unheard of in medieval times. However, when Henry I died in December 1135, it was Matilda's cousin Stephen, who seized the throne, aided by his brother Henry, Bishop of Winchester. As a Bishop, Stephen's brother held lots of influence amongst the nobility and Stephen gained widespread support amongst the barons, many of whom did not want to see a woman rule over them.

In 1139, Matilda sailed to England from her home in France and began her campaign to win back the throne. A brutal **civil war** known as 'the Anarchy' broke out as supporters of each claimant for the throne battled throughout England. Matilda eventually gained the upper hand and Stephen was captured in 1141. To take the throne Matilda needed the support of the Church and in March she met with key members of the English Church - including Stephen's brother Bishop Henry! - to negotiate and secure their support. With the support of the clergy, she was pronounced 'Lady of the English' and made her way to London to be crowned as the first Queen of England. Coins were issued in her name; she was greeted enthusiastically by the crowds in London and preparations were made for her coronation. However, things soon went wrong for Matilda. As she began to act like a 'King', the noble men around her began to accuse her of arrogance and of not behaving 'as a woman should'. She rapidly lost the support of the nobles as they claimed she was 'unbearable'. Rumours began to spread that Matilda was going to demand higher taxes from the people of London, the people became angry and began to withdraw their support for Matilda. Bishop Henry switched his allegiance back to Stephen and thousands of armed Londoners stormed Matilda's residence, forcing her to flee London and her coronation.

After coming so close to the throne, Matilda was forced to release Stephen and the war rumbled on. Eventually, both exhausted by war, Matilda and Stephen came to an agreement, Stephen could keep the throne of England if he agreed to name Matilda's son as his heir. In 1154, after 19 years as King, Stephen died and Matilda's son became King Henry 2nd of England. Matilda spent the rest of her life in Normandy, ruling lands and advising her son - whose descendants still rule England to this day.



The coin created for Matilda's coronation, she is shown sitting on the throne and is described as 'regina', the Latin word for Queen.

Extended Writing Task: What does the story of Matilda and Stephen tell us about who held power in medieval England?

- Discuss at least two different people/groups of people
- Give specific examples from the text of them holding power - what did they do and how did it show power?
- Come to a conclusion as to who had the most power and **why**
- **Challenge: Can you explain how who held power changed over time?**

Lesson 5 - A murder in the cathedral!

Do Now – Mini Whiteboards

Key definitions

Cathedral – A church that is ran by a bishop

Secular – Not connected with religion

Penance – An act of punishment, to show regret for committing a sin.



The reign of Henry 2nd – the son of Matilda - is best remembered for one shocking event that occurred in Canterbury Cathedral, 29th December, 1170. We will uncover the story using sources and then assess what the story can tell us about medieval power...

Task: For each source annotate with ideas about what you think is happening, how do you know?

