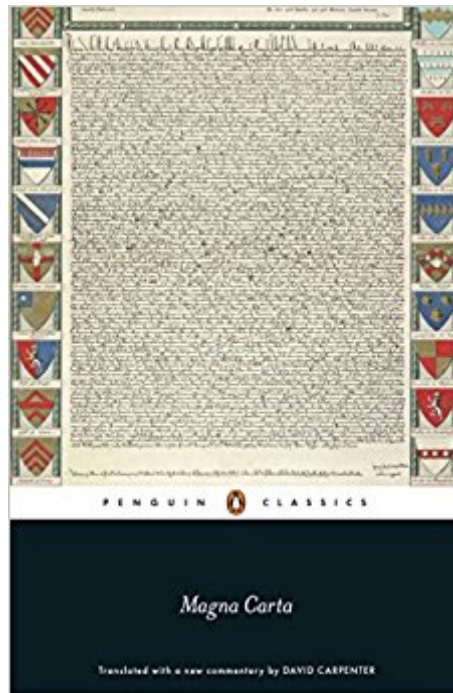


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Magna Carta (Penguin Classics)



Synopsis

For its 800th anniversary, a new edition of one of democracy's founding legal documents, with extensive new commentary. Wrested by rebellious barons from a very reluctant King John, Magna Carta set out a series of rights and duties that have been appealed to, ignored, suppressed, and argued about ever since. Here, David Carpenter's forceful new translation is accompanied by extensive commentary that sheds new light on this illustrious legal document. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"An invaluable new commentary." —Jill Lepore, *The New Yorker*
"A magisterial re-examination of the Charter."
"The Times Literary Supplement" "Of all the books that commemorated the octingentenary of the signing of Magna Carta, the one that stands out for me is David Carpenter's new Penguin Classics edition. . . . Carpenter deserves to replace Sir James Holt as the standard authority, and an unfailingly readable one too."
"Ferdinand Mount, *The Times Literary Supplement*, "Books of the Year"

David Carpenter, who has translated the text of Magna Carta and written the text of this edition, is Professor of Medieval History at King's College, London. He is the author of *The Struggle for Mastery in Britain, 1066-1284*, a volume in the Penguin History of Britain series.

The English consider King John one of the worst monarchs in their long history, but the maxim stating that every dark cloud has a silver lining certainly proved true in the case of John; his misrule was so egregious that in response England birthed Magna Carta, a landmark not just in English history but in world history. This brilliant study of that seminal document features both the Latin and English texts of Magna Carta with superb commentary by historian David Carpenter. In the years leading up to 1215, King John came into increasing conflict with English barons and with others in English society. John was both incompetent and heavy-handed, losing English-held land in present-day France, taxing unjustly, and ruling arbitrarily--justice was meted out capriciously during his misrule. Carpenter describes the king's character flaws that exacerbated the conflicts he had with the English people and led them to seek redress, and the author neatly summed up John's reign, noting that "it took far too much and it gave far too little." This volume reminds readers that public opinion matters and politics takes place even in monarchic systems--by 1215, the people were in position to force John to acknowledge that even kings were not above the law, and Carpenter describes the final negotiations over the content of Magna Carta. The charter was to grant the right of trial by jury as well as provide protection against both arbitrary rule and the unjust seizing of property by the king. Carpenter examines the debate over the date of Magna Carta and describes the charter's effect on the king, the church, London, Scotland, Wales, as well as the various social classes. The reader learns some of the workings of medieval English society and of its economy, as there were several conflicts between the classes--this study shows how Magna Carta aided some more than others. After Magna Carta was sealed, it was abandoned and revived, and Carpenter examines the distribution of the charter, the fits and starts it had on its road to wide acceptance, and the difference that Magna Carta made through the thirteenth century. Magna Carta had a profound effect on subsequent law and, half a millennium later, its principles influenced the founding of the United States of America. This study of one of the most important documents in world history comes with a glossary you will likely refer to often while reading the book and gives a sense of how England was governed before the charter was framed, and how that subsequently changed. This is a thorough, definitive account of the document that has for centuries inspired protections of the rights and freedoms we in America take for granted every day.

Excellent reference book. The academic writing is dry, but there's a wealth of information in the book, as well as the complete Magna Carta with notes and variants. If you're looking for more background information, I recommend the very readable book by Stephen Church, "King John and the Road to Magna Carta." I read lots of history books, and this was a very good read. King John was controversial, though, so you will probably want to read more than one book about him to get a fuller picture. Anyway, Carpenter's extensively introduced and annotated edition of Magna Carta is a very good book

A very thorough history of the Magna Carta. The specifics of the document itself, the individuals involved in its creation, the cultural context of the 13th century, and some reflection on its historical impact.

Haven't finished the book yet which is why I only give it 4 stars, not five. Very meaty book. Hard to think of a treatment of Magna Carta better than this. Absolutely engaging for those who want to know the knotty-gritty of the magnacarta.

am looking forward to reading it

Carpenter's Magna Carta is a masterful compendium of recent scholarship on the Charter with the author's own original research and insights. Perhaps a bit long for casual readers.

Quite a detailed analysis of the development of the Magna Carta and the implication on English society.

Magna Carta by British scholar provides a handbook of information and new understandings about the Magna Carta, 1215 and its subsequent history. A must read for everyone concerned about freedom and democracy in this day and age.

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