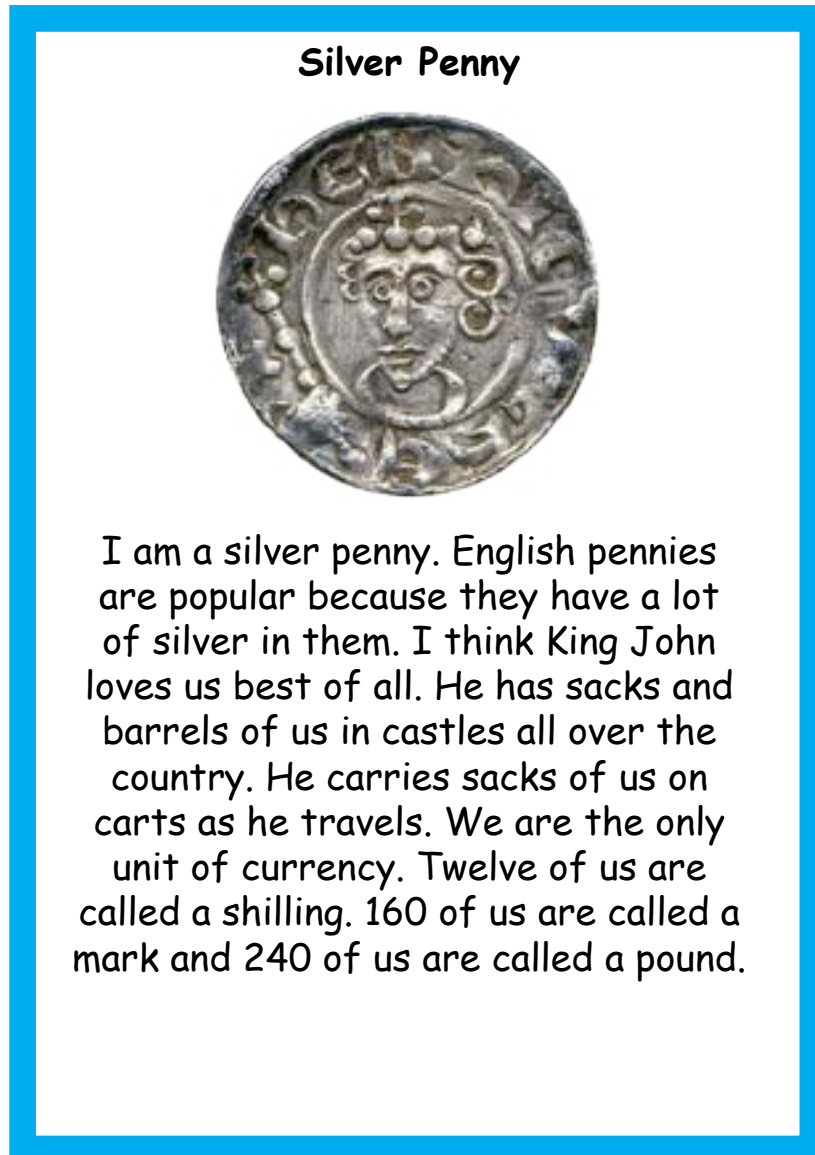


King John's Court and Government 1215

Role play cards

King John had so many silver pennies they became scarce!



King John travelled sixty nine thousand miles!

"It is a hundred-handed giant, who if he be all maimed, is yet all the same, and still hundred-handed; a hydra of many heads."
Walter Map's description of the king's court

King John's Government

This activity was inspired by David Carpenter's book on Magna Carta and we are also grateful to the education department at the British Library. It consists of thirty two role cards for the people and things that surrounded King John as he governed while travelling from castle to castle. We are hoping it will provide a background to work around Magna Carta and the origins of government.

The webaddress for this activity is:

<<http://www.collaborativelearning.org/kingjohnsgovernment.pdf>>

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COLLABORATIVE LEARNING PROJECT

Project Director: Stuart Scott

Supporting a cooperative network of teaching professionals throughout the European Union to develop and disseminate accessible teaching materials in all subject areas and for all ages.

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BRIEF SUMMARY OF BASIC PRINCIPLES BEHIND OUR TEACHING ACTIVITIES:

The project is a teacher network, and a non-profit making educational trust. Our main aim is to develop and disseminate classroom tested examples of effective group strategies across all phases and subjects. We hope they will inspire you to use similar strategies in other topics and curriculum areas. We run teacher workshops, swapshops and conferences throughout the European Union. The project publishes a catalogue of activities plus lists in selected subject areas, and a newsletter available by post or internet: 'PAPERCLIP'.

