

# Tensions with king john leading up to the magna carta essay sample



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It is apparent that all was not well in England in the years building up to the Magna Carta in 1215. The barons of the day, not royalty, but the upper crust of society, forced King John to sign the document because it greatly reduced the power he held as the King of England and allowed for the formation of a powerful parliament. In return, the barons took an oath of loyalty to King John under the agreement that all abide by it. The Magna Carta became the basis for English citizen's rights and it is evidence that the people of England faced many political, social, economic, and ethnic tensions with King John and his empire.

In its essence, the Magna Carta describes the rights of English citizens and limits the power and authority of the King. Its articles cover the entire width of the population; widows, inheritance, children, orphans, veterans, those subject to discrimination and those of religious beliefs. The subjects of the Magna Carta included: debts and repayment, aspects of justice and the application of laws, confiscation of private property, equality of justice under the law, environmental laws and a legislative and judicial framework. Mainly, the political tensions with King John were that of the barons wanting to better their kingdom. Twenty-five barons were elected to observe, hold peace and liberty, and determine the transgression of any person who does wrong (Perspectives, 376.) The twenty-five barons were to be obeyed and serve to lesson the power of the king.

Social tensions were maybe the most important rules of the Magna Carta. The one that showed a need for social justice is number sixty. It states that all of the liberties expressed in the document extended to " all men of our kingdom" (Perspectives, 376.) This is critical because it puts all classes of

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people on a similar level with those of the upper classes including the king. This basic premise can be seen in our own constitution.

The main issues of economic tensions were those involving debts. An example of an economic law; The Magna Carta states that no one could seize any land for any debt as long as the debtor has enough payment for the debt. Also, if any one has taken a loan and dies before the debt is paid off, the debt cannot draw interest if their heir is underage. Another example; if any man dies and owes a debt to the Jews, his wife should receive her dowry and should not pay any of the debt if their remain minor children (Perspectives, 372.) Although this still may seem a little unfair to us, back then any right to a woman was good because they were treated to no extent like men.

As difficult and annoying that it was to read the language of charter it's really amazing how thorough the writers were in addressing these articles to the injustice of everyday life under King John. They even accounted for the need for standardized weights and measure. Apparently, England had difficulties with the Welsh at the time. To reduce the ethnic tensions articles deal with the return of Welsh hostages and also the hostages of the King of the Scots. The Magna Carta states that if any Welsh were removed from their land without legal judgment, they should be returned and will be shown full justice immediately. (Perspectives, 376)

Overall, the Magna Carta is a charter of liberty and rights obtained from King John of England by his rebellious barons. Reasons that led up to the Magna Carta were tensions that were social, political, economic, and ethnic. The

main goal to suppress these issues was an attempt to limit his powers by law and protect the people's privileges.