Source 1 - A medieval painting depicting the event



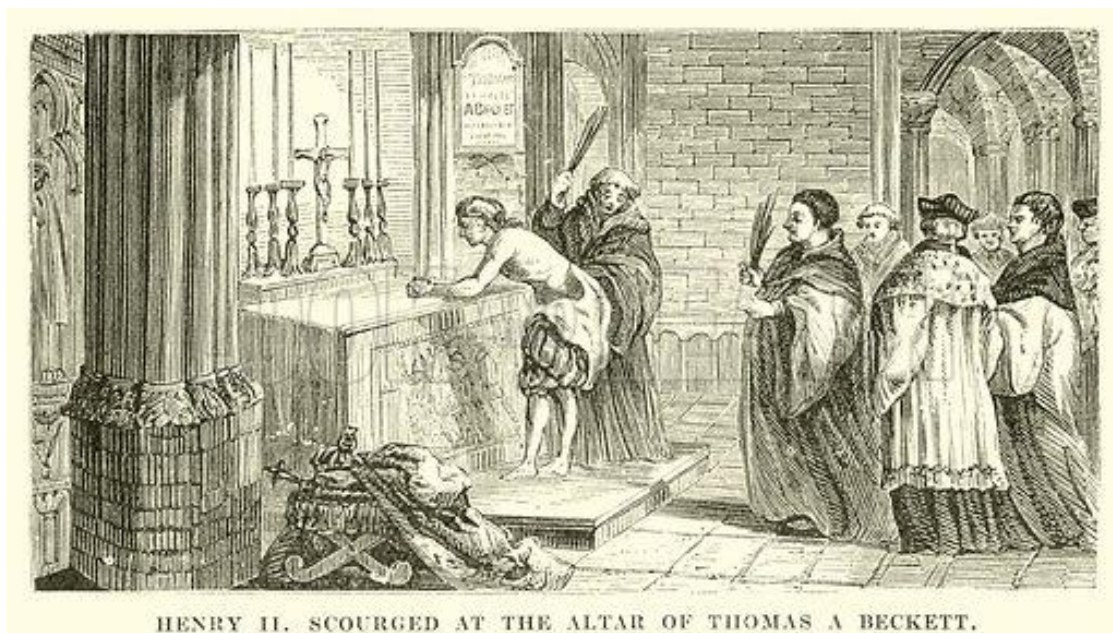
Source 2 – An eyewitness account of the event

“The knights had arrived in the afternoon at the archbishop Thomas Becket’s lodging, claiming to bear a message from King Henry II. A violent argument soon broke out, and archbishop Thomas took refuge in the church. He resisted the knights’ demand that he should become their prisoner. In response, they attempted to haul him out of the church, and in the struggle that ensued, drew their swords. The first blow wounded Thomas on the head, and then, as the blood streamed down his face, one of the knights, Richard Brito, “smote him with such force that the sword was broken against his head”, and the whole crown of his head was cut off. One of the knight’s followers used his sword point to extract the archbishop’s brains through the wound.”

Source 3 – An extract from a letter written to King Henry 2nd from Thomas Becket:

‘There are two beliefs by which the world is ruled: the authority of priests and the authority of Kings. The authority of priests is greater.’

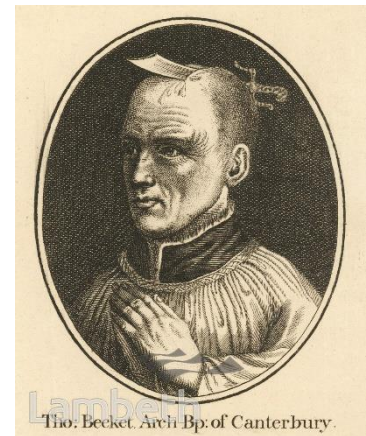
Source 4 – An image of King Henry 2nd being whipped at the altar of Canterbury Cathedral



The story:

Thomas Becket and King Henry II were originally close friends. Becket was a trusted advisor and worked closely with the king. He served as the Chancellor of England, a powerful position in the king's government.

However, things took a dramatic turn in 1162 when Becket was appointed as the Archbishop of Canterbury, the highest religious office in England. This appointment was made by Henry, who believed that his good friend Becket would help him to get the Church under control. However, when he became Archbishop, Becket's priorities shifted dramatically. As the Archbishop, he felt a strong responsibility to defend the interests of the Church and this often brought him into direct conflict with the king.



The major source of their falling-out was the question of whether clergy, including priests and bishops, should be subject to **secular** laws and tried in royal courts. Becket vigorously defended the Church's right to have its own courts and maintain its independence from royal authority. This put him at odds with King Henry, who believed that clergy should be subject to the same laws as everyone else.

The tension between Becket and Henry came to a tragic climax when, in a fit of frustration, Henry is said to have uttered words that some interpreted as an order to harm Becket – “Who will rid me of this troublesome Priest!”. Four knights loyal to the king took this as a command and assassinated Becket in Canterbury Cathedral on December 29, 1170.

