

KS3 History

Lesson 4 of an enquiry of 6 lessons

How did the barons reduce royal power under Henry III?

Enquiry: Why did Kings struggle to rule England?

Mr Madeley



Background to Henry III's reign

Henry's early reign was successful. He had accepted Magna Carta and he ruled with a council of barons. As Henry grew older, he wanted more power for himself. He started to ignore his barons. Henry favoured foreigners. Henry also failed to regain lands in France. He even had the Pope threaten to excommunicate him over the purchase of Sicily. This left Henry with little money. The only people Henry could ask for money from were his barons. They now had their chance to control him.



Provisions of Oxford, 1258

Henry turned to the people he had been pushing away. In 1258, Henry asked his barons for more money. They had no interest in letting Henry rule without them anymore. Simon de Montfort was a key leader of the rebel barons. Simon de Montfort and other barons told the king that things must change. They ordered Henry and his son, Edward, to promise to protect England against foreigners. This forced Henry to give up his foreign advisors. To help Henry rule England, a council of 15 barons was chosen. All important positions in Henry's government were chosen by this council. This took away Henry's right to rule alone.



Creation of Parliament

However, Henry did not like this loss of power and gradually tried to rule alone again. This pushed the barons too far and they turned to Simon de Montfort. He began a **civil war**. Simon defeated and captured Henry. With the king under his control, Simon set about changing England forever. He created a **Parliament**. This was made up of barons, churchmen, two knights from each shire and two men from each town. This was the first time ordinary people had been given a say in how to run England. This was the birth of our Parliament today.



Simon rules England

By creating a parliament Simon de Montfort hoped to be able to rule England. Interestingly, creating parliament actually changed who had power. Many barons had previously questioned and criticised kings. Now the barons themselves were being questioned by people below them in the feudal system: knights and townsmen. Some barons worried that Simon wanted to rule without them and rely on the knights and townsmen to support his rule.

So, some barons turned towards Henry's son, Edward. Edward was able to create an army and then defeat Simon de Montfort. However, once king, Edward continued to rule with parliament.



Why did Henry struggle to rule England?

Henry had struggled to rule England for a number of reasons. He upset the barons by trying to tax them too much and listening to foreign advisors. Henry then showed himself not to be trustworthy as he did not stick to agreements made with the barons. Finally, he struggled to rule England because he could not defeat his barons in a civil war.

The creation of Parliament after Henry's defeat meant that England started to move towards **representative government**. This meant that a king could no longer rule by himself or even with just the barons. Royal power in England was weakened. They now had to rule with the support of the barons and ordinary people.



Glossary

Civil War - When a country is split between two sides who fight each other over who should rule.

Parliament - A meeting of people who then pass laws.

Representative government - The idea that people from a larger group from all ways of life help to make decisions in how to run the country. For Simon, it was barons, bishops, knights and freemen who were chosen to help rule England.



Comprehension Questions

1. What caused the barons to turn against Henry?
2. How was Henry's power limited in 1258?
3. Who was the leader of the rebel barons?
4. Which groups of people made up Parliament?
5. Why was Simon unable to keep power?

Starter sentence - Simon was unable to keep power because...

Extension:

How did parliament limit the power of kings?

