

KS3 History

Lesson 6 of an enquiry of 6 lessons

Why did Kings struggle to rule England?

Enquiry: Why did Kings struggle to rule England?

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Overview of the changes to how England was ruled

The way the Kings of England could rule changed massively during this enquiry question. King John began his reign being the most powerful person in the country. He could make laws and rule in whatever way he wanted. Through John's actions this power was reduced. Henry III further weakened the power of the monarchy. By the end of Henry's reign, a king would need to rule with Parliament. Edward, learnt how to be a good king and was able to set an example to all future kings on how to rule alongside Parliament.



Barons

The English barons wanted two simple things from their king. The first was that they were consulted when the king made decisions. They did not want their king to ignore them and invite foreigners to help them make decisions. Both John and Henry did this and this caused many problems with the barons.

Secondly, the barons wanted a king who was fair. They wanted to be taxed fairly and be given justice. Again, John and Henry failed to do this and they wasted money. Edward, through using Parliament, made sure the barons and people were happy.



Church

A king was meant to protect the Church. As a person, they wanted to live a good life so that they went to heaven. Both John and Henry had their problems with the Church. John managed to get himself excommunicated after arguing with the Pope. Whereas Henry was threatened with excommunication. This showed that they did not always follow their promises.

Edward showed his support for the Church by going on Crusade. Henry rebuilt Westminster Abbey. These pleased the Church and so, at times, they did not risk their souls or the anger of the Church.



War

A king needed to protect his people and be a great warrior. John failed to protect his people. He lost many of the lands within the Angevin Empire and finished his reign with England under attack from both Scotland and France. Henry was not much better. He failed to regain the lost lands and was defeated by Simon de Montfort.

Edward, though, did protect his people and was a great warrior. He managed to conquer Wales and take over Scotland. However, he failed to hold Scotland and the constant fighting was beginning to tire the English and this may have caused problems in the future.



Why did Kings struggle to rule England?

Kings struggled to rule for many reasons, such as losing the support of the barons, failing to protect the Church or their people. However, it would take more than one of those reasons to cause a problem a king. Both John and Henry were able to upset the Church and the barons. However, they could not offer an escape from their problems by being successful at war. This eventually pushed the barons into acting against their king and limiting their power.

Edward was more successful because he ruled with permission. The war in Scotland was a problem due to its cost and length. However, he had proven himself a great warrior. The money to fight his wars was raised through Parliament. This meant he avoided facing any problems.



Comprehension Questions

1. What changes happened in England that changed how it was ruled?
2. What made the barons cause the king to struggle to rule?
3. What made the Church cause the king to struggle to rule?
4. How did war cause the king to struggle to rule?
5. Why did John and Henry struggle to rule England more than Edward?

Starter sentence - John and Henry struggled to rule England more than Edward because...

Extension:

What was the most important reason for Kings struggling to rule England?

