

Topic: The origins of the English Parliament

Level: B2 / C1

Time: 1 hour

Aims

- To develop students' ability to read a historical text.
- To familiarise students with the historical origins of the parliamentary system in Britain.

Materials

- PowerPoint slides related to the theme of 'parliaments' (you could print these and put them on the classroom walls).
- A set of cut-out cards (copies of **Task 1**) for each group of four students.
- A copy of all the worksheets for each student.

Preparation

Before class, print and cut up one copy of **Task 1 – Vocabulary matching** for each group of four students. As the answers are printed next to the sentences, you will need to cut this task up.

You may also want to print the pictures from '**English Parliament pictures for warmer**' (the PowerPoint file) and display them around the classroom, but these can simply be shown on the projector.

Introduction

This lesson is to familiarise students with the development of the parliamentary system in England. It is a multi-skilled lesson and is mostly based on group work activities in order to maximise interaction and collaboration among students. Students will read the text about the Magna Carta and Simon de Montfort's Parliament, and then take part in a group discussion about the influence of ordinary citizens on political decisions nowadays.

Procedure

Lead-in – Speaking (15 minutes)

- Show the pictures from '**English Parliament pictures for warmer**' (the PowerPoint file) and ask them what the pictures show.

Answers: Slide 1 – King John agreeing to the Magna Carta in 1215 (the students will read about this in Tasks 2 and 3.

Slide 2 – the British House of Commons / parliament in the 19th century.

Slide 3 – the Houses of Parliament by the River Thames, London.

- Get them to brainstorm any vocabulary related to 'parliament'.

Suggested answers for the word 'parliament': democracy, election, opposition, MPs, political party, the Speaker, houses, vote, ballot, bills, law, debate, sessions, pass a new law, constituency.

- Ask students about any historical events that might have led to the formation of parliamentary systems in their country or in the world.

Task 1 – Deducing the meaning of words from the context (10min)

- Get students into the groups of four. Give each group one set of cards.
- In their groups ask students to read only the sentences first and deduce the meaning of the words in bold from the context.
- Then ask students to look at definitions of these words and match them with the correct sentence.
- Monitor students during their work and feed back on their answers.

Tip: If some students have finished earlier, you could ask them to make some other sentences with the given words.

Answers to Task 1: 1.c, 2.j, 3.i, 4.f, 5.a, 6.h, 7.e, 8.b, 9.g, 10.d

After the students complete the task, distribute the worksheets; the students will then have a written record of the words with the definitions next to them (**Task 1 – Vocabulary record**).

Reading tasks: The beginnings of the British Parliament – intensive reading (20 min)

Task 2 – Scanning:

- Give each student **Task 2**. Ask them to cover the whole text except for the title.
The original source of this text is:
<http://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/evolutionofparliament/originsofparliament/birthofparliament/overview/firstparliaments/>
- Get them to predict the content of the text. Ask if there are any facts or names they expect to find in this text.
- Ask students to read quickly the text and underline only the names and main historical facts in the text.

Answers: *Parliament, King Richard the Lionheart, King John, the Magna Carta, King Henry III, the Provisions of Oxford, Simon de Montfort, the Great Council.*

The Magna Carta was a charter of legal rights which urged the king to consult his decisions with the barons. It was sealed by King John 1215.

Task 3 – Reading for specific information

- Get students to read the text again and decide if the given statements are true or false. Ask them to justify their answers and correct any wrong statements. Once finished, students answer questions 8 and 9.

Answers to Task 3: 1.T; 2.F (*It was an advisory gathering of the king, nobles **and the clergy***); 3.T; 4.T; 5.F (*King John **was forced** to seal the Magna Carta Act*); 6.T; 7.F (*The barons **won** the war in 1264 and their leader **called a new parliament** a year later*). 8. *Simon de Montfort was the leader of the barons during the war against their king Henry III. He is also known for his revolutionary parliament which is considered to begin the development of modern parliamentary democracy.* 9. *De Montfort's parliament included for the first time the representatives of ordinary citizens from the cities and towns.*

- Ask students to check their answers in pairs. Then collect the feedback from the whole class.

Task 4 – Group discussion (15min)

- Put students in groups of three or four and ask each group to discuss the questions.
- Monitor and help as necessary.
- Elicit from students a range of answers during feedback stage.

Suggested homework

- Ask students to do some research in their library or on the Internet and find out some interesting facts about the structure and the work of the British Parliament.

- Get students to prepare a text about the beginnings of the parliamentary system in their country, if applicable.