

# KIM: TCI Ch. 5 Decline of Feudalism

**Social Studies**

Chapter 10 in

**Vocabulary**

Blue text

**bubonic plague**

**habeas corpus**

**heretic**

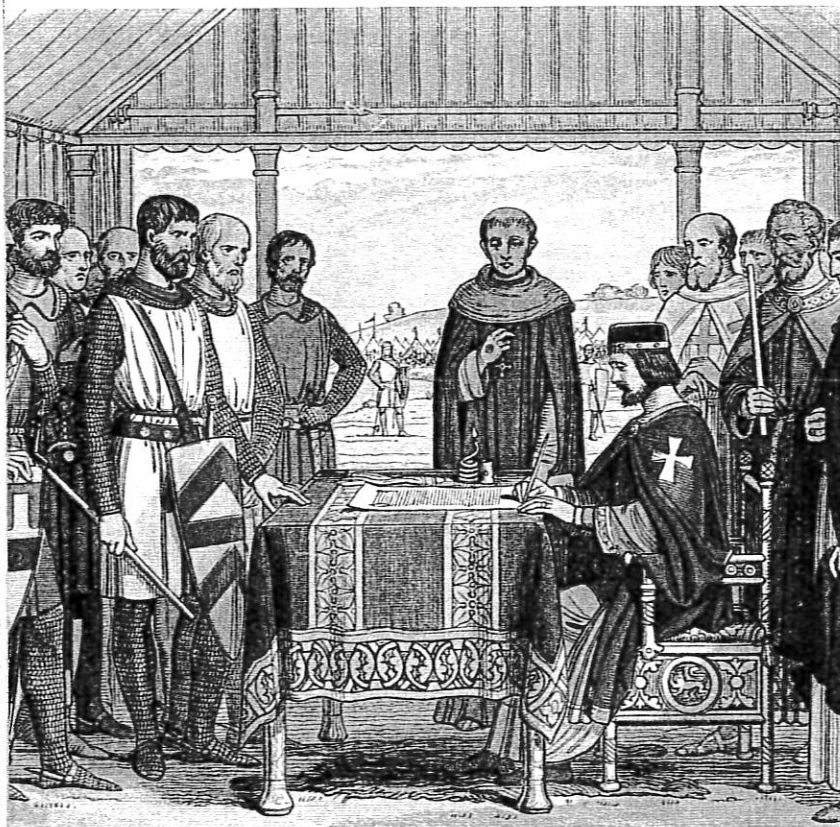
**Hundred Years' War**

**Magna Carta**

**Model Parliament**

**Magna Carta** a written legal agreement signed in 1215 that limited the English monarch's power

King John's acceptance of Magna Carta has been illustrated and painted many times. He is often, as he is here, incorrectly shown signing his name with a pen. In fact, he stamped his royal seal on the document to show his agreement.



## 5.2 Political Developments in England

There were many reasons for the decline of feudalism in Europe. In one country, England, political developments during the 12th and 13th centuries helped to weaken feudalism. The story begins with King Henry II, who reigned from 1154 to 1189.

**Henry II's Legal Reforms** Henry made legal reform a central concern of his reign. For example, he insisted that a jury formally accuse a person of a serious crime. Cases were then tried before a royal judge. In theory, people could no longer simply be jailed or executed for no legal reason. There also had to be a court trial. These reforms strengthened the power of royal courts at the expense of feudal lords.

Henry's effort to strengthen royal authority led to a serious conflict with the Catholic Church. In the year 1164, Henry issued the Constitutions of Clarendon, a document that he said spelled out the king's **traditional** rights. Among them was the right to try clergy accused of serious crimes in royal courts, rather than in Church courts.

Henry's action led to a long, bitter quarrel with his friend, Thomas Becket, the archbishop of Canterbury. In 1170, four knights, perhaps seeking the king's favor, killed Becket in front of the main altar of Canterbury Cathedral. The cathedral and Becket's tomb soon became

