

Task 1 – Vocabulary matching

1. Providing advice or information	a) West Yorkshire is a county famous for sheep-farming and the wool industry.
2. Something that existed before a newer but similar thing started	b) The minister aimed to reduce the government spending on the army.
3. Members of the highest social class who usually hold titles, such as dukes, barons or earls.	c) The advisory committee of the government met to discuss conditions of the peace treaty.
4. A sudden feeling that you need to get or do something usually not very important	d) Their landlord was taken to court for breaking the contract.
5. A part of a country that has its own local government	e) Poverty led people to revolt against their king in 1381.
6. Successful; having won a competition or a battle	f) A devoted secretary was made to satisfy the king's every whim.
7. A protest against authority	g) Queen Elizabeth II is one of the most popular monarchs in British history.
8. The amount of money that is spent by the government or an organisation	h) In the Wimbledon Men's Tennis final, Andy Murray was victorious over Novak Djokovic, and became champion.
9. Kings or queens	i) In early medieval times, nobles were usually very influential people in the country.
10. A place where legal trials take place	j) Country music is said to be a forerunner of rock and roll.

Task 2 – Scanning

Read the text on the next page quickly. Find and underline the key historical figures, dates and events. What was the Magna Carta?

The origins of the British Parliament

What are the historical roots of the parliament?

Originally, *Parliament* meant the advisory meetings of the English monarch with a large group of his nobles and clergy. The word *Parliament* comes from the French word *parler* (meaning *to speak*); Parliament itself was an event arranged to talk and discuss things. The first known use of the word was in 1236, although the English Parliament itself is much older.

What form did Parliament take in its early years?

For the first few centuries of its existence Parliament was only an occasion and not an institution. It was called at the whim of the monarch, consisted of whoever he wanted to speak with, met wherever he happened to be, could last as long as he wanted, and had no independent officials of its own.

Who fought back against the king?

Throughout the 13th century the barons were frequently in revolt against the kings whom they thought were governing the kingdom badly, that is, against the barons' own wishes. In 1199 after the death of King Richard the Lionheart, King John started to rule the country. He quickly became very unpopular with his nobles and infamous for his greediness and cruelty. He was losing in the war with France, imposing higher taxation on his people, closing feudal courts and taking lands away from noble families according to his own wish. At last, barons couldn't bear his policy any longer. In 1215 King John was forced to agree to the Magna Carta, the "great charter" of legal rights, which insisted that he listen to and follow the advice of the barons.



King John agreeing to the Magna Carta in 1215

How did the position of barons change?

Unfortunately, barons' situation didn't improve for long. After King John died in 1216, his son King Henry III continued his father's heavy spending and surrounded himself mainly with foreign advisers.

What was the barons' reaction to this?

In 1258 the barons stated their dissatisfaction with Henry III, and tried to force him to accept a set of conditions called the Provisions of Oxford. These radical proposals called for regular meetings of Parliament three times a year, which should also include 12 non-noble representatives chosen from the counties.

Did they reach an agreement with the king?

Henry III refused to agree to the provisions and war broke out between him and the leader of the barons, Simon de Montfort, who was victorious in 1264. In January 1265 de Montfort called his own Parliament to discuss the peace terms. This Parliament is seen as the earliest forerunner of the modern Parliament because it included not only the men who made up the Great Council, but also representatives from each county and from the cities and towns.



Simon de Montfort (left) quarrelling with King Henry III

Task 3 – Reading for specific information

Read the whole text again and decide if these statements are true or false. Correct the false ones.

1. According to the text, the first known use of the word 'parliament' is dated back to 1236.
2. Originally, parliament was an advisory gathering of only the king and the bishops.
3. In the early years parliament was summoned only on demand of the monarch.
4. In the 13th century the nobility was very unhappy with the kings' reigns and they fought against their monarchs a lot.
5. In 1215 King John decided himself to give more rights and freedom to his people.
6. In the Provisions of Oxford barons demanded of their monarch to summon parliamentary meetings three times a year and include representatives of common people in the works of parliament.
7. As a result of the war with their monarch, the barons were defeated and they didn't manage to reform the parliament.

Answer these questions:

8. Who was Simon de Montfort?
9. Why is his parliament described as 'the earliest forerunner of the modern parliament'?

Task 4 – Group discussion

Discuss these questions in your group.

- Is it important for the country to have representatives of common people in the parliament?
- Does the government in your country listen to the voice of 'ordinary citizens'?
- Do you feel it's important to participate in public general elections? Why?
- In what way can an 'ordinary citizen' in your country have more influence on decisions made by the government or the parliament?