

Kings and Popes

**BEFORE
YOU
READ**

Reach Into Your Background

Nations came into being in Europe as the Middle Ages came to an end. The people of the United States come from many different backgrounds.

Sometimes we feel divided by our differences. Still, as citizens of the United States we have much in common. What makes us feel like one nation?

Questions to Explore

1. Why did kings and popes come into conflict in the Middle Ages?
2. What events made nations out of the kingdoms of Europe in the late Middle Ages?

Key Terms

nation
the Magna Carta
Parliament

Key People and Places

Pope Gregory VII
King Henry IV
King John
Joan of Arc
Runnymede
Orléans

▼ King Henry IV kneels before Pope Gregory VII and asks for his forgiveness. Countess Mathilde, shown on the right, arranged for the two men to meet.

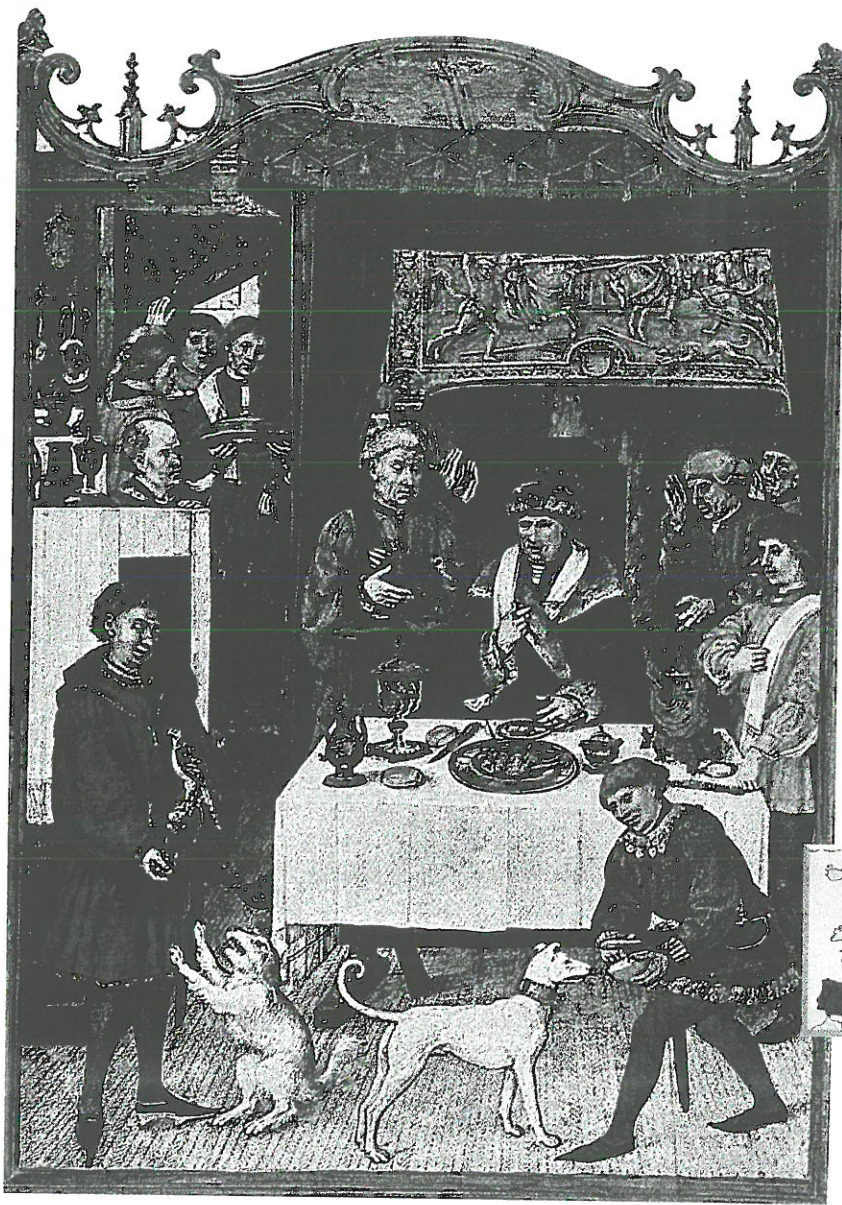


The king regretted disobeying the pope. For three days, he waited outside the gates of the castle where Pope Gregory VII was staying. Barefoot in the winter cold, the king begged forgiveness for the mistake he had made. Would the pope forgive Henry IV of Germany?