The murder of Thomas Becket in 1170 had significant consequences that left a lasting impact on medieval England. After Becket's violent death, King Henry II, in an act of **penance**, publicly whipped himself, acknowledging his responsibility for the murder and seeking forgiveness from both the Church and the people.

Becket's murder shocked the medieval world and had far-reaching consequences. It heightened the idea of the separation of church and state and led to Becket being made into a saint by the Catholic Church. The conflict between Becket and Henry II serves as a powerful example of the struggle for power and the conflict between religious and **secular** authorities in medieval Europe.

Becket's murder also highlighted the delicate power balance between the Church and the monarchy during the Middle Ages. It showed the Church's ability to challenge and influence the authority of the king, even monarchs were not above the Church's authority.

Task: Explain why the murder of Thomas Becket was significant - what does it tell us about the relationship between the monarch and the Catholic Church?

Lesson 6 - What problems did King John face?

Do Now – Mini Whiteboards

Key Terms

Excommunication - Being banned/excluded from the Christian Church



King John was the son of Eleanor of Aquitaine and King Henry 2nd, he reigned as King of England from 1199 to 1216. His reign was filled conflict and controversy, and historians often debate how we should remember King John and his actions. Was he really one of the worst Kings in British history? Or was he a victim of situations beyond his control?

Task: Read through King John's problems during his reign. Colour the thermometer to show how 'hot' of a problem it was for John

John's problems

1. King John had serious problems with the Pope, leading to his **excommunication** by the Catholic Church.

King John and the Pope disagreed over who should be the new Archbishop of Canterbury (England's most powerful religious position).

The Pope excommunicated John in 1209 and the Pope removed the rights of priests and bishops to conduct church services in England. This meant people could no longer attend mass, get married or baptised in Church. Many people feared they would go to hell!

2. Another significant issue King John faced was the **loss of his French territories.**

Due to military defeats, John gradually lost control of all French land owned by the English monarchy - including Normandy in 1204. English Kings had ruled Normandy since William the Conqueror's victory in 1066 - it was a humiliating loss.

He was nicknamed 'soft sword' due to the perception that his military leadership was so weak!

3. To fund his expensive wars, John needed to raise taxes. John **continuously raised the amount of tax that his barons had to pay**, which made them furious.

Some barons who refused to pay taxes were imprisoned, along with other members of their families.

The barons became increasingly angry with their King and could no longer stand his actions!

Task 1 – Explain why each problem would cause such an issue for John.

Task 2 - Which problem do you think was the most significant and why?

Below are two medieval images of Kings. On the left is King Richard, known as 'lionheart'. He was the brother of King John. On the right is King John. It is clear that the artist who created the images had a much more positive view of Richard than John!

Task: Annotate the two images to highlight how Richard is shown as a 'good' medieval King and King John as a 'bad' medieval King

King Richard



King John



Has history been fair to King John?

- Medieval monks portrayed John as an evil monster – this is the image of King John that many people have today. In the Middle Ages, the churchmen wrote the histories, and John had fallen out with the Church, so all the histories of the time agreed he was dreadful!
- Modern historians agree that King John inherited a difficult set of circumstances when he became King and it isn't always as simple as seeing someone as 'good' or 'bad'. For example, King John inherited a lot of debt from his brother Richard the lionheart. He wasn't greedy or bad with money – he was just making up for his brother's overspending!

Challenge: Read the two extracts below and answer the following questions

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.

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.

- 1. Do the authors of the two extracts agree on their opinion of King John? Explain how you know.**
- 2. The extracts were written by monks. Monks are Catholics who have devoted their life to serving God. Why might a monk have a negative opinion of King John?**

Lesson 7 - How could the nobility control a King?

Do Now – Mini Whiteboards

Key terms:

Renounce – To formally give something up

Rebel – To rise up against your ruler, sometimes with violence

Democracy – A way of running a country, in which the people have a say in how the country is ran

King John had upset the Church, the Barons AND the English people during his reign. People had lost faith in their King and something needed to be done...

