



# Magna Carta: Law, Liberty, Legacy

*Claire Breay, Julian Harrison*

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In his 1941 inaugural address, Franklin Delano Roosevelt asserted that "the democratic aspiration is no mere recent phase in human history . . . It was written in Magna Carta." In 1215, confronted by forty rebellious barons, King John of England affixed his seal to Magna Carta, thereby avoiding civil war. Though much of the original text has been superseded by modern-day law, many of the principles expressed in Magna Carta still resonate clearly: "No free man shall be seized or imprisoned, or stripped of his rights or possessions, or outlawed or exiled . . . except by the lawful judgment of his equals or by the law of the land. To no one will we sell, to no one deny or delay justice."

The British Library is proud to present *Magna Carta: Law, Liberty, Legacy* in commemoration of the eight-hundredth anniversary of Magna Carta. Documenting a once-in-a-lifetime exhibition at the British Library, and drawing on the Library's rich historical collections--including two original copies of Magna Carta from 1215--this catalog brings to life the history of this globally important document, taking the reader on a journey from the charter's medieval origins through to its contemporary significance and enduring symbolic power. *Magna Carta* features treasured artifacts inspired by the charter's rich legacy, including Thomas Jefferson's handwritten draft of the Declaration of Independence and an original copy of the Bill of Rights.

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