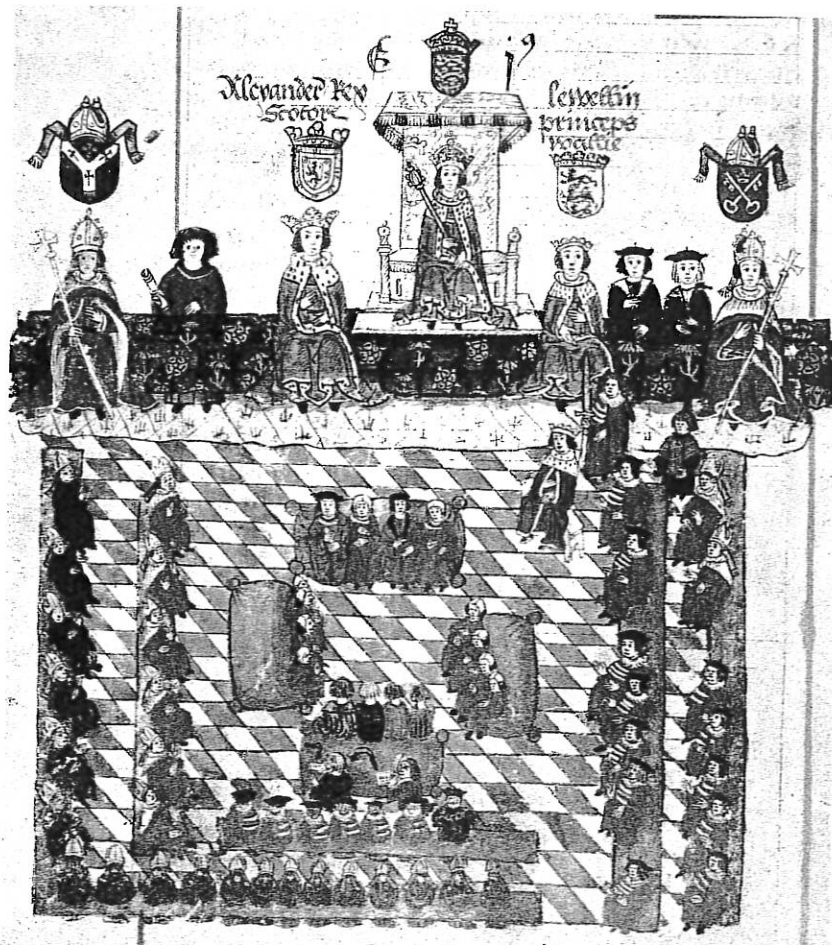
a popular destination for pilgrimages. In 1173, the Catholic Church proclaimed him a saint. Still, most of the Constitutions of Clarendon remained in force.

**King John and Magna Carta** In 1199, Henry's youngest son, John, became king of England. John soon made powerful enemies by losing most of the lands the English had controlled in France. He also taxed his barons heavily and ignored their traditional rights, arresting opponents at will. In addition, John quarreled with the Catholic Church and collected large amounts of money from its properties.

In June 1215, angry nobles forced a meeting with King John in a meadow called Runnymede, beside the River Thames, outside of London. There, they insisted that John put his seal on a document called **Magna Carta**, which means "Great Charter" in Latin.

Magna Carta was an agreement between the nobles and the monarch. The nobles agreed that the monarch could continue to rule. For his part, King John agreed to observe common law and the traditional rights of the nobles and the Church. For example, he promised to consult the nobles and the Church archbishops and bishops before imposing special taxes. He also agreed that “no free man” could be jailed except by the lawful judgment of his peers or by the law of the land. This idea eventually developed into a key part of English common law known as **habeas corpus** (HAY-be-us KOR-pus).

In many ways, Magna Carta only protected the rights and privileges of nobles. However, as time passed, the English people came to regard it as one of the **foundations** of their rights and liberties.



The Granger Collection, New York

**King Edward I and the Model Parliament** In 1295, Edward I, King John’s grandson, took a major step toward including more people in government. Edward called together a governing body called the **Model Parliament**. It included commoners and lower-ranking clergy, as well as high-level Church officials and nobles.

This 14th-century illustration shows King Edward I attending his Parliament. The King of Scots is seated to his right; the Prince of Wales is seated to his left.

**The Impact of Political Developments in England** These political changes contributed to the decline of feudalism in two ways. Some of the changes strengthened royal authority at the expense of the nobles. Others weakened feudalism by eventually shifting some power to the common people.

Magna Carta established the idea of rights and liberties that even a monarch cannot violate. It also affirmed that monarchs should rule with the advice of the governed. Henry II’s legal reforms strengthened English common law and the role of judges and juries. Finally, Edward I’s Model Parliament gave a voice in government to common people, as well as to nobles. All these ideas formed the basis for the development of modern **democratic** institutions.

**habeas corpus** the legal concept that an accused person cannot be jailed indefinitely without being charged with a crime

**Model Parliament** a governing body created by King Edward I of England that included some commoners, Church officials, and nobles



**bubonic plague** a deadly contagious disease caused by bacteria and spread by fleas; also called the Black Death

### 5.3 The Bubonic Plague

You have learned how political developments in England helped to weaken feudalism in that country. Another reason for the decline of feudalism was the **bubonic plague**, which affected all of Europe. The bubonic plague first struck Europe from 1346 to 1351. It returned in waves that occurred about every decade into the 15th century, leaving major changes in its wake.