Discuss: What do think is happening in this picture?



What do you SEE in this Picture?

What you THINK might be happening in this picture.

What QUESTIONS would you like to ask about this picture?

What did the barons do?

By 1215, the barons of northern England had had enough of John's high taxes. They thought John was treating them unfairly and that he was not capable of running the country. If they didn't do something they thought the whole country would soon be ruined! They decided to **rebel**. 40 barons **renounced** their feudal ties to the king. With French and Scottish support, they formed an army (called 'the Army of God') and on 17th May they captured London.

John had no alternative but to **negotiate**. The rebelling barons forced King John to meet them in a field at Runnymede and sign an agreement called 'Magna Carta' (Great Charter). Magna Carta had 63 different points but the main ones were:

- 1) The Church would be free from the control of the King and government
- 2) No freeman could be imprisoned or executed without a fair trial
- 3) The King could not raise taxes without the agreement of the Barons and the Bishops.

A council of barons would also be set up to make sure John kept his promises. King John agreed to sign the document. In return, the barons agreed to stand down and surrender London. This was a turning point in the history of England's government, the barons had successfully said 'no' to the king, and made him do as they wanted. **This was the first time anyone had expected a King to obey a set of rules!** Barons and 'freemen' had more power than ever before.

Unsurprisingly, John did not keep the promises of Magna Carta. John's rejection of Magna Carta caused another rebellion by the barons. The barons invited the French King to invade England – even he would be better than John! In October 1216, as he was retreating from the French, John lost all his supplies and treasure trying to cross a river. Sources say he even lost the crown jewels of England. He was already ill at this time and he died shortly afterwards.

However, the next King after John accepted Magna Carta, and every Queen or King since has had to accept it too. It controlled the power of Kings and Queens for hundreds of years. Only 3 points of the Magna Carta are still in use today, however Magna Carta is considered one of the most important documents in the history of our **democracy**.

Task 1: What was Magna Carta and what did it aim to do?

Task 2: Why was Magna Carta a turning point in English history? (A turning point is a specific, significant moment when something begins to change)

Lesson 8 - Who held power in medieval England?

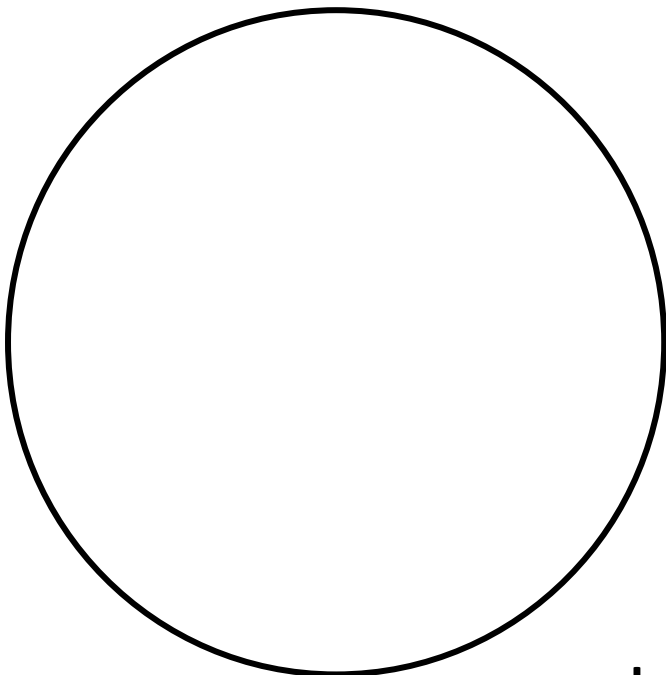
Do Now – Mini whiteboards

If this is the answer – what was the question?