*These activities were influenced by current thinking about the role of language in learning. They are designed to help children learn through talk and active learning in small groups. They work best in mixed classes where children in need of language or learning support are integrated. They are well suited for the development of speaking and listening. They provide teachers opportunities for assessment of speaking and listening and other formative assessment.

*They support differentiation by placing a high value on what children can offer to each other on a particular topic, and also give children the chance to respect each other's views and formulate shared opinions which they can disseminate to peers. By helping them to take ideas and abstract concepts, discuss, paraphrase and move them about physically, they help to develop thinking skills.

*They give children the opportunity to participate in their own words and language in their own time without pressure. Many activities can be tried out in mother tongue and afterwards in English. A growing number of activities are available in more than one language, not translated, but mixed, so that you may need more than one language to complete the activity.

*They encourage study skills in context, and should therefore be used with a range of appropriate information books which are preferably within reach in the classroom.

*They are generally adaptable over a wide age range because children can bring their own knowledge to an activity and refer to books at an appropriate level. The activities work like catalysts.

*All project activities were planned and developed by teachers working together, and the main reason they are disseminated is to encourage teachers to work effectively with each other inside and outside the classroom. They have made it possible for mainstream and language and learning support teachers to share an equal role in curriculum delivery. They should be adapted to local conditions. In order to help us keep pace with curriculum changes, please send any new or revised activities back to the project, so that we can add them to our lists of materials.

King John's Government

This is an introduction to a selection of the people and things that made up the 'family' or court of King John. The majority described here travelled with him from castle to castle either hunting with him or travelling slowly with the carts. A few stayed with the Exchequer in Westminster. During his kingship John travelled about sixty nine thousand miles. The most important task of the government was to collect money and John, keen to spend on soldiers to win back his possessions in France, was very good at squeezing money out of his tenants. A lot of individuals collected and recorded payments from taxes and fines. While the carts with everything including his bed travelled slowly from castle to castle, the king hunted and hawked. We thought the detail would interest children and inspire to find out more about all the different occupations of government: some of which still exist today. They could begin to investigate how they worked together and how they later evolved.

Here are some suggestions on how the role play cards could be used. We will expand this as the year passes and welcome your suggestions to add to our list.

The cards in each set of four are linked to a greater or lesser degree. Pupils could work in groups of four, investigate links and feed back to the class.

The cards could be handed out randomly and pupils could find one other card in the class that is linked and again feed back to everyone.

The cards could be handed out randomly and pupils could work in pairs or fours and choose a question for the class which other groups could answer.

The cards could be used in our favourite way where pupils read their card and then have to present themselves in role to another character who does the same to them.

The cards could inspire groups to research and produce similar cards for other members of the court. Some vital ones are missing!

Titles of the Role Cards

1

Chancellor
Chancery Clerk
Falconer
Messenger

2

Keeper of the Great Seal
A Charter
Letter Patent
Letter Close

3

Officer of the Kitchen
Baker
Butler
Clerk of the Chapel

4

Chamberlain
Chamber Clerk
Porter of the Bed
Silver Penny

5

Almoner
Keeper of the Relics
Carter
Stable Boy

6

Steward
Household Knight
Chief Justiciar
Castellan

7

Crossbowman
King's Forester
Sheriff
Jew

8

Treasurer of the
Exchequer
Armourer
Keeper of the Pipe Rolls
Tally Stick

"It is a hundred-handed giant, who if he be all maimed, is yet all the same, and still hundred-handed; a hydra of many heads."

Walter Map's description of the king's court

Chancellor



My name is Richard Marsh. I am the king's chancellor and a bishop. I travel with the king and arrange for his letters and charters to be written by my team of clerks. Sometimes I have to follow the king when he is hunting deer and someone will arrive to ask for a favour. If there is enough money to pay for it, a letter gets written at once. I keep in the king's good books by getting as much money as I can extract from these suitors.

Chancery Clerk



goose quills

stretched parchment

oak galls



I am a junior chancery clerk. I make the ink from oak galls, I sharpen the goose quills. I make sure there is enough vellum and parchment for writing charters and letters closed and patent. I am carefully making my special chancery handwriting better so I can write letters dictated by the king or chancellor. I walk behind the cart full of desks, quills ink, vellum, parchment and copies of recent letters and charters which are rolled up.

Falconer



I have a very important job in the king's family. I look after his hawks and falcons. As the court travels the king's hunts and catching cranes by the riverbanks is his favourite sport. He gets his tenants to build bridges to cross rivers. Cranes are not too good to eat but make good hunting.