In the Middle Ages, kings and popes often quarreled over who should pick Church officials called *bishops*. Since bishops were part of the Church, popes claimed the right to choose them. Kings also wanted this right because bishops often controlled large areas of their kingdoms.

This was the power struggle that caused Henry IV to beg for the pope's forgiveness. King Henry had been choosing bishops even though Pope Gregory VII had ordered him not to. In response, Gregory excommunicated the king and declared that his people no longer had to obey him.

Henry traveled to Gregory to beg for forgiveness. After three long days, the pope gave in. He allowed Henry to rejoin the Church.



◀ During the Middle Ages, many wealthy nobles lived in luxury. At dinner time, they might be waited on by 10 or more servants. These nobles were so rich and powerful that they rivaled kings. With the decline of feudalism, however, kings gained more power.



Nation Building Begins

Pope Gregory made a great mistake in treating King Henry IV in this way. In 1081, Henry invaded Italy, where the pope lived. By 1084, Henry had replaced Gregory with a new pope. Gregory was sent into exile and died far from his home. Henry IV's success in overthrowing Pope Gregory VII was a hint of things to come. As kings gained power, they dared to put their own wishes before those of the Church.

The Decline of Feudalism When the 1200s began, Europe was still a feudal society. For most people, the only important authority was the local lord. He protected them from invaders and made the laws, just as our government does today.

While there were kings who reigned over kingdoms, their power was far from complete. The wealthiest lords also had great influence. Many of them saw themselves as nearly the king's equal. In fact, it was not unusual for a noble to have more land, vassals, and knights than his king.

In time, kings gained power as different forces weakened feudalism. The Crusades, for example, did much to weaken nobles. Many gave up land to raise money to join the Crusades. Other families lost their land when kings claimed the estates of nobles who died in the Crusades. Kings also began to support the new towns in exchange for money. They agreed to protect towns and made laws to help towns grow rich. Then, with the money paid by townspeople, kings hired armies and used them to attack troublesome nobles.

In these ways, kings became the main authority in their kingdoms. Gradually their kingdoms began to be real nations. A nation is a community that shares a government. A common language and culture are other things that sometimes unite the people of a nation.



Predict What could have caused King John to attend the meeting at Runnymede?

England Becomes More United

On June 15, 1215, about 2,000 English nobles gathered at Runnymede, a meadow along the Thames River in England. Dressed in armor and carrying banners, they had marched from London, a short distance away. Now they prepared to meet with King John.

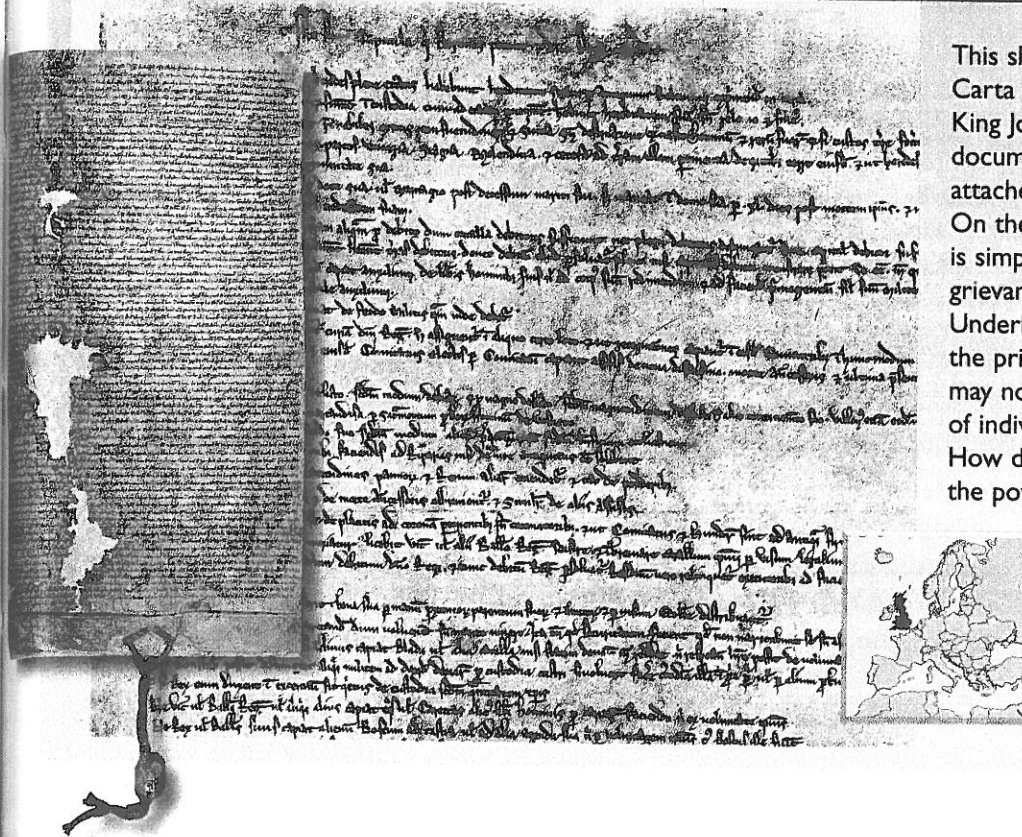
This was an unusual meeting. The king had not called it. The nobles were the ones who had demanded the meeting. King John, who once had had enormous power, had been forced to attend.

