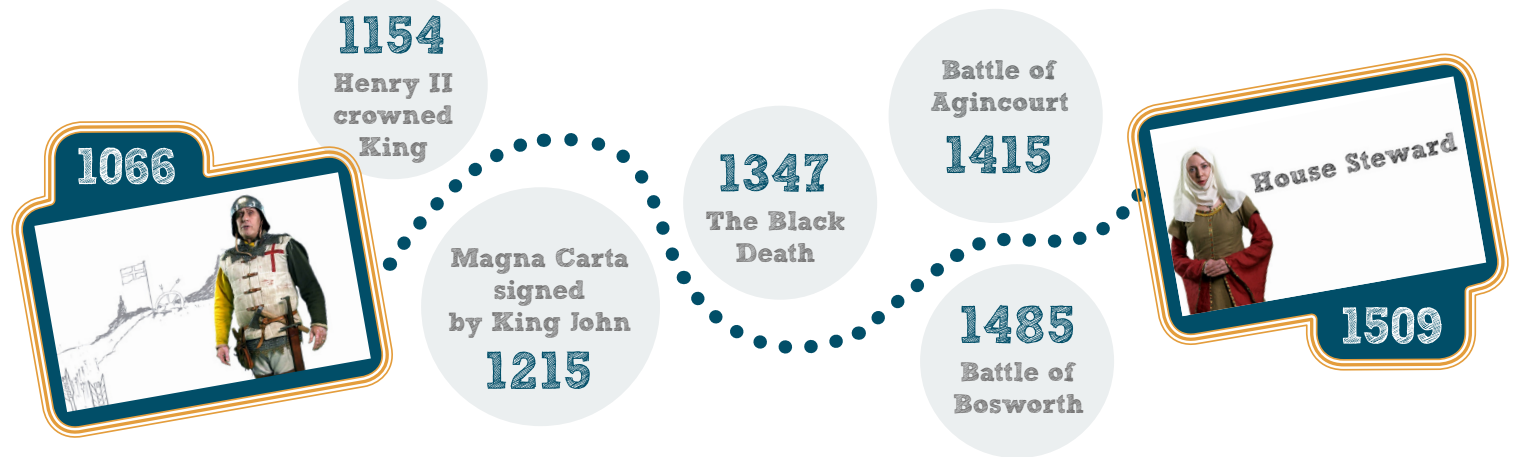


# Medieval England

Aimed at Key Stage 3, around year 7



## National Curriculum subject links

*The development of Church, state and society in Medieval Britain 1066 – 1509*

- Society, economy and culture
- Magna Carta and the emergence of Parliament

## Coverage and links

As part of the ongoing Norman Conquest, a series of castles were built across England and Wales. The earliest were wooden castles built on a motte and bailey design, of which none survive today, and later were built of stone. They served many purposes; they were garrisons and housed a good number of soldiers and because of this a castle was an impressive symbol of power and authority over the local people. Yet they were also homes and thus became centres of a busy community.

This first lesson will allow students to build a mental picture of the daily life of a castle and investigate the diversity of the people who lived therein. This enquiry would thus complement other work on village and town life in medieval England. It would also fit into a broader enquiry about the changing nature of castles, perhaps like the one by \*Byrom, Counsell and Riley in *Medieval Minds: Britain 1066–1500*.

