

Magna Charta



Hi,Guys! To introduce today's topic, let's start with a simple question?



What are taxes for?





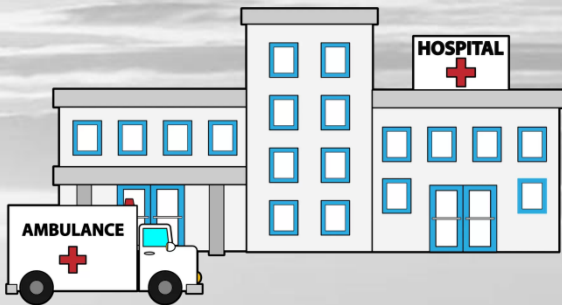
Nobody has ever enjoyed paying taxes...

But, have you ever thought how is that money used?

Taxes are mandatory contributions levied on individuals or corporations by a government entity.

HELP!!

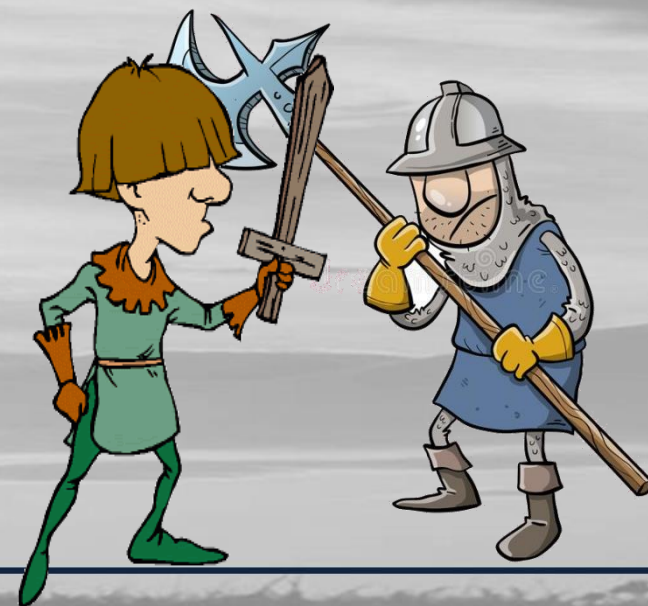




Hence, taxes are paid to provide society with essential services

This has happened in any society, but....

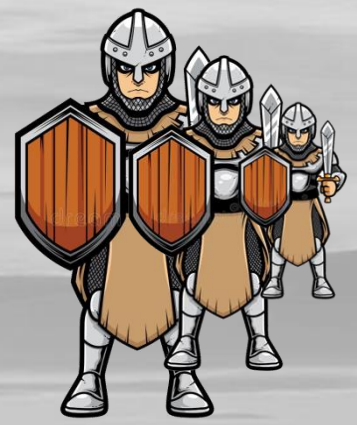
what kind of taxes were paid in the 13th century and what were they for?





Tithe

- Ownership of land
- Trade
- Movable property





John Lackland

This talk on taxes takes us to the story of a king who **tripped over** (*inciampare*) tax issues:

Who was John Lackland?





A Controversial King

- The youngest of Henry II' s four sons .
- John was fiercely energetic.
- 1. **hustled hither and thither** (*correva avanti ed indietro*) across his **domains** (*territori*), to raise cash or **swipe** (*colpire*) at rebels,
- 2. **snooped on** (*spiare*) his barons to **blackmail** (*ricattare*) them,
- 3. **abandoned** his first wife, Isabella of Gloucester to marry the 12-year-old Isabella of Angouleme in order to secure a continental alliance,
- 4. **starved** to death Matilda de Braose and her son when their family rebelled,


BUT

- But he possessed little of the physical courage or martial charisma of his brother , in fact his nicknames were 'Lackland' and 'Softsword'.





The Loss of Normandy

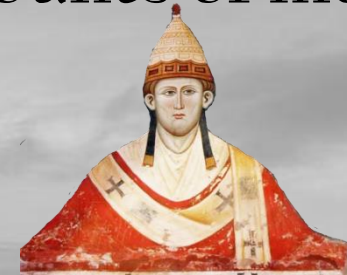
- King Philip of France won Normandy in 1204.
- John raised the money he needed  to recover his continental inheritance. How? The King:
 1. ordered sheriffs to **raise** (*procurarsi*) more cash from their counties
 2. **levied** (*prelevare*) large taxes from the Jews
 3. raised a tax on the general population of 13 %



John and the Church of Rome

- John was able to raise vast amounts of money from the Church.

HOW?



- He rejected Pope Innocent III's candidate for the archbishopric of Canterbury: Stephen Langton
- John was excommunicated and England placed under an interdict.
- Hence, as a form of revenge, John drove the bishops out of their monasteries and was able to **wring** £100,000



Yet it was King John's treatment of his barons that was to provoke rebellion and ultimately lead to Magna Carta.

Jealous of their power and suspicious of their intentions, he tried to force the loyalty he could not win.





King John and the Barons



John's behaviour invited the very rebellion he feared. In fact he:

- **took** the barons' sons as hostages ,
- **charged hefty** (*salate/elevate*) sums for having his 'goodwill',
- **named** exorbitant fees (*tassa*) for heirs to enter **THEIR** inheritance.





At the Pope's side

- When King Philip won at Bouvines in July 1214, John's hopes of recovering Normandy ended.
- King John opted **to patch things up** (*riparare*) with the Pope, so he accepted Stephen Langton as archbishop of Canterbury and made himself a papal vassal.
- The Pope condemned the barons' rebellion.
- John was in a much stronger position to face baronial demands.



The Charter of Runnymede

- The two sides met at Runnymede, on the River Thames near Windsor in the south of England, in June 1215.
- The demands of the barons were recorded in the document known as the Articles of the Barons.
- King John **granted** (*concedere*) the Charter of Liberties, subsequently known as Magna Carta, at Runnymede on 15 June 1215.
- On 19 June the rebel barons made their formal peace with King John and renewed their **oaths** (*giuramento*) of **allegiance** (*fedeltà*) to him.





A Change of Direction

- The King's clerks set about drawing up copies of the agreement for distribution throughout the kingdom.
- The barons had included a 'security clause' royal property could be seized if the king **breached** (*rompere/violare*) the Charter.
- John persuaded the Pope to annul the Charter.
- On 24 August 1215 the Pope issued a papal **bull** (*bolla*), describing Magna Carta as '*illegal, unjust, harmful to royal rights and shameful to the English people*', and declaring the charter '*null and void of all validity for ever*'.
- **The barons invited the French king to INVADE England and take John's throne.**
- But John died in October 1216, leaving an infant son and a kingdom **wracked** (*devastato*) by civil war.



"Hey! — Don't go adding disclaimers!"



The Aftermath

- In 1217, the council issued the Charter again, this time alongside a sister document, the Charter of the Forest (hence the Charter of Runnymede became Magna Carta, ‘the Great Charter’).
- In 1225 Henry III issued the Charter freely in return for taxation
- In 1225 Stephen Langton pronounced sentence of excommunication against anybody – even the king himself – who dared to break the Charter’s terms.
- The 1225 issue of Magna Carta was to set a new pattern for the king’s relationship with his subjects:
 1. **The King had to stick to the Charter** if he was to hope for **financial support**.
 2. The barons and knights gathered in parliaments to discuss the King’s policies.



Magna Carta established for the first time the principle that everybody, including the king, was subject to the law.

The king could no longer decide in economic matters alone, but needed the approbation of a «**general consent**»

That «general consent» is the first seed that will take the form of a Parliament soon.

I DIDN'T KNOW THE MAGNA CARTA HAD SMALL PRINT!



What does Magna Carta say?

- Although Magna Carta contained 63 clauses when it was first granted, only three of those clauses remain part of English law. One defends the liberties and rights of the English Church, another confirms the liberties and customs of London and other towns, but the third is the most famous:

“No free man shall be seized or imprisoned, or stripped of his rights or possessions, or outlawed or exiled, or deprived of his standing in any other way, nor will we proceed with force against him, or send others to do so, except by the lawful judgement of his equals or by the law of the land. To no one will we sell, to no one deny or delay right or justice.”

Hence, this clause gave all free men the right to justice and a fair trial.



Conclusion

Magna Carta is regarded as **the foundation of democracy in England**. Magna Carta has acquired a special status as the **cornerstone** (*cardine*) of English liberties. This is despite the fact that the vast majority of its clauses have now been **repealed** (*abrogate*), or in some cases **superseded** (*sostituito*) by other legislation such as the Human Rights Act (1998). Magna Carta nonetheless retains enormous symbolic power as an ancient defence against arbitrary and tyrannical rulers, and as a guarantor of individual liberties.





"Look — if I'd had any idea what a constitution was, I never would have signed the darn thing, okay?"