King John of England

John's 16-year reign was marked by conflict. Here, John is pictured standing between two groups with which he clashed. The clergy are on the left and the nobles are on the right.



The Magna Carta



This shows a copy of the Magna Carta made many years after King John's reign. The original document, with John's seal attached, is shown in the inset. On the surface, the Magna Carta is simply a list of the nobles' grievances against King John. Underlying this list, however, is the principle that the government may not interfere with the rights of individuals. **Critical Thinking** How did the Magna Carta limit the power of English monarchs?

King John Gets Into Trouble When John had become king of England in 1199, he quickly moved to increase his wealth and power. He taxed people heavily. He jailed his enemies unjustly and without trial. Even the most powerful nobles were hurt by John's unfair actions.

John also clashed with the pope by objecting when a man he did not like was made bishop. He seized Church property. The pope struck back by excommunicating John and declaring that he was no longer king.

The Magna Carta John was now at the mercy of the nobles and clergy he had angered with his earlier actions. Now that he was in trouble with the pope, the nobles and clergy struck back. With the bishops' help, the nobles made a list of demands and called John to Runnymede. There he put his royal mark on their document, which was called the Magna Carta (MAG nuh KAR tuh), or the "Great Charter." Once John's mark was on the paper, it became law.

The Magna Carta limited a king's power over the nobles. The king could no longer jail nobles without just cause, nor could he tax them without their agreement. The Magna Carta also paved the way for the first **Parliament**, a council that would advise the English king in government matters.

In some ways, the Magna Carta made King John and the kings who followed him more powerful. Because nobles had a say in government, England became more united behind its royal ruler. It became a true nation instead of a quarreling collection of feudal fiefs.



The Declaration of Independence More than 500 years after King John signed the Magna Carta, another group demanded their rights. British colonists in North America thought that they were being treated unfairly. They complained about unfair taxation. When Parliament and the king refused to listen to their demands, the colonies declared their independence from Britain. The ideas in the Declaration of Independence are largely based on the laws and ideas that grew out of the Magna Carta.

The Hundred Years' War

The idea of nationhood was taking hold all over Europe in the late Middle Ages. In Spain, for example, a royal marriage united the king and queen of the two largest kingdoms. In Russia, Moscow's rulers were expanding their territory and their power over other princes. The new nations did, however, have many growing pains.

