King John and The Magna Carta:

The fifth and youngest son of King Henry II and his wife, Eleanor of Aguitaine, was nicknamed John Lackland because he lacked land. Unlike his brothers, John inherited no important fiefs from his father. John did, however, manage to outlive his four older brothers, one of whom was the popular King Richard the Lion-Heart. As a result, John inherited the throne of England in 1199.

King John immediately embarked on a series of ill-advised actions, which included extortion and other abuses. His excesses alienated the English nobles and triggered unrest throughout the kingdom. In 1225, angry nobles forced King John to place his seal up upon the Magna Carta, or Great Charter, which limited the power of the king.

One of the most important documents in English history, the Magna Carta forms the foundation of English constitutional law and liberties and it has been declared part of the Canadian Constitution.

The Magna Carta assumes that the king, like those he rules, is subject to the law. To ensure that justice was applied fairly and equally under the law, all free men were entitled to be judged by their peers. This principle led, over time, to the system of trial by jury.

