King John: Evil or Unlucky key notes:

When Richard died and John took control of England he inherited a country that had been **taxed** heavily to pay for the crusades and had no wealth left, not a good start!

Richard was king for just over **ten years** and spent around **six months** in England! He said it was a miserable place and disliked the people and weather.

When Richard died and John took control of England he inherited a country that had been **taxed** heavily to pay for the crusades and had no wealth left, not a good start!

John was not happy with the church. He argued with the **Pope** over who should be next archbishop of Canterbury (a bit like Henry II). The result was that the Pope closed down all the churches in England while John was King!

The closure of the churches was bad news for John, but he also made other bad decisions. He took away church lands and buildings. Priests and monks were sometimes punished.

John’s brother Richard was a **warrior king**: he was at his best with a battle to fight. John, however, was not the same type of king. In fact he was a **lousy soldier** and it showed!

In **France** there was a new king, Philip II, who wanted to prove himself.

Richard’s lands in France were lost in **1206**. He tried to win them back in **1214** but failed to. People did not like their kings to be failures!

To pay for all the wars, John had to **tax** people. As he had no money because Richard had spent it all, he had to increase the amount of tax people paid.

The barons (nobility) were taxed more than they had under any other king and thought he was being unfair. Some types of tax increased by six times the previous amount!

This was made worse by the fact that much of the barons’ land in France had been taken over so they could not claim tax on that!

The barons rebelled against their king. They thought he was not running the country properly and that he was being unfair. At a place called **Runnymede** they made the king sign a charter called the **Magna Carta** (meaning Great Charter).

The **Magna Carta** is seen as a really important document, even in today's society. For the first time it told a king what he could and could not do!

It also gave **freemen** rights. Remember, however, that for the majority of the population this meant nothing as they were **villeins** (people tied to the land) and not freemen.