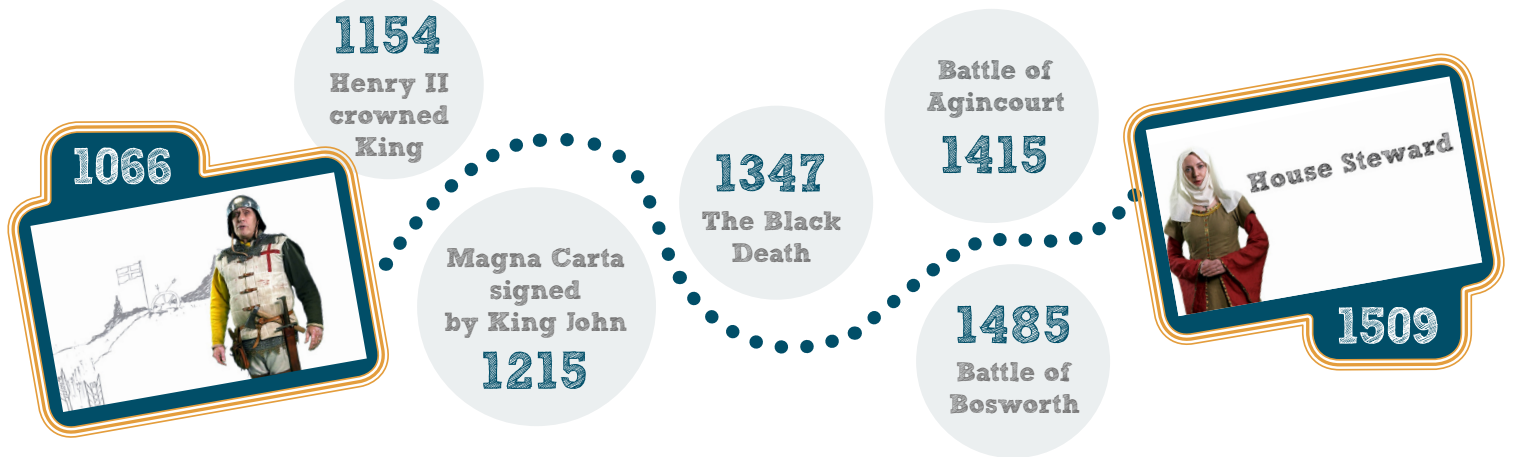
The second lesson looks at military life in medieval England. Pupils will be introduced to four important weapons and use this to investigate the English army in battle on three occasions in the Medieval period. They will work in small groups doing some focussed research and designing a short presentation to deliver to their peers. At the end, they will begin to assess the relative strength of the Medieval English Army.

The final lesson sits alone as a mini-enquiry into the making of the Magna Carta. This short enquiry will consider the significance of the Magna Carta at the time, and why it has kept being significant at different points in the centuries following.

\*Source: Byrom, Counsell and Riley, *Medieval Minds : Britain 1066-1500* Longman, 1997

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## Suggested learning outcomes

*By the end of these lessons, pupils will be able to...*

- Give reasons why castles were important in Medieval England
- Discuss the diversity of people who made their home in a castle
- Use a range of criteria to judge the significance of the **Magna Carta**.

## Pre-lesson homework

This sequence will probably follow on from work done on the Norman conquest. Pupils could thus look back at that work with a new focus, taking a panel of the Bayeux Tapestry not as part of a story, but as a source about Medieval life; what clothes did people wear? What weapons did soldiers use? What languages were spoken?

## Lesson 1 – Who lived in a castle?

Films to use

- **People in a castle; the constable**
- **People in a castle; the constable's wife**
- **The banquet**
- **Gong farmer**

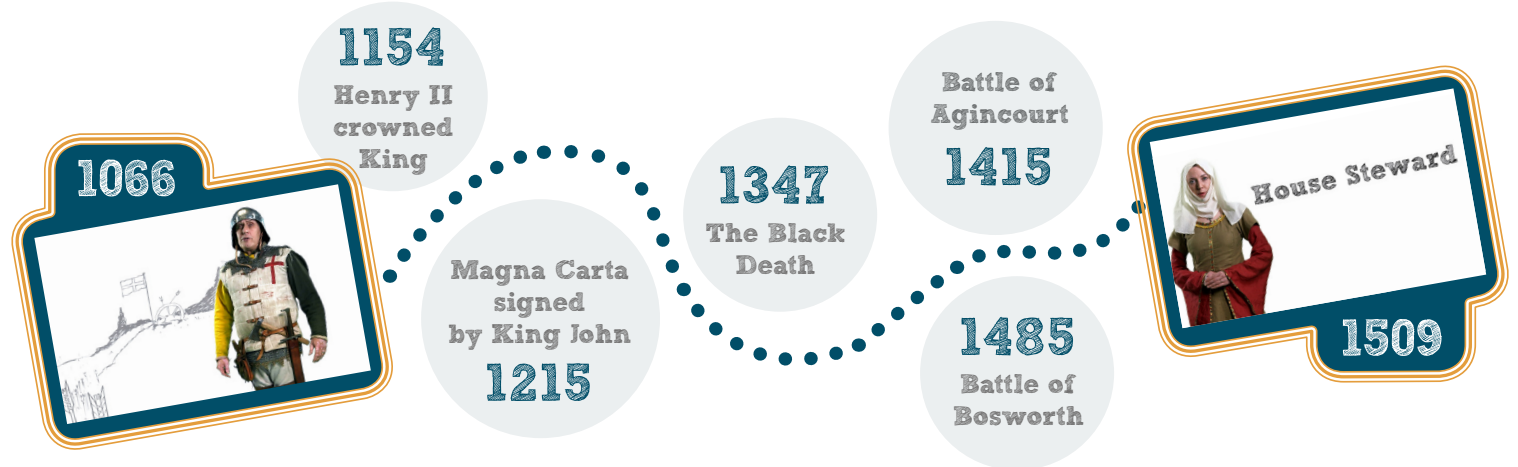
**Start by** showing a picture of a castle in England. If it is local, then so much the better. The aim is get your pupils talking about what castles might have been built for. Although speculation is useful, try to steer thinking towards two big ideas:

1. **a castle was a home for somebody powerful and**
2. **it was a place of defence.**

Showing pictures of castles would be useful at this stage, both photographs and, if possible, artists' impressions of a castle as it was when new and occupied by a lord and all of his people. With each picture there would then be a chance to ask lots of questions about how a castle was laid out and what different sections were for.

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## Lesson 1 – Who lived in a castle? continued ...

**After** you've introduced this diversity enquiry, show *People in a castle*; **the constable**. As they watch, pupils should record all the people that the Constable mentions as living and working in the castle. Some will be named – the marshal, for example – and some will be general – the household staff. In pairs or small groups, ask your students to talk about this list of people. What does it suggest to them about what goes on in a castle? They should comment on the sorts of jobs that people did there and what in turn this might suggest to us about what the castle was for. They might also talk about the other kinds of activities – eating, sleeping and military training, for example – all of which help build a picture of the daily life in a medieval castle.

