

Chapter 1: Britain

1. England

Origins

What would become England was a large section of the southern part of the island the Romans called Britannia. The Romans thought English culture primitive. Most English history begins with the Romans as they left written records about English life.

Germanic tribes of Angles, Saxons, and Jutes from Europe invaded England from the mid-400s until the early 600s. The Anglo-Saxons became the dominant force in England. In 927, the Anglo-Saxon **king** Athelstan united England under a single ruler. Over time, Roman culture largely disappeared except for Christianity which the Anglo-Saxons eventually embraced.

France

In 1066, William of Normandy striking from France invaded England and defeated the Anglo-Saxons at the Battle of Hastings. With French speaking rulers in control of England, the French language mixed with the German speaking Anglo-Saxons to form a new language: English.

2. English Rights

Magna Carta

Going back to Anglo-Saxon times, kings often made promises to their subjects to rule fairly and maintain the peace. Often kings failed to fulfill those promises. In 1199, John Plantagenet became king. He lost a war with France, spent all the government money, raised taxes, and treated people cruelly.



The island of Britain eventually divided into three major countries: Scotland, England, and Wales. Eventually, these countries would unite to form the country of Great Britain/United Kingdom.

In May 1215, the tax paying, land owning barons raised an army of over two thousand men and marched on the city of London. The popular support for the barons forced King John to negotiate for peace. The two sides met at Runnymede, where King John on 15 June 1215 signed the *Great Charter* or *Magna Carta*. This document granted **rights** to individuals, created a Great Council to approve taxes, and limited the authority of the king.

Parliament

The need for money to fight wars, required the future kings of England to call the Great Council together to approve taxes. Eventually, membership of the Council expanded and it became known as Parliament. Parliament raised taxes for

the king in exchange for more power. Eventually, **Parliament** became the lawmaking part of the English government and competed with the king for power.

3. Rise of Parliament

The Glorious Revolution

England broke from the Catholic Church and formed its own **Protestant** church, the Church of England. The English persecuted Catholics. When James II, a Catholic, became king of England, it was too much for the English. Parliament invited Netherland Protestant leader Prince William of Orange and his wife Mary to invade England and take the throne. James II lost military support and fled to France.

William and Mary took the throne but Parliament set limits on their power. In 1689, Parliament passed the *English Bill of Rights* that included:

- The monarch cannot repeal laws without Parliament's permission
- Parliament must approve all taxes
- People have the right to petition the king without punishment
- Parliament must approve keeping an army during peacetime
- Protestants may keep arms for self-defense
- Parliamentary elections should be free from monarchical interference
- Free speech in Parliament without punishment
- No excessive bail or fines or cruel and unusual punishments inflicted

- Jurors should be chosen according to law
- A person must be convicted of a crime before being punished
- Parliament should meet frequently

Parliament became the major power in the British government. While kings and queens continued to enjoy a lot of authority, from this point forward, it was a **limited monarchy**.

Great Britain

By the late 1600s, leaders in both England and Scotland began to discuss joining the two counties into a single nation. They were both Protestant, spoke English, and inhabited the same island. Yet, issues over taxation, trade, and religious toleration extended negotiations for years. In 1707, the Acts of Union joined Scotland and England into the country of Great Britain. One Parliament and one monarch would represent the country. Catholics were banned from the throne. The flags of England and Scotland were combined to create the Union Jack.

