**The Magna Carta**

JOHN, by the grace of God King of England, Lord of Ireland, Duke of Normandy and Aquitaine, and Count of Anjou, to his archbishops, bishops, abbots, earls, barons, justices, foresters, sheriffs, stewards, servants, and to all his officials and loyal subjects, Greeting.

(1) FIRST, THAT WE HAVE GRANTED TO GOD, and by this present charter have confirmed for us and our heirs in perpetuity, that the English Church shall be free, and shall have its rights undiminished, and its liberties unimpaired. That we wish this so to be observed, appears from the fact that of our own free will, before the outbreak of the present dispute between us and our barons, we granted and confirmed by charter the freedom of the Church's elections - a right reckoned to be of the greatest necessity and importance to it - and caused this to be confirmed by Pope Innocent III. This freedom we shall observe ourselves, and desire to be observed in good faith by our heirs in perpetuity.

*(The writers have a problem with King John, not the Church. They want the Church to be able to act without the king’s interference.)*

TO ALL FREE MEN OF OUR KINGDOM we have also granted, for us and our heirs forever, all the liberties written out below, to have and to keep for them and their heirs, of us and our heirs:

*(At the time, this covered about 10% of the population; however, over time, as more of the population qualified as “free men,” it came to include practically all of the people of Great Britain.)*

(12) No 'scutage' or 'aid' *(tax)* may be levied in our kingdom without its general consent,

(14) To obtain the general consent of the realm for the assessment of an 'aid' - or a 'scutage' *(tax)*, we will cause the archbishops, bishops, abbots, earls, and greater barons to be summoned individually by letter… to come together on a fixed day (of which at least forty days notice shall be given) and at a fixed place. In all letters of summons, the cause of the summons will be stated. When a summons has been issued, the business appointed for the day shall go forward in accordance with the resolution of those present, even if not all those who were summoned have appeared.

(20) For a trivial offence, a free man shall be fined only in proportion to the degree of his offence, and for a serious offence correspondingly, but not so heavily as to deprive him of his livelihood… None of these fines shall be imposed except by the assessment on oath of reputable men of the neighborhood.

(21) Earls and barons shall be fined only by their equals, and in proportion to the gravity of their offence.

(36) In future nothing shall be paid or accepted for the issue of a writ of inquisition of life or limbs. It shall be given gratis, and not refused.

*(This section required that an investigation be conducted in any case that might result in the defendant being deprived of life or limb, and subject to punishment. The writ calling for the investigation was to be issued free of charge.)*

*[A writ is a legal document issued by a court, under the authority of the state, compelling certain action to be taken.]*

(38) In future no official shall place a man on trial upon his own unsupported statement, without producing credible witnesses to the truth of it.

(39) No free man shall be seized or imprisoned, or stripped of his rights or possessions, or outlawed or exiled, or deprived of his standing in any other way, nor will we proceed with force against him, or send others to do so, except by the lawful judgment of his peers (equals) or by the law of the land.

(40) To no one will we sell, to no one deny or delay right or justice.

*(The practice, until this was written, was to charge a fee for certain writs. These charges were considered a way for the king to raise revenue.)*

(60) All these customs and liberties that we have granted shall be observed in our kingdom in so far as concerns our own relations with our subjects. Let all men of our kingdom, whether clergy or laymen, observe them similarly in their relations with their own men.

(63) IT IS ACCORDINGLY OUR WISH AND COMMAND that the English Church shall be free, and that men in our kingdom shall have and keep all these liberties, rights, and concessions, well and peaceably in their fullness and entirety for them and their heirs, of us and our heirs, in all things and all places for ever.

**The Bill of Rights**

**AMENDMENT 1**

* Congress can’t make any law that:
  + Favors one religion over another religion, or no religion at all, or opposes any religion;
  + Stops you from practicing your religion as you see fit;
  + Keeps you from saying whatever you want, even if you are criticizing the President of the United States;
  + Prevents newspapers, magazines, books, movies, radio, television or the internet from presenting any news, ideas, and opinions that they choose;
  + Stops you from meeting peacefully for a demonstration or protest to ask the government to change something.

**AMENDMENT 2**

* Congress can’t stop people from having and carrying weapons.

**AMENDMENT 3**

* You don’t have to let soldiers live in your house, except if there is a war, and even then Congress needs to pass a law and set the rules.

**AMENDMENT 4**

* Nobody can search your body, or your house, or your papers and things, unless they can prove to a judge that they have a good reason for the search.

**AMENDMENT 5**

* Except during times of war or if you are in the military:
  + You can’t be tried for any serious crime without a Grand Jury meeting first to decide whether there’s enough evidence against you for a trial;
  + If at the end of a trial, the jury decides you are innocent, the government can’t try you again for the same crime with another jury;
  + You