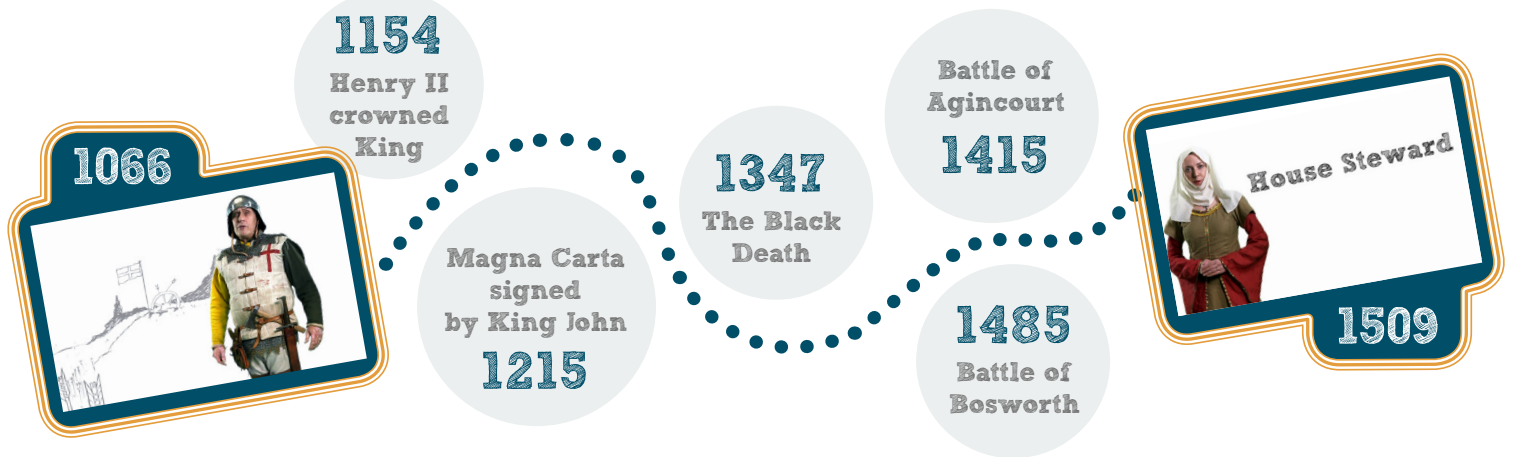
**Next** show *People in a castle*; **the constable's wife**. She also talks about the people in the castle, but this time the focus is on those who work in the lord's household, like the chamberlain. As before, ask your pupils to record the job titles and ask them to have the same conversation again. How has their answer changed this time? At this point, they might fill in an inference table, like the one at **figure 1** below.

**Now** for something rather more unsavoury. Show **Gong farmer**, in which pupils will hear what happened to the sewage cleaned out of the castle toilets. Though disgusting to us now (and I'm sure to them then, too) the gong farmer had a crucial job to do. She also hints at something important for the final activity in this lesson, so it will be important to spend some time with her. She says that the waste got taken to the fields and used as manure on the crops that went back to feed the people of the castle. This tells us something of the fact that the castle would have been a community with everyone reliant on everyone else. Add the gong farmer to the table.

**The final film** to show is **The Banquet**. Here the constable's wife describes the arrangements for a grand banquet hosted by the lord. This film shows how the kind of occasion where servants and nobles came together in an impressive display of wealth and power. It also dispels the myth that a medieval banquet was an uncouth affair; as the lady says, good manners were essential.

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## Lesson 1 – Who lived in a castle? continued ...

**To complete the enquiry** pupils will do a short piece of writing. The local castle needs a new entry in its guidebook to help visitors understand the diverse range of people who lived in the castle. The challenge is to write the entry to a set word limit. Again, differentiation can be a simple job of changing the number of words for the task.

## Lesson 2 – How successful was the English Army in battle?

Films to use

- **Heavyweight crossbow**
- **Lightweight crossbow**
- **Longbowmen**
- **Arrowheads**

This lesson turns pupils' attention to the military aspects of castle life.

