

Rome's common citizens, called *plebeians*, soon tired of the rule of the patricians. A long struggle followed. The plebeians finally gained political equality in 287 B.C.

Rome continued as a republic until General Julius Caesar took control around 50 B.C. After his death, monarchs called emperors ruled Rome and its empire for more than 500 years.

## Early English Influences

The Roman Empire collapsed around A.D. 476. For the next 700 years, kings and lords ruled most of Europe. Lords were noblemen who usually inherited land, wealth, and power. Over time the growth of towns as business and trade centers weakened the power of the lords. The kings gained greater control of their kingdoms. Many nobles resisted this change. In England they rose up against King John in 1215. They forced him to sign a **document** called the Magna Carta (Latin for "Great Charter").

English nobles forced King John to sign the Magna Carta limiting the monarch's power.

### ► CRITICAL THINKING

**Cause and Effect** How did this event affect future English kings? **SS.7.C.1.2**



The Magna Carta limited the king's power. It forbade him from placing certain taxes on the nobles without their consent. It gave rights to free men. These included the rights to equal treatment under the law and to trial by one's peers. The Magna Carta also gave nobles the right to rebel if the king broke his part of the agreement.

The Magna Carta is important because it established the principle of **limited government**. This is the idea that a ruler or a government is not all-powerful. At first, many of the rights protected by the Magna Carta applied only to nobles. Over time, however, those rights came to apply to all English people.

Kings who came after John were advised by nobles and church officials. Gradually this group grew to include representatives of the common people, as well. By the late 1300s the advisers had become a **legislature**, or lawmaking body. It was called Parliament.

Parliament had some influence, but England's monarchs remained strong for the next 300 years. In the mid-1600s, a power struggle developed between the monarch and Parliament. In 1625 King Charles I dismissed Parliament and ruled alone.

## Reading HELPDESK

**republic** a representative democracy where citizens choose their lawmakers

**Academic Vocabulary**  
**document** an official paper or form that is a record of something

**limited government** the principle that a ruler or a government is not all-powerful

**legislature** a group of people that makes laws

When he recalled the members in 1628, they forced him to sign the Petition of Right. Like the Magna Carta, this document limited the king's power. When Charles failed to uphold the terms of the agreement, a civil war broke out. Eventually, Parliament removed the king and ruled without a monarch for about 20 years.

## The English Bill of Rights

In 1688 Parliament forced King James II, the son of Charles I, from the throne. It asked James's daughter Mary and her husband, William, to rule instead. This transfer of power is known as the Glorious Revolution.

But first William and Mary had to accept rules set by Parliament. They agreed that English citizens had rights that no king could violate. Citizens had the right to a fair trial. They also could not be taxed unless Parliament agreed. The rights set out by Parliament became known as the English Bill of Rights.

The signing of the English Bill of Rights signaled the end of the struggle between Parliament and the monarch. Parliament had won. It was now the leading force in English government. Such events changed English government. They also received much notice in the English colonies in North America.

### PROGRESS CHECK

**Explaining** How did the Magna Carta establish the principle of limited government?

## Influence of the Enlightenment

**GUIDING QUESTION** How did Europe's Enlightenment influence ideas about government in what became the United States?

The conflict between the monarch and Parliament produced new ideas about government. These new ideas were part of a larger cultural movement in Europe known as the Enlightenment.

During the 1600s, scientific discoveries led to the belief that God had created an orderly universe. Some people thought that its laws could be discovered through human reason.

This change in how some people saw their world is called the Enlightenment. These thinkers wanted to apply the laws that ruled nature to people and society. These new ideas had a great effect on political thinking in Europe and the Americas.

## English Bill of Rights (1689)

- No imprisonment without due process of law.
- No loss of property without due process of law.
- No cruel punishment.
- No standing army in time of peace without Parliament's consent.
- No taxation without Parliament's consent.
- Subjects [people] have the right to bear arms.
- Subjects [people] have the right to petition the king.
- Freedom of speech in Parliament.

The English Bill of Rights built on the gains won in the Petition of Right.

### CRITICAL THINKING

**Classifying** What rights listed here do you recognize as rights modern Americans enjoy?  
SS.7.C.1.2

NGSSS covered in  
"Influence of the Enlightenment"



**SS.7.C.1.1** Recognize how Enlightenment ideas including Montesquieu's view of separation of power and John Locke's theories related to natural law and how Locke's social contract influenced the Founding Fathers.

**SS.7.C.1.4** Analyze the ideas (natural rights, role of government) and complaints set forth in the Declaration of Independence.

**LA.7.1.6.2** The student will listen to, read, and discuss familiar and conceptually challenging text.