**Magna Carta Activity**

In 1199, Richard died and John became king. War with France was renewed, triggered by John's second marriage. While asked to mediate between the rival families of Lusignan and Angoulâme, he married the Angoulâme heiress Isabella, who had been betrothed to Hugh de Lusignan. A rebellion broke out and John was ordered to appear before his overlord, Philip II of France. His failure to do so resulted in war.

By 1206, John had lost Normandy, Anjou, Maine and parts of Poitou. These failures were a damaging blow to his prestige and he was determined to win them back. This required money, so his government became increasingly ruthless and efficient in its financial administration. Taxes soared and he began to exploit his feudal rights ever more harshly.

This bred increasing baronial discontent. Negotiations between John and his barons failed and civil war broke out in May 1215. When the rebels seized London, John was compelled to negotiate further and, on 19 June at Runnymede on the River Thames, he accepted the baronial terms embodied in the Magna Carta, which limited royal power, ensured feudal rights and restated English law. It was the first formal document stating that the monarch was as much under the rule of law as his people, and that the rights of individuals were to be upheld even against the wishes of the sovereign.

**Extracts from the Magna Carta (1215)**

(I) In the first place we have granted to God... that the English Church shall be free... freedom of elections, which is reckoned most important and very essential to the English Church...

(II) If any of our earls, or barons... shall have died, and at the time of his death his heir shall be of full age... he shall have his inheritance...

(VII) A widow, after the death of her husband, shall without difficulty have her inheritance...

(VIII) No widow shall be compelled to marry, so long as she prefers to live without a husband...

(XI) If anyone die indebted to the Jews, his wife shall... pay nothing of that debt.

(XII) No scutage or aid (tax) shall be imposed on our kingdom, unless by common counsel of our kingdom...

(XIV) And for obtaining the common counsel of the kingdom before the assessing of an aid or of a scutage, we will cause to be summoned the archbishops, bishops, abbots, earls, and greater barons...

(XX) A freeman shall not be fined for a slight offence... and for a grave offence he shall be fined in accordance with the gravity of the offence... and a villein should be fined in the same way.

(XXIII) No village or individual shall be compelled to make bridges or river banks...

(XXX) No sheriff or bailiff... or other person, shall take the horses or carts of any freeman for transport duty, against the will of the said freeman...

(XXXV) Let there be one measure of wine throughout the whole kingdom, and one measure of ale; and one measure of corn; and one width of cloth...

(XXXIX) No freeman shall be taken or imprisoned or outlawed or exiled or in anyway destroyed... except by the lawful judgement of his peers or by the law of the land.

(XL) To no one will we sell, to no one will we refuse justice.

(XLI) All merchants shall have safe and secure exit from England, and entry to England, with right to be there and to move about... for buying and selling... except in time of war, such merchants as are of the land at war with us. And if they are found in our land at the beginning of the war, they shall be detained, without injury to their bodies or goods, until information be received by us by our chief justicar how the merchants of our land found in the land at war with us are treated; and if our men are safe there the others shall be safe in our land.

(XLII) It shall be lawful in future for anyone to leave our kingdom... excepting those imprisoned or outlawed in accordance with the law in the kingdom...

(XLV) We will appoint as justices, constables, sheriffs, or bailiffs only such as know the law of the kingdom and mean to observe it well.

**Answer The Following:**

Question 1: What evidence is there in the Magna Carta that the barons were unhappy with the way the law operated under King John?

Question 2: Explain how the following groups of people might have responded to the Magna Carta: (a) widows; (b) merchants; (c) villeins.

Question 3: Why is the Magna Carta such an impactful document on history? Are the ideas and principles the Magna Carta established still seen today? Where and how?