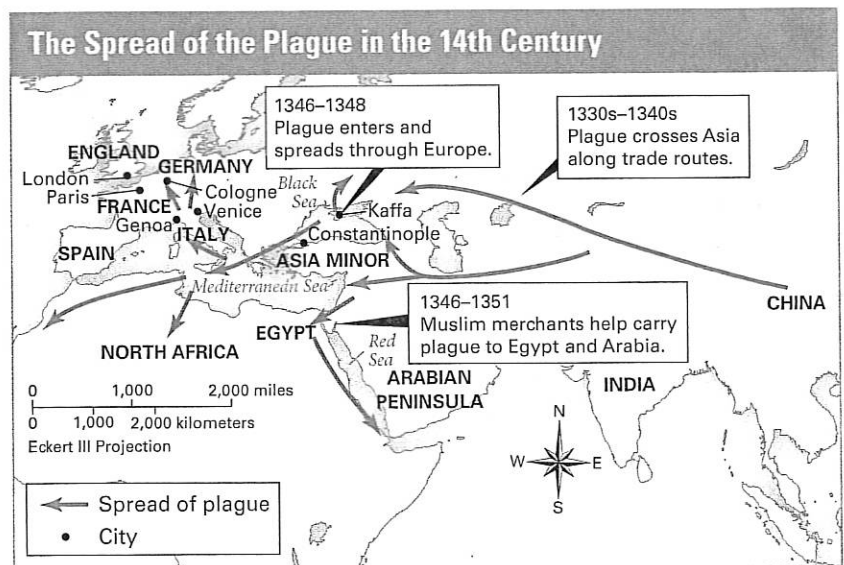
Historians think the plague began in Central Asia, possibly in China, and spread throughout China, India, the Middle East, and then to Europe. The disease traveled from Central Asia to the Black Sea along the Silk Road (the main trade route between Asia and the Mediterranean Sea). It probably was carried to Italy on a ship. It then spread north and west, throughout the continent of Europe and to England.

**The Black Death** Symptoms, or signs, of the plague included fever, vomiting, fierce coughing and sneezing fits, and egg-sized swellings or bumps, called *buboes*. The term “Black Death” probably came from these black-and-blue swellings that appeared on the skin of victims.

The dirty conditions in which people lived contributed significantly to the spread of the bubonic plague. The bacteria that cause the disease are carried by fleas that feed on the blood of infected rodents, such as rats. When the rats die, the fleas jump to other animals and people. During the Middle Ages, it was not unusual for people to go for many months without a change of clothing or a bath. Rats, covered with fleas, often roamed the floors of homes looking for food. City streets were filled with human waste, dead animals, and trash.

At the time, though, no one knew where the disease came from or how it spread. Terrified people falsely blamed the plague on everything from the positions of the planets to lepers and to Jews.

The bubonic plague, or Black Death, most likely originated in Asia. In the 14th century, this disease killed about one-third of the population of Europe and brought about major political and social change.





Joan of Arc inspired the people of France to fight. To this day, she is honored for her heroism. A late 19th-century artist painted this scene called *Entrance of Joan of Arc into Orleans on 8th May 1429*.

**Hundred Years' War** a series of battles fought between France and England from 1337 to 1453

**heretic** a person who holds beliefs that are contrary to a set of religious teachings

## 5.4 The Hundred Years' War

Between 1337 and 1453, England and France fought a series of battles for control over lands in France. Known as the **Hundred Years' War**, this long conflict contributed to the erosion of feudalism in England and in France.

English monarchs had long claimed lands in France. This was because earlier English kings had actually been feudal lords over these French fiefs. French kings now disputed these claims. When Philip VI of France declared that the French fiefs of England's King Edward III were part of Philip's own realm, war broke out in France.

**Early English Successes** Despite often being outnumbered, the English won most of the early battles of the war. What happened at the Battle of Crécy (KRAY-see) shows why.

Two quite different armies faced each other at the French village of Crécy in 1346. The French had a feudal army that relied on horse-mounted knights. French knights wore heavy armor, and they could hardly move when they were not on horseback. Their weapons were swords and lances. Some of the infantry, or foot soldiers, used crossbows, which were effective only at short ranges.

In contrast, the English army was made up of lightly armored knights, foot soldiers, and archers armed with longbows. Some soldiers were recruited from the common people and paid to fight.

The longbow had many advantages over the crossbow. Larger arrows could be fired more quickly. The arrows flew farther, faster, and more accurately, and could pierce the armor of the time. At Crécy, the longbow helped the English defeat the much larger French force.

**The French Fight Back** The French slowly chipped away at the territory the English had won in the early years of the war. In 1415, after a long truce, English King Henry V again invaded France. This time, the English met with stronger resistance. One reason was that the French were now using more modern tactics. The French king was recruiting his army from commoners, paying them with money collected by taxes, just as the English did.

Another reason for increased French resistance was a new sense of national identity and unity. In part, the French were inspired by a 17-year-old peasant girl, known today as Joan of Arc. Joan claimed that she heard the voices of saints urging her to save France. Putting on a suit of armor, she went to fight.

In 1429, Joan led a French army to victory in the Battle of Orléans (OR-lay-uhn). The next year, the "Maid of Orléans" was captured by English allies. The English pushed certain Church leaders to accuse Joan of being a witch and a **heretic** and to burn her at the stake.