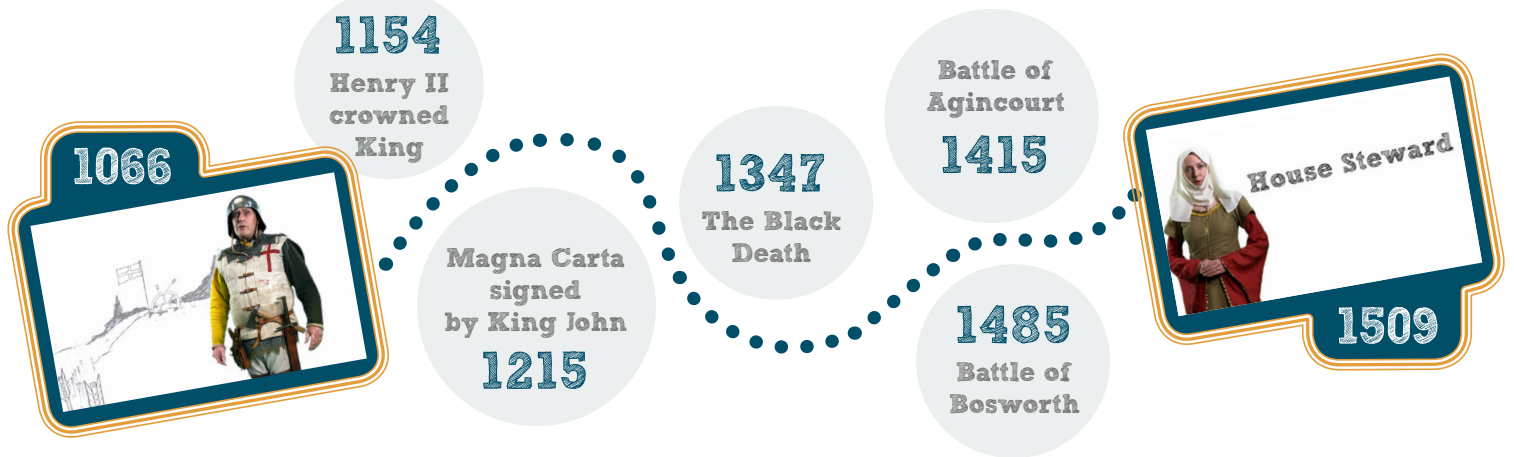
**Start by** showing your class a picture of a castle with as many defensive features as possible on display; look for moats and drawbridges, battlements, keeps with raised entrances and so on. Ask them to talk about what made a castle hard to attack. Why would it be built like that?

They should notice its sheer size, the fact that it's made of stone, the outer wall and inner keep design, its position relative to the surrounding area. They will probably also see some of the details, like the narrow windows and crenellations round the top of the walls.

**Next**, show the first three films, **Heavyweight crossbow**, **Lightweight crossbow** and **Longbowmen** straight after each other. Pupils should record some details of each as they watch and at the end they will briefly discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each weapon. Certainly, by now, pupils will be starting to see that the English army was well trained and had a wide range of useful weapons.

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## Lesson 2 – How successful was the English Army in battle? continued

**Pupils will now** need to do some research into how the English army operated in battle by looking at one of three conflicts:

- **The Anarchy during the reign of King Stephen**
- **The third crusade under Richard I (Richard the Lionheart)**
- **The Battle of Agincourt, 1415.**

For each one, pupils will need to ask,

- **What caused the conflict?**
- **Who did the English army have to fight?**
- **How did they fight? What tactics did they use?**
- **Were they successful?**

**To complete the lesson**, pupils could present their findings to the rest of the class, or work in groups of three to share what they've learned more closely.

## Lesson 3 Why was the Magna Carta significant?

Films to use

- **Magna Carta part 1 & Magna Carta part 2**
- **What happened after the Magna Carta?**

