

Optional Resources

- . Text to colour
- . Story for younger children

He telleth
the
number
of the
stars

Psalm 147:4

The Magna Carta

Over 800 years ago there was a wicked king of England named John. John had land in France, but the French people grew angry with him and didn't want him in France anymore. John had to leave France and his possessions and return to England. This meant he was very poor. King John tried all sorts of ways to make money. One way he made money was to punish people by making them pay him huge amounts of money, even if they only did a small thing wrong. He did many other unfair things and he became very unpopular with the people in England.

Eventually the barons decided to do something about the situation. They had had enough of the way King John was behaving. Along with the Archbishop of Canterbury, a man called Stephen Langton, they marched to London. The people of London usually got worried when the barons came as they were very powerful people. Then they were glad when the King at that time made sure they did not demand more than they should. On this occasion, they were glad to see the barons as they were so cross with the king for demanding so much money from them.

Stephen Langton, the Archbishop of Canterbury told King John that the barons wanted him to sign an agreement (called a charter) that he would not treat the people badly. The charter had rules that they wanted King John to follow, so that he treated people fairly. It took a lot of trouble to get King John to put his seal to it, but eventually he did. It was called the Magna Carta. The word 'Magna' means 'great'. It was a very long, important document. The barons made many copies of the new charter and had them sent all over the country to make sure that everyone knew about their new freedoms.

In King John's days, most people were not free. In years to come, there would be a day when all men in England would be free. One of the most important things that the charter said, was that the King had to obey the laws of the land. This makes the Magna Carta very important in our history.