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## 5:1 British Constitutional History

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### Absolute Monarchy

- National monarchs consolidated power in the 1600s and 1700s throughout Europe
- Church and noble power over masses lessened
- Divine right – monarch chosen by God to lead his people
- Brought peace to kingdoms and regulated economies

### England

- England developed slightly differently
- British Constitution – not a single written document like the United States of America. Made up of numerous documents, acts of Parliament, and other political and social governances.
- Rights gained by nobles and later regular citizens come gradually over several hundred years
- “Rights of Englishmen” – Constitution establishes certain rights every English subject has before the law
- Major documents include *Magna Carta*, *Petition of Rights*, and the *English Bill of Rights*



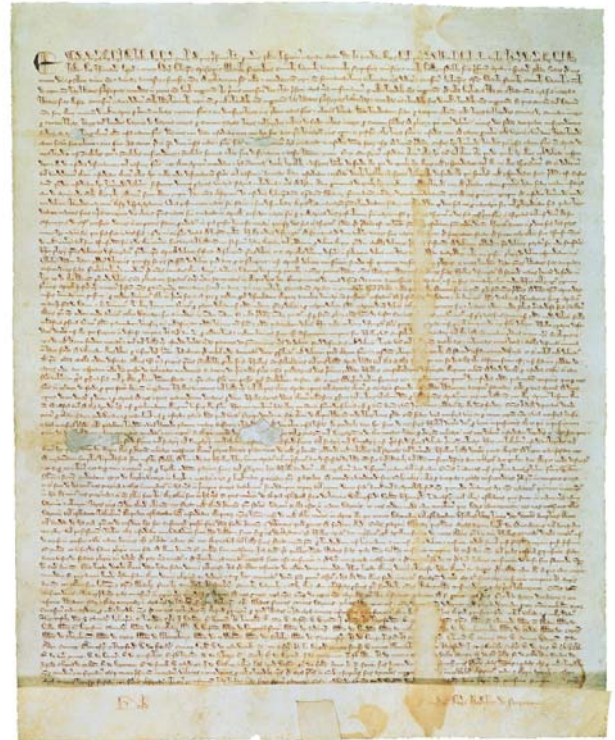
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## 5:1b British Constitutional History

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### **Magna Carta 1215**

- A conflict between King John and the nobles led to the *Magna Carta*
- *Magna Carta* written for nobles by nobles, but later the English applied ideas to all classes
- Defined and protected certain liberties for English nobles
- Established parliamentary power & rule of law (everyone must follow the laws)
- Introduced concept of due process



The Magna Carta

### **Petition of Right 1628**

- Parliament challenged King Charles
- Precursor to the English Civil War
- Attempted to limit royal power and reestablish rights granted in the *Magna Carta*



### **English Bill of Rights 1689**

- Not a list of rights like the American Bill of Rights
- Justified the ouster of James II and the Catholics during the Glorious Revolution
- Established checks and balances for the king
- Parliament becomes dominant force in English government