

Topic: English society in the Middle Ages

Level: B2

Time: 55 minutes

Aims

- to develop students' negotiation skills
- to develop students' awareness of common predicaments of people living in the 1200s, which caused the unrest that ultimately led to the Magna Carta

Introduction

This lesson is about the problems that different people had at the beginning of the 1200s.

The quiz (**Task 2**) provides students with background knowledge of the grievances that fuelled the events leading to the Magna Carta, agreed in 1215 between King John of England and his disgruntled barons.

The role play (**Task 4**) personalises the events to make them more accessible and to bring the period alive, giving the historical events more meaning. Students will practise their speaking skills and negotiation skills.

Preparation

Be ready in **Task 1** to show the students the pictures on the PowerPoint.

Copy and cut out the five role play cards from **Rolecards for Task 4** before the class starts so that each student has their own card, ready for the role play task. The role play cards can be found in a separate document.

Procedure

Warmer – Grievances (5 mins)

- Ask students if they have ever had to make a formal complaint about anything, for example poor food in a restaurant or a delayed journey. How did they complain? Did they ask to speak to the manager, make a phone call or write a letter? Ask students if they sometimes find it difficult to complain? Why?

Task 1 – Vocabulary: people in the 1200s (5 mins)

- This exercise introduces vocabulary that students will need for the quiz in **Task 2** and the role play in **Task 4**. It sets the scene for the whole lesson by introducing some people from the time with pictures and definitions. The pictures are on the PowerPoint file.
- Ask the students to look at **Task 1 – Vocabulary: people living in the 1200s**.
- Show the students the five images on the **PowerPoint** and elicit or teach the words:
baron monk widow peasant knight
- Ask students what sorts of things they think these people might have complained about in 1200.

Task 2 – Quiz about common problems in the 1200s (10 mins)

This is to set the scene for the role play. It will give students ideas which they will be able to use in the role play (**Task 4**). It involves reading and pair work.

- Set up students in pairs to discuss the questions and complete the quiz.
- When students have finished, go through the answers.
- Elicit feedback about the quiz. Were students surprised or shocked about any of the answers? Which practice do they consider to be the most unfair?

Answers for Task 2: 1.A 2.B 3.B 4.A 5.C 6.B 7.A

Task 3 – Language of negotiation (10 mins)

This activity is to give students vocabulary that they will be able to use in the roleplay.

- Tell the students you are going to read out some phrases which are useful in negotiations and ask them to write the phrases beside the headings that fit them best. For example, 'In my opinion' would go beside the heading 'Putting across a point' and 'I don't think so' would go beside 'Disagreeing'.
- Tell students that there are two phrases for each heading.
- Read out the following phrases, using voice and gesture to give the students clues:

'In my opinion ...'

'I don't think so.'

'So what are you proposing?'

'As far as I am concerned ...'

'Fair enough.'

'Can I please finish what I was saying?'

'So that's agreed.'

'Could I just say something at this point?'

'What exactly do you have in mind?'

'I'm afraid I can't agree with that.'

'As I was saying ...'

'That sounds fine.'

'Do we agree?'

'If I could interrupt here ...'

- Get students to compare their answers.

Suggested answers for Task 3

Putting across a point: 'In my opinion ...' / 'As far as I am concerned ...'

Asking for clarification: 'So what are you proposing?'/ 'What exactly do you have in mind?'

Agreeing: 'That sounds fine.' / 'Fair enough.'

Disagreeing: 'I'm afraid I can't agree with that.' / 'I don't think so.'

Interrupting: 'Could I just say something at this point?'/ 'If I could interrupt here ...'

Stopping someone interrupting: 'Can I please finish what I was saying?'/ 'As I was saying ...'

Concluding the negotiation: 'Do we agree?'/ 'So that's agreed.'

Task 4 – Role play: agreeing on a petition to present to King John (20 mins)

- Divide the class into groups of up to five.
- Give each student in the group a role play card from **Rolecards for Task 4**.
- Teach the meaning of *petition*:
 - 'a formal written request to someone in authority and signed by many people'.
- Tell the students that the group has to write a group petition to the king complaining about the different problems. However, only four complaints can be put in the petition. They will have to negotiate as a group to decide what the four most important issues are.
- Point out that some of the complaints might be similar and so they could be presented as a single complaint. For example the knight and widow both have to pay the king fines.
- Ask one of the students in each group to write down the four complaints that they agree on.
- When the task is finished ask the groups to feed their complaints back to the class.
- You could tell the students that in 1215, when demands like these were put to King John, he reluctantly agreed. The agreement became known as the Magna Carta, and is accepted as being one of the key moments in English history, and one of the most significant documents of all time.

Whole class discussion (5 mins)

- Ask the students which character they felt most sympathy for, and why.
- Which character did they feel least sympathy for, and why?
- If they had to time-travel back to 1200, which character would they choose to be?