Messenger

I am William of Cambridge. I am a messenger for the chancellor and the king.

I carry charters, letters patent and close from the court to the

people to which they are addressed. I follow the court, then take a message and then have to return and find where the court has moved to. I have sworn a special oath of loyalty to the king and report on any thing that may affect his power. I have men to protect me and provide horses.



Keeper of the Great Seal



I am the keeper of the Great Seal. On one side there is picture of the king making judgements and on the other side there is a picture of the king on a horse and wearing armour. A king protects and judges his subjects. A wax impression of the seal is fixed to every charter and letter that the king sends out. He does not sign his charters. He also carries a little seal called the privy seal for times when he is too far from the Great Seal.

A Charter



I am a town charter. I was written by chancery clerks on stretched sheep skin. The town has paid the king a lot of money and has to pay more money every year. In return they can hold a market and collect taxes from the people who live in the town, The king's seal is attached to the charter.

Letters Patent



I am a letter patent. I am written by chancery clerks on stretched sheep skin or calf skin. Patent means open so anyone can read me. Here the king gives a grant of land to a priory. The king's wax seal is at the bottom.

Letters Close



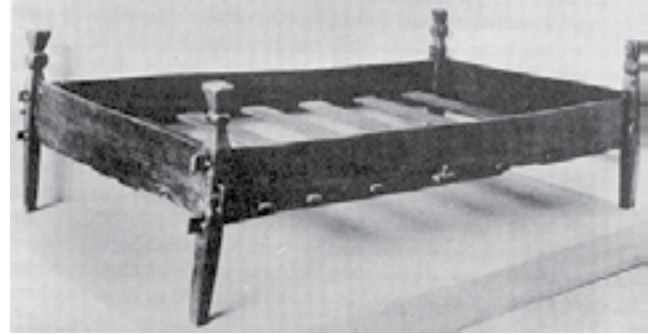
I am a letter close. I am written by chancery clerks on stretched sheep skin or calf skin. Close means I am folded and sealed up. This is because I am addressed to one particular person and only he should read me. King John sent a lot of letters close to his sheriffs and castellans and the subject was usually money.

Chamberlain



I am Hubert de Burgh and in charge of all the people to look after the 'room' wherever it may be, where the king sleeps and keeps his money. Perhaps the most important thing I look after is the king's treasure: jewels and sacks of silver pennies. My clerks record every penny that comes and every penny that goes out. I also have the wardrobe with all the king's clothes

Porter of the Bed



I have one of the most important jobs at the court. I carry the king's bed on a cart to his next sleeping place. I also make sure that there is clean straw and fresh bedding. The bed can be taken apart. If the king does not sleep well, I am in big trouble.

Chamber Clerk



I am a clerk in the king's chamber and wardrobe. Last week the king held a feast that cost a hundred pounds. Normally food and drink cost 20 pounds a day. I receive and record money that is stored in castles and sometimes it comes from the Exchequer. The chamber pays for soldiers and crossbowmen as well as food and drink. The picture is of the chest which holds the king's robes.

Silver Penny



I am a silver penny. English pennies are popular because they have a lot of silver in them. I think King John loves us best of all. He has sacks and barrels of us in castles all over the country. He carries sacks of us on carts as he travels. We are the only unit of currency. Twelve of us are called a shilling. 160 of us are called a mark and 240 of us are called a pound.

Officer of the Kitchen



The kitchen is responsible for cooking meat and fish for the king and the court. Here I am cooking meat with a meat hook and a spoon to catch gravy. Some of the meat is hunted by the king. Swans and cranes are good to hunt but a bit tough to eat. I prefer venison from deer. Last week the king ordered salmon and it came all the way to Nottingham from Carlisle. All my griddles, pots and pans, dishes and platters travel with me on the kitchen cart.

Chief Baker



The dispensary is responsible for providing all the bread for the court. I make white manchet bread for the king and his close household knights. The others get brown bread and sometimes bread made with peas. Castle ovens vary a lot and can be difficult to light and heat up.

Butler



I look after all the drink for the court. There is best wine for the king and his household knights. You can see me testing it here. There is beer for everyone else. Every ship carrying wine must give some to the king. A tun of wine holds 252 gallons. The king is very fond of good wine from his holdings in Gascony.

Clerk of the Chapel



We make sure a daily Mass is performed for the king. We travel around with the king. Our special clothes (liturgical garments), chalices and candles go on a cart. We love our singing but the king is not very interested in our work. He often misses Mass and has to make amends by giving pennies to the poor.

