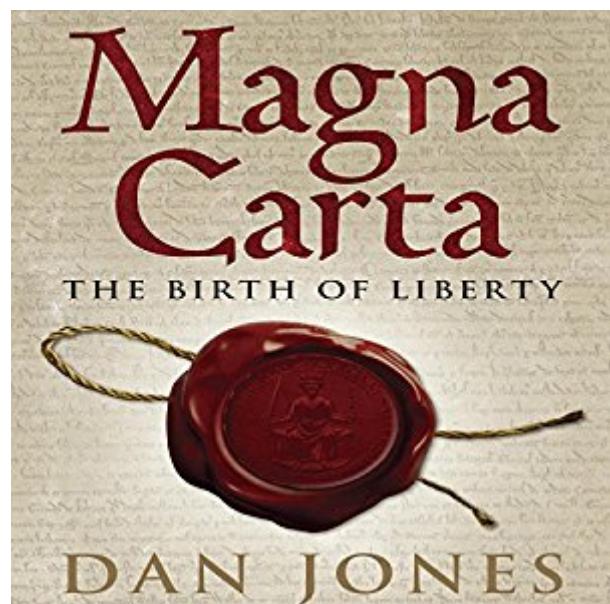


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# Magna Carta: The Birth Of Liberty



## Synopsis

From the New York Times best-selling author of *The Plantagenets*, a short, lively, action-packed history of how the Magna Carta came to be. The Magna Carta is revered around the world as the founding document of Western liberty. Its principles can be found in our Bill of Rights and in the Constitution. But what was this strange document that dwells on tax relief and greater fishing rights, and how did it gain legendary status? In this 800th anniversary year, Dan Jones takes us back to 1215, the turbulent time when the Magna Carta was just a peace treaty between England's King John and a group of self-interested, violent barons who were tired of his high taxes and endless foreign wars. The treaty would fail within two months of its confirmation. But this important document marked the first time a king was forced to obey his own laws. Jones' *Magna Carta* follows the story of the Magna Carta's creation, its failure, and the war that subsequently engulfed England and is an audiobook that will appeal to fans of microhistories of pivotal years like 1066, 1491, and especially 1776 - when American patriots, inspired by that long-ago defiance, dared to pick up arms against another English king.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is a concise, but far-ranging summation of the Magna Carta, the context of English, French and papal events that led to it, and how the initial statement evolved into the influential document in subsequent centuries. It breaks open a lot of the myths and cliches that we have about the Magna Carta, such as that it was about freedom for all men and even women, or that it immediately marked a new form of rule-of-law in England. The truth is far messier (and more interesting). Starting with

Henry II in 1154, through his sons and grandson, England was ruled by the Plantagenet dynasty. These were powerful kings who earned a lot of victories both in Scotland/Wales but also in what we now call France. At its zenith in 1189, the kingdom controlled about 2/3 of France, basically from the entire western coast and inland. But successful military leaders often are despotic rulers, too, and that was certainly the case with Henry II, his son Richard (Lionheart) and his other son, John Lackland, who took over the throne when Richard died. John was the most hated of the rulers. He raised taxes on barons and other nobles to unbearable levels, and in order to fund both battles and an unprecedentedly large royal entourage. He fought (unsuccessfully) in France early in his reign and then criss-crossed England tirelessly later in his reign to keep everyone in check. The taxes, fines, selling of exemptions from lawsuits and other financial measures he imposed were the reason the barons rebelled and insisted on a set of promises known as the Magna Carta. John was the king forced to sign the Magna Carta.

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