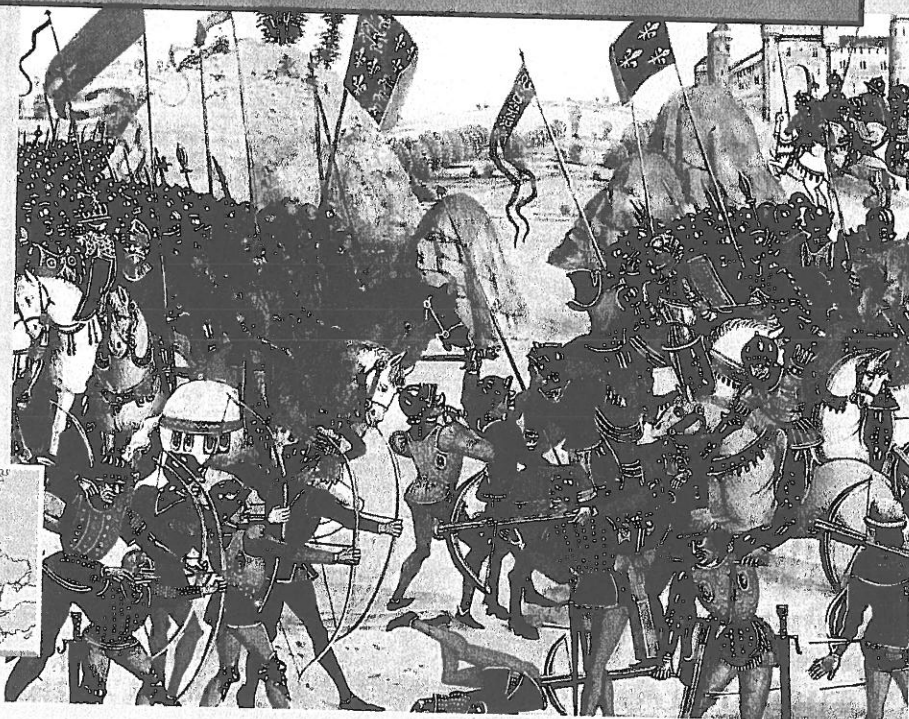
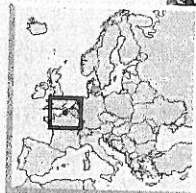
England and France at War One of the difficulties these young nations had was conflict with one another. In particular, England and France often clashed. One conflict between them led to the Hundred Years' War, which lasted from 1338 to 1453.

The English king owned and controlled a large amount of land in France. In 1328, the French king died and Edward III, who was king of England, decided he should become the new king of France. The French nobles did not agree. Determined to get his way, Edward III invaded France. Many bloody battles were fought, but nothing was settled. England won most of the battles, but the French continued to fight. The war dragged on, fought by one king after another.

Joan of Arc's Victory England continued to gain ground in the war until 1429. Then a 17-year-old peasant girl named Joan of Arc joined the French army. Deeply religious, Joan believed that God had called her to lead the French forces at the battle of Orléans (OR lay ahn). She met with the young French king and convinced him that she should

An English Victory

This battle of the Hundred Years' War took place in 1346 at Crécy (kray SEE), France. Archers armed with longbows enabled the English, at the left, to defeat a bigger French force, at the right. An English archer using a longbow could hit a target 300 yards (274 m) away. He also could fire five arrows in the time it took a French archer, who was armed with a crossbow, to shoot just one. In the Battle of Crécy, English archers killed half the French force, including about 1,000 knights.





◀ This picture, dating from the 1400s, shows Joan of Arc's first meeting with the French king. In several battles in 1429, Joan defeated the English army and broke its spirit. To this day, the French consider Joan of Arc a heroine.

command his army. Then she went on to Orléans. There the French greeted her with hope and curiosity. One person who was there said:

“People could not weary of seeing her, and it seemed to all a great marvel that she could sit on her horse with such ease and grace. And in truth she bore herself as highly in all ways as a man-at-arms who had followed the wars from his youth.”

Under Joan's command, the French defeated the English at Orléans. She then led her forces to victory in four other battles. In 1430, Joan was taken prisoner by the English, tried as a witch, and burned at the stake. Her death came too late to help England's cause. It did not help England recover from its string of losses. By 1453, France had reclaimed all but a small portion of its lands. With the English troops in retreat, the French were on their way to becoming a strong and united nation.

SECTION 4 REVIEW

1. **Define** (a) nation, (b) the Magna Carta, (c) Parliament.
2. **Identify** (a) Pope Gregory VII, (b) Henry IV, (c) King John, (d) Joan of Arc, (e) Runnymede, (f) Orléans.

3. What caused struggles between kings and popes in the Middle Ages?
4. Describe some events that helped European kingdoms become nations in the late Middle Ages.

Critical Thinking

5. **Understanding Cause and Effect** Explain how the actions taken by England's

King John led to the creation of the Magna Carta.

Activity

6. Writing to Learn

Suppose that you are a French soldier preparing for the battle of Orléans. Describe your reaction to the news that a young peasant girl, Joan of Arc, is your new commander.