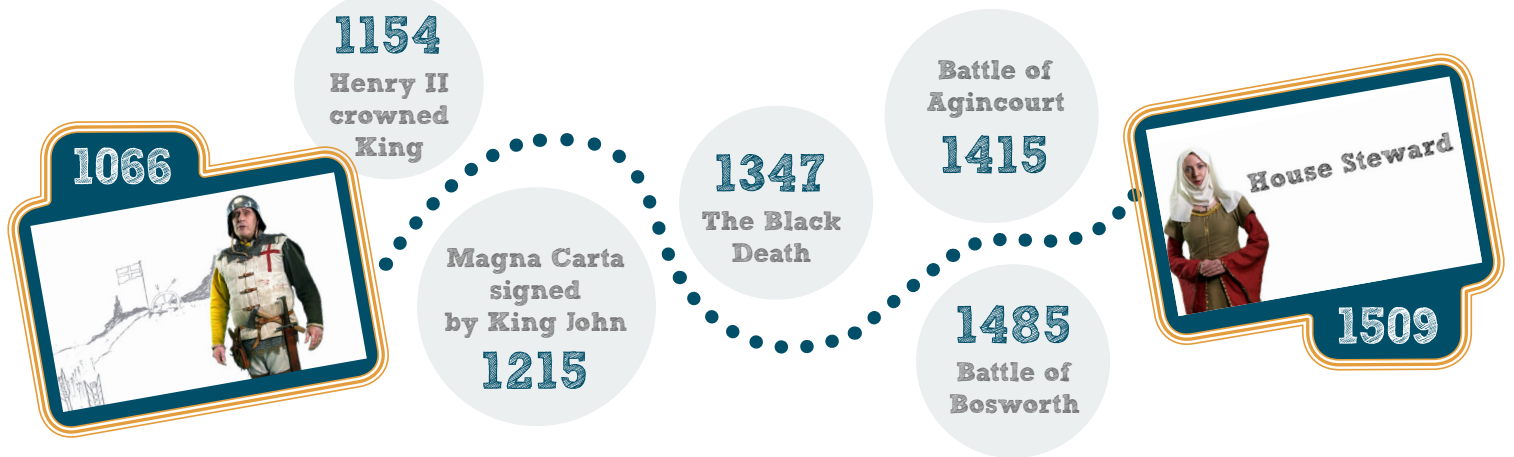
For this lesson you will need to have copies of the Magna Carta both in its original form and in transcript. Both are available at **the National Archives**

**To begin the lesson**, remind pupils of the structure of Medieval society by having them draw a simple feudal pyramid, like the example in **figure 2**. If they've previously covered this aspect of medieval society before, this could be done from memory, but if this is new, then the pyramid will take some explaining. The relationship to really focus on here is the one at the top of the pyramid, between the King and the Lords. Ask them to talk about how this relationship could have worked and how it could have gone wrong. What would a good king be like? What about a bad king?



# Medieval England

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## Lesson 3 Why was the Magna Carta significant? ... continued

What would a good king be like? What about a bad king?

### Show Magna Carta part 1

This film outlines what the Magna Carta was and some of the reasons why it was forced on the King. These can be discussed briefly, but the more important focus for this lesson is what the Magna Carta said, so show **Magna Carta part 2**. Pupils should record the key points of the Magna Carta and then turn to the transcript of the document itself. There are over 60 clauses, so you'll need to prepare for this by choosing carefully choosing a clause each for the pupils in your class. Give them out and tell pupils that they are going to think about what the king was giving to the Barons by agreeing to that clause. Then have organised chaos for 10 minutes as they all go and talk to as many others as possible! After as long as you think suitable, encourage pupils to find people with whom their clauses have something in common. You should then start to see bigger groups emerging.