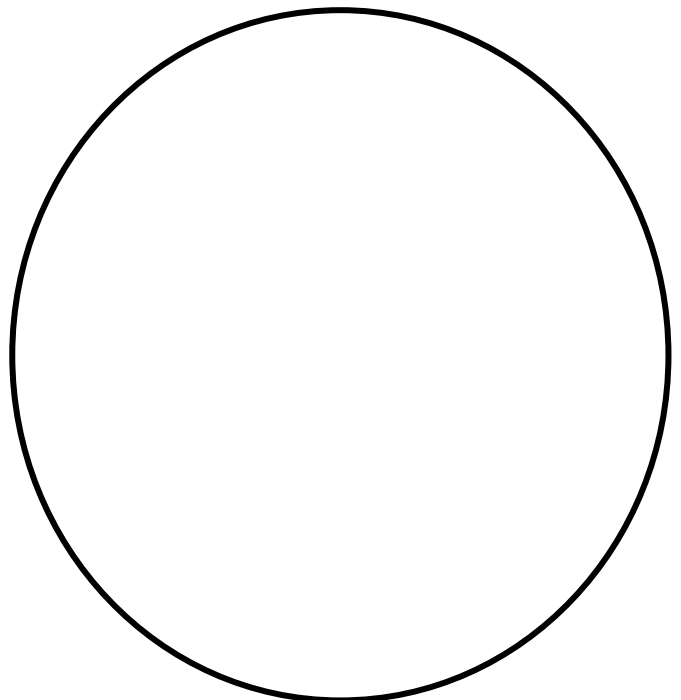
1. Magna Carta
2. The Feudal System
3. A turning point

Task 1: Below are three blank pie charts, for each one shade in how much power the Church, the monarch or the barons displayed in each story

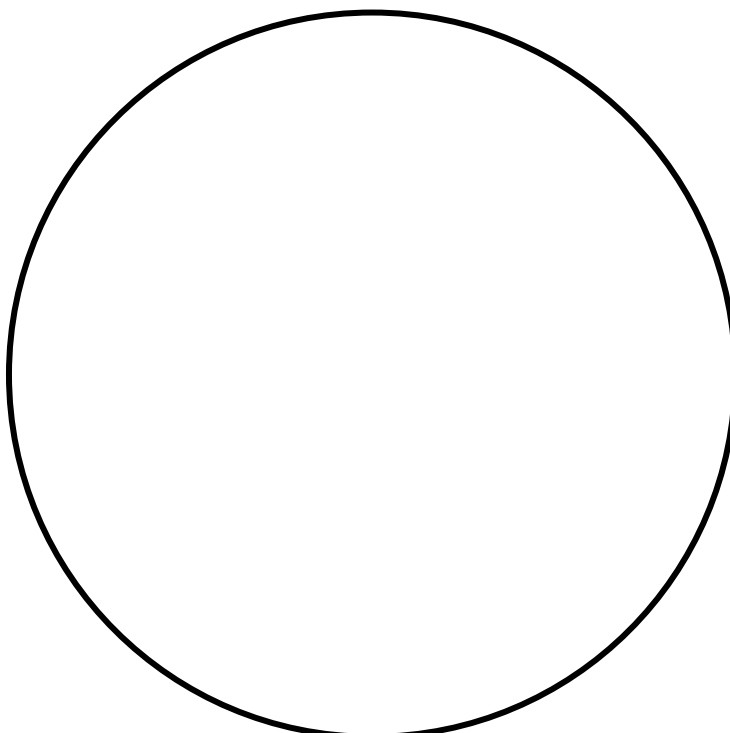
Henry 2nd



Matilda



John



Task 2: Extended Writing

How was the power of Kings challenged in the medieval period?

- Introduction - Create an opening sentence which summarises how you will answer the question
- Paragraph one – Discuss King Henry and how the Church challenged his role as monarch
- Paragraph two – Discuss King John and how the barons challenged his role as monarch
- ***Challenge – Discuss the story of Matilda, what does that tell us about challenges to the monarchy in the medieval period?***
- Conclusion - Do you think the Church or the barons were a bigger challenge to the monarchy in the medieval period? Why?