

Topic English society at the time of the Magna Carta

Level: B1

Time: 90 minutes

Aims

- To develop students' ability to talk about daily life using past tenses and "used to".
- To develop students' understanding of England at the time of the Magna Carta.
- To provide opportunities for students to compare England 800 years ago to their own contexts.

Introduction

This lesson prepares the students to learn more about the Magna Carta by describing and explaining the social structure in England 800 years ago. The listening and reading sections have some challenging vocabulary, which students are encouraged to use in the later speaking activities.

Resources and Preparation

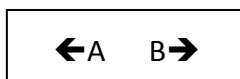
The student worksheets can be printed double-sided

Also, for every three students in the class, print an additional copy of the last page of the student worksheets '**Texts for Task 3**', and cut them up. These will form the jigsaw reading activity in **Task 3**.

Procedure

Warmer – Quiz about the Middle Ages (15 mins)

Mark the sides of the room as 'A' or 'B', e.g. with arrows on the whiteboard.



- Explain that the students will hear statements about England 800 years ago and must decide which is correct and go to that side of the room. (If there is no space to move around, students can stand up for 'A' and sit down for 'B'.)
- Read the first statement about life 800 years ago.
- After students have all moved, give the correct answer and/or additional information.
- For higher-level students, elicit feedback on decisions, e.g. that bicycles had not been invented 800 years ago.
- Repeat for numbers 2-10.

	Quiz Question	Answer
1	800 years ago, people used to travel by: (A) horse (B) bicycle	<i>(A) Bicycles were not invented for another 600 years. Poor people used to walk everywhere. People also travelled by boat.</i>
2	800 years ago, the most powerful person in England was: (A) the king (B) the prime minister	<i>(A) The king. The job of prime minister was created 500 years later.</i>
3	800 years ago, people used to eat with: (A) knives and forks (B) knives and fingers	<i>(B) Knives and fingers. People in England did not use forks until 500 years later. They also had spoons for soup.</i>
4	If you had toothache 800 years ago, would you go to: (A) the barbers/hairdressers (B) the chemists?	<i>(A) The barbers. This job was called "barber surgeon". They would shave men and cut their hair but also do tattoos and fix broken arms and legs.</i>
5	The Magna Carta is: (A) an old English document (B) an ice cream	<i>(A) It's an important and historic document which was produced in England 800 years ago.</i>
6	800 years ago, which type of fruit did people think was unhealthy or dangerous? (A) cooked fruit (B) raw fruit	<i>(B) Raw fruit. People cooked all of their food, including fruit.</i>
7	800 years ago, the population of London was about: (A) 25,000 (B) 250,000	<i>(A) 25,000. This is the size of a small town today. And London now has 8 million people!</i>
8	800 years ago, people used to write in: (A) Latin or French (B) English	<i>(A) Latin or French. English was spoken mainly by poor people (who usually couldn't write). It was also quite different from the English we speak today.</i>
9	800 years ago, English people used to make their clothes from: (A) cotton (B) wool	<i>(B) Wool. The cotton plant did not grow in England... but there were lots of sheep.</i>
10	800 years ago, English people used to drink: (A) tea (B) beer	<i>(B) Beer – but the alcohol level was low. Tea came to England from China and India 450 years later.</i>

Task 1 – England 800 years ago: Vocabulary (10 mins)

- Distribute **Task 1** and direct students' attention to the picture.
- Put students in pairs and ask them to match the descriptions with the groups. Help students with vocabulary relating to the descriptions on the right but let them work out the social groups named on the picture.
- Don't go into discussions about the society now – there will be more information in the jigsaw reading.
- Check answers with the whole class and drill pronunciation.

Answer key

- *King – the ruler; barons – landowners; knights – fighters who ride horses; merchants – people who buy and sell things; artisans – skilled workers; peasants – farmers; serfs – unfree farmers.*

Task 2 – Reading: King John (10 mins)

- Ask the students to read about King John and explain the highlighted vocabulary, looking up words as necessary.

Answer key

- *Inherit – to receive things from someone after they have died*
- *Landowner – someone who owns land*
- *Rent (verb or noun) – (to pay) money to live somewhere*
- Check understanding – ask students to give examples using these words, as they will reappear in the following reading.

Task 3 – Reading: Peasants and Serfs, Merchants and Artisans, Barons and Knights (20 mins)

- Put the students into three equal-sized groups. Distribute the cut-up texts. Give one group text A, the second text B, the third text C.
- Tell the students to read the text and check among their group that they understand – circulate and clarify any vocabulary/pronunciation.
- When they have finished reading, check the students have made notes/completed the table in **Task 2** (page two on the worksheet attachment)
- Reconfigure the class into groups of three, so that each group has a student with an A, B and C text.
- **Without looking at the text and working from their notes**, the students tell each other about their text.

Task 4 – Discussion (10 mins)

This discussion can be done with the whole class or in small groups (with whole class feedback). The discussion prompts are on page 2 of the worksheet attachment.

- What surprised you?
- What was life like in your country 800 years ago?
- What do you think the barons did next?
(They made King John come to a meeting and agree on some rules. This was written down as the Magna Carta.)

Task 5 – Grammar: Irregular past tenses and ‘used to’ (25 mins)

Some or part of this task can be given for homework if time is short.

- Give students the grammar worksheet and ask them to fill in the past irregular verbs from memory. (They are all from the texts.)
- Give the full set of texts (**A, B, C**) on page 4 to enable individual checking (if worksheets are printed double-sided, these will be on the reverse of the grammar).
- Ask students to look at the quiz questions from the beginning of the lesson and underline all instances of ‘used to’ (x 8).
- Drill pronunciation of fun facts with ‘used to’, making sure students understand it sounds like ‘use to’.
- Ask the students to read the grammar explanation, complete the questions and check their answers in pairs. If this usage is entirely new to the students, whole class presentation may be appropriate.
- Students write sentences – or give as a homework task.
- For a fuller explanation see: <http://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/en/grammar-reference/past-habit-used-to-would-past-simple>

Answer key

a) TRUE

b) FALSE

1. 800 years ago, people **used to make** their clothes from wool.
2. People **used to cook** all their food, even fruit.
3. About 25,000 people lived in London. (not a habit, repeated or a state)
4. Barbers **used to do** tattoos as well as shaving men and cutting their hair.

Cooler – How many fun facts can you remember? (5 mins)

This cooler activity is designed to recycle vocabulary. It could also be done at the start of a subsequent lesson.

Students work in pairs and try to recall the fun facts from the warmer from memory, then check against the originals.

Extension / homework activity

As an extension (or for homework), ask students to write fun facts about their own country’s history. If they write ‘A’ and ‘B’ options, they can test the class.