### At the end of this activity

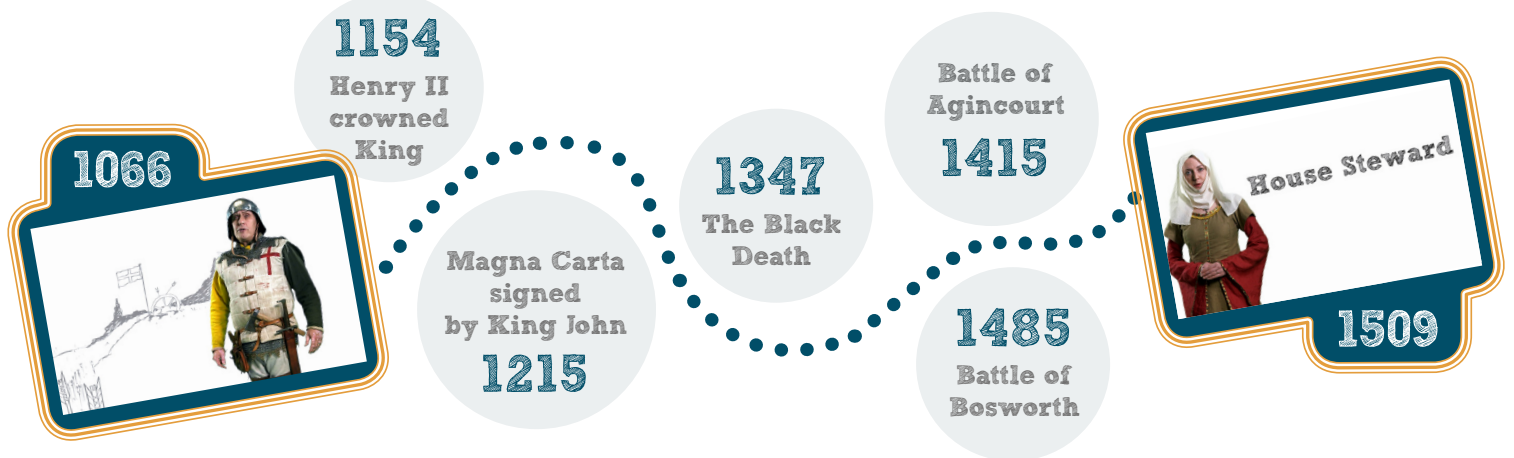
discuss with the class about why these groups of clauses were such a big deal? Why, indeed, did King John try to overturn the document almost immediately?

### Finally

explain to the class that the charter was rewritten in 1222, and then reinstated by several kings in the following centuries. The final task is for pupils to write a short letter of advice to an incoming medieval king, telling him why he should reinstate the Magna Carta; what's in it for him?

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## Differentiation, assessment and reflection

### Extension

There are opportunities in each lesson to extend pupils thinking.

- In the first lesson pupils could be given a chance to research other people who lived in the castle and add those to the table.
- In the second lesson, pupils could be given a wider range of questions to tackle in the research section, for example 'What soldiers did the English army face in the battle?'
- In the last lesson, the clauses that are shared will be the simplest way to add challenge.

### Scaffolding

There are opportunities in each lesson to extend pupils thinking.

- Students who need support could be given the table already partially filled in.
- In the second lesson, they could be given print-outs from 'Simple English' versions of relevant articles on Wikipedia.
- In the final lesson, the choice of Magna Carta clause given out will be crucial.

### Formative assessment opportunities

There are opportunities in each lesson to extend pupils thinking.

- As pupils work on their castle guides, they can share their work with the class, or in small groups for some peer assessment.
- As groups share their work on the English army in action, encourage others to ask them probing questions, to test the limits of their learning.

### Reflection

Because the three lessons are based on separate topics, at the end it will be important to do something to draw the whole Medieval England topic together. One idea might be to discuss briefly what we have left of medieval England. What in physical form is left behind? What ideas and beliefs have we kept from them?

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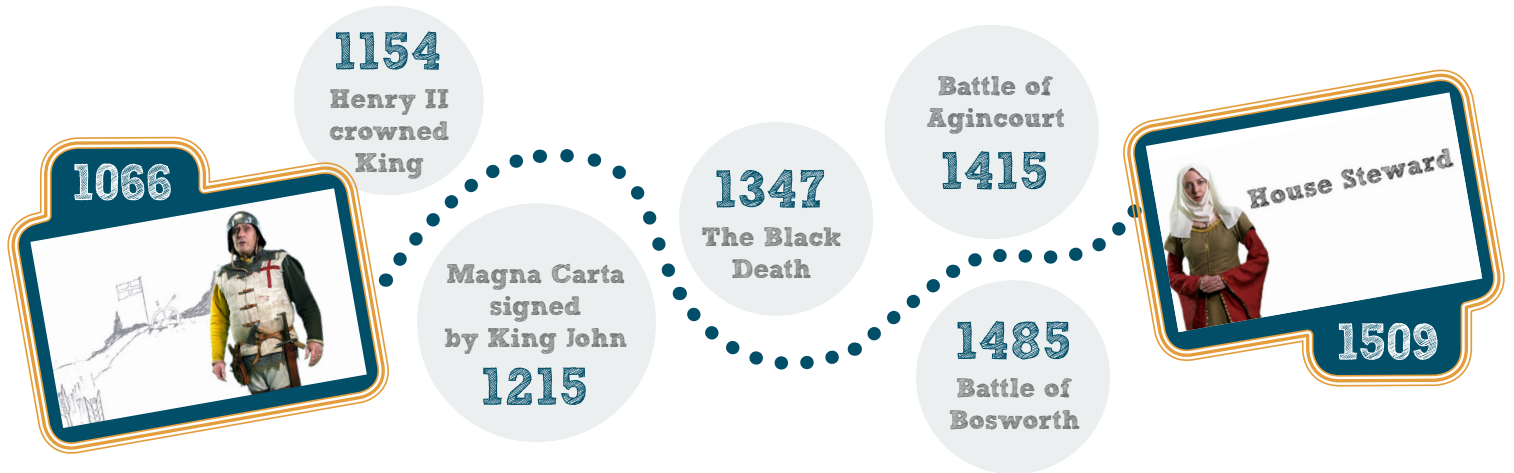


figure 1. Who lived in a castle?

Job in the castle	What did they do?	What does suggest about life in castle?
Constable	Looked after the castle on behalf of the Lord. In turn, he had his own servants.	The castle was a home to lots of people and life must have been well organised and ordered.



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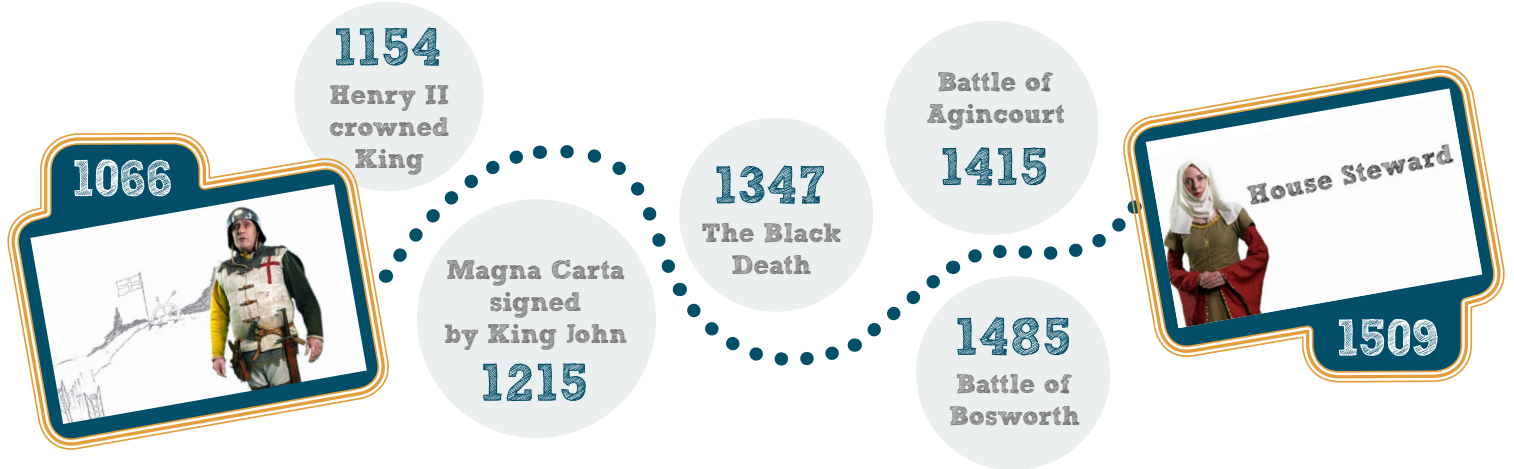


figure 2. The hierarchy of the feudal system in its simplest form