Keeper of the Relics



I am the Keeper of the king's relics. He has the bones of saints and even a very small piece of the True Cross. When someone has to swear an oath to the king he must put his hand on the relics. If he breaks his oath the saint will punish him. When the king does something that makes him feel guilty he orders candles to be lit all night around the relics.

Almoner



Every day the king grants thirty six pence for alms. My job as Almoner is to distribute this money to paupers. When the king eats on fast days, or does not attend Mass and this is quite often, he gives more than a hundred pence a day for me to distribute. The people in the picture are lepers.

Carter



I am chief carter in charge of all of the carts. There are ten four wheeled carts to carry the kitchen, ten more to carry the king's bed, his wardrobe including robes and armour, his jewels and his sacks of silver pennies. There are carts for the king's relics, the desks for the clerks. I check the wheels and make sure the loads are secure.

Stable Boy



I am a stable boy. There are more than seventy of us. I look after the palfreys, which are used for hunting and long distance riding. Other boys care for the carthorses which are larger slower but better tempered. The household knights have strong destriers which are used for fighting.

Steward



I was a Household knight. Now, as steward, I am in charge of all of them.

They are the eyes and ears of the king and report any disloyalty they discover. I also have to make sure the king has enough to eat and drink.

We are all the king's family and he prefers us because we tell him what he likes to hear. But don't tell the king I said that! I hope he will make me a castellan or sheriff soon.

Household Knight



I am a Household knight. I am a younger son so will inherit no land from my father. I have been very successful in tournaments and won many prizes. I protect the king and do what he commands and go where he goes with the court. There are over a hundred of us. The king feeds us and pays us for our service. I hope he will give me some land or a title.

Chief Justiciar



I stand in for the king when he is abroad. I send judges around the country. I can issue my own letters and charters. I have my own seal.

When the king is in England, I usually stay with the Exchequer in Winchester or London.

Castellan



I am in charge of a castle. I come from Anjou and the king pays me well. I can also find money in the country around. I keep arms, money and jewels in the castle. I have a stock of food for a siege. A small number of soldiers and crossbowmen can hold this castle against an army. The king is visiting soon with his court so I am stocking up with wine and food.

Crossbowman



I am from Genoa in Italy which is famous for its crossbowmen. A bolt from a crossbow killed Richard I. King John pays us to stay and protect him and his castles. If he pays well I shall stay in England but I don't like the weather. Rain is bad for crossbow strings. At least we get good food and plenty of wine.

King's Forester



I am a royal forester. I keep Forest Law in Sherwood Forest. The king owns everything in the forest. There are lots of people who want to steal the wood, the deer and the land. Some have paid for rights to take dead wood by hook or crook, but often they steal live wood for building. When the king hunts I make sure the bridges are safe.

Sheriff



I am Reginald of Cornhill and the king's sheriff in Kent. I collect all the money owing to him. The Exchequer sends me details of who owes how much. I store the money in the castles of Dover and Rochester. If tenants don't pay up I can take their wheat and household goods. I get wine for the king from the shippers in the Cinque ports of Sandwich, Dover and Romney.

Jew



I am a Jew and the king owns me. I am protected by the king and allowed to lend money to the king's tenants. The king often taxes me. The tax is called tallage. Sometimes he takes the debts from me and takes the money directly from the tenant borrowers. He is certainly very good at collecting money. Most of it seems to go on his wars in France and Ireland.

Treasurer of the Exchequer



I am Richard Fitznigel. I do not travel with the king. I stay in Westminster and collect the money due to the king. The chief justiciar is in charge but I send out a summons every year to every county and keep a record of every payment. Debtors must pay twice a year. When they come to pay we mark their tally stick to prove their payment.

Keeper of the Pipe Rolls



I am William Cucuel. I am the keeper of the rolls. I make sure that copies are made of every charter and letter. I keep a record of every silver penny that the king receives and pays out. These copies are written out in very small writing on parchment, the bits are sewn together, rolled up and eventually they travel to the Exchequer in Westminster. Magna Carta is not copied in the rolls because the king did not want to be reminded of it!

Armourer



My job is to keep armour and weapons bright and working well. Sometimes I travel with the court and sometimes I stay in a castle. I need boys to fire and blow air on to the furnace. I also need a good supply of dry wood. I am especially busy after tournaments. Last week I had to hit a bent helmet with a baron's head in it so he could take it off!

Tally Stick



There are thousands of us at the Exchequer. Each stick is in two parts which joins neatly and each stick is different from any other. When a debt is paid, the stick is marked across and half of the stick is given to the person who paid and half is kept by the Exchequer. Then both have proof of how much has been paid.