

Late Middle Ages Dossiers

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Thank you and enjoy the lesson!

How to:

- Give each group a packet with one of each one dossier.
- Make sure they fill in the information on each “suspect” before doing the conclusion questions.

Name: Richard

Nickname: Coeur De Lion ("The Lionheart")

Reign: 1189-1199



Actions

At a young age Richard sided with the French king in a war against his own father. He lost an eye for his father's forgiveness. He was forgiven and given the task of eliminating the remaining rebels. He did so with incredible skill. This is where he earned the nickname "The Lionheart" for his incredible feats in battle. A few years later, he rebelled against his father again. This time, after killing his older brother, Richard was named king of all England.

Six months after becoming king he left England to go on Crusade. Before going he admitted his sins of his past and swore to turn away from them and serve God. He spent nearly all of England's money to raise an army. He even raised taxes on the English and sold jobs in his government to those who would pay. He even reportedly said "I'd sell London itself if I could find a buyer." He commented that England was "cold and always raining" and seemed to want to leave his country as soon as possible. Interestingly, it appears that he may not have even spoken English and instead spoke only French. He basically used his home country as little more than a giant piggy bank.

While on Crusade, Richard fought valiantly. He quickly conquered some islands near Jerusalem. During one battle he was so sick that he was being carried on a stretcher into battle. He continued to fight shooting a number of enemy guards with a crossbow while still on the stretcher! He eventually signed a peace treaty with the Muslims granting Christians the right to visit Jerusalem. He had to leave before

completely conquering Jerusalem, however, since he heard reports that his brother was trying to take power back in England.

On his way back he was kidnapped by another European leader whom he had offended earlier. He was held until a ransom of nearly two billion dollars was paid by the people of England. This nearly bankrupted the kingdom. He was eventually freed and retook his place as king. At which point he continued to avoid England as much as possible.

Witness Testimony

“Never have I faced a bolder or wiser opponent.” –Saladin, Muslim General

“He was a bad son and a bad king but a gallant and splendid soldier.” Steven Runciman, Historian

Death

Killed in battle. Richard attacked the castle of one of his own subjects over an argument about buried treasure. Richard was shot by a child from the castle using a crossbow. The king was reportedly distracted by a defender using a cooking pot as a shield. Additionally, he was not wearing any armor thinking the battle would be easy.

Name: John

Nickname: Lackland (“one without much land”), Softsword

Reign: 1199 - 1216



Actions

While his brother Richard was off fighting the Crusades John tried to take his place as king. Richard returned and John was cast aside. Richard forgave John blaming not him but “his evil advisors” for the move. John served his brother loyally until his death. Upon Richard’s death John wisely allied with the French king and was able to claim the crown of England.

As king John focused more heavily on the people of England than any other king of the time. He was a very “hands on” king who visited many areas of his kingdom that had long been ignored. He was particularly interested in law appointing new sheriffs and judges throughout the kingdom. He was even known to act as a judge on cases himself, even ones for minor offenses.

Money was definitely an interest for John. Not only did he collect money from the fines he imposed as judge but he raised taxes many times. He also would demand lords and knights to go to war but then would offer them a pass if they paid him instead. He also charged people to become sheriffs. These sheriffs would then raise fines on their subjects to make up for it.

John further angered his people by defying the church. Ultimately John was excommunicated and responded by forcing the church to pay taxes as well. This left the people thinking they were doomed and had no chance at salvation.

The anger at John resulted in the writing of the Magna Carta. John signed the document granting great freedoms and rights to the freemen of England. However, he ignored it completely. Further, he had those who forced him to sign it rounded up and executed.

Witness Testimony

"Most historians today see John as hard-working administrator, an able man, an able general." –John Bradbury, Historian

"Too late to be known as John the first, he's sure to be known as John the worst." – Robin Hood

Death

Killed by disease contracted in battle while at war with one of his subjects who rebelled against John's rule. John contracted dysentery. Some have testified that his death was not natural and was in fact caused by poison or overeating but no clear physical evidence has been found.

Middle Ages Dossiers

Your Task: You are an investigative historian. You have been given the task of determining if King John truly was as bad as he has been remembered. Your team has been asked to compare John to his brother Richard who is remembered as one of England's greatest kings.

Background Information:

Name: Richard

What does his nickname tell you about him?:

Two best things he did:

1.

2.

Two worst things he did:

1.

2.

On a scale of 1 to 5 how good of a king was he? Why?

Name: John

What does his nickname tell you about him?

Two best things he did:

1.

2.

Two worst things he did:

1.

2.

On a scale of 1 to 5 how good of a king was he? Why?

Write an ARE (Assertion, Reason, Evidence) that answers the following:

Which of the two men was a better king for England?

Assertion:

Reason:

Evidence 1: