

**Topic:** Events leading up to the Magna Carta

**Level:** A2/B1

**Time:** 60–90 minutes

### Aims

- To develop students' vocabulary to describe character
- To develop students' ability to pick out specific information while listening
- To provide opportunities for students to relate the context of the Magna Carta to their own experiences.

### Introduction

This lesson provides some background to the Magna Carta by looking at the key characters of King Richard and King John, one loved, one hated. It provides students with listening practice and develops a set of vocabulary to talk about personality. Students are also encouraged to think about some famous people today who are loved or hated.

### Procedure

#### Warmer (20 mins)

- Using the worksheet, students look at a lexical set of adjectives to describe personality, e.g. *brave*, *greedy*. They work together to divide into positive and negative, helping each other and/or using dictionaries. Some may be seen as both (e.g. *ambitious*)
- Check as a class, and check pronunciation as students need to recognise the words when they hear them.

#### Answers

*Positive: ambitious (could be negative), brave, kind, lucky, popular, proud (could be negative), wise*

*Negative: bad-tempered, cowardly, cruel, greedy, selfish, stupid, ruthless, unlucky*

#### Task 1 – Personality adjectives (5–10 mins)

- Draw students' attention to the pictures of two kings of England: King Richard (ruled 1189–1199) and King John (ruled 1199–1216).
- Tell students they are going to find out about these two kings, who were brothers. Can they use any of the adjectives to describe the pictures?  
*'He looks ...', 'He might be ...'*

#### Task 2 – Listening for vocabulary (5–10 mins)

- Students listen to the audio, tick which adjectives they hear and write 'R' or 'J'.

#### Answers

<i>ambitious</i> ✓ J	<i>greedy</i> ✓ J	<i>selfish</i> ✓ J
<i>bad-tempered</i> ✓ J	<i>kind</i>	<i>stupid</i>
<i>brave</i> ✓ R	<i>lucky</i> ✓ R	<i>unkind</i> ✓ R
<i>cowardly</i> ✓ J	<i>popular</i> ✓ R	<i>unlucky</i> ✓ J
<i>cruel</i> ✓ R	<i>proud</i>	<i>wise</i>

**Task 3 – Listening for detail (10 mins)**

- Ask students to read through the questions and check they understand the vocabulary. They may be able to make some guesses at this stage, which is fine. Students then listen again and answer the questions.

Tip – For higher-level students you could also ask follow-up questions; see in key below.
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**Answers**

- 1) *Because he was brave*
- 2) *French*
- 3) *He wasn't interested in it. (What did he say about London?)*
- 4) *Ten months (How long was he king for?)*
- 5) *Richard*
- 6) *John*
- 7) *Richard and John (Why did the people get angry with John, but not Richard?)*
- 8) *To stop him being able to do whatever he wanted.*

**Task 4 – Discussion (5–10 mins)**

- Put students in pairs or small groups and ask them to discuss the questions. Depending on the context you're teaching in, you could give examples about what tax is spent on. Bear in mind that the question about how they feel about having to pay to fund fighting abroad might need to be handled sensitively in some contexts.
- The final question is intended to lead into the final task.

**Task 5 – Presentation (30 mins or for homework)**

- Set up a quick discussion with the class about how people are loved or hated by the public, how fair these reputations are, etc.
- Students choose a famous person they know about whom some people love and others hate. This could be an historical personage, or simply a modern-day person or celebrity. They prepare to tell others in their group, or the whole class, what people think about this person and what their personal opinion is, trying to use some of the adjectives.  
In a longer class, students could give mini presentations to the whole class or to their smaller group. In a shorter class, this could be prepared for homework and presented in the next class.

**Extension activities**

- You might like to look at a clip from the Disney film *Robin Hood*, where two of the key characters are King Richard and Prince John (who was looking after the country while Richard was away fighting). They are very much shown as hero and villain. I'd suggest students watching and shouting out appropriate adjectives (e.g. *greedy* when he's gloating over his jewels).

**Audio script**

King Richard and King John of England were brothers, but history has seen them very differently. King Richard was also known as Lionheart; having the heart of a lion. He was a brave soldier. At the age of 16 he was leading an army in France against his father's enemies. At that time much of France also belonged to the King of England. In fact, Richard and his family would not have spoken English, but French.

Richard was a popular leader. However, we also know that he was a cruel man. Although the English people loved him, he did not seem to love England. He once said: 'I would have sold London if I could find a buyer.' He spent most of his time abroad, in France and fighting in the Middle East. He was King of England for ten years, but only lived there for a total of ten months.

Fighting abroad was expensive and Richard made the people of England pay a lot of money in taxes for these foreign wars. However, he was lucky and usually won, so no one complained too much.

Richard died in 1199, and when his brother John became king, all this changed. John was ambitious, and also wanted to fight foreign wars, but he was unlucky and lost most of the lands in France. People felt that John was cowardly and a poor leader.

He is still well known for his hobby of collecting precious jewellery, and he was seen as greedy and selfish. Although he had done so badly in the wars abroad, he continued to tax the people very heavily. He was also very bad-tempered, and would punish people severely if they dared to refuse him.

Eventually, the barons, who were the most important people in the country after the king, lost patience with King John. They met him in a field at Runnymede and forced him to seal the Magna Carta, which put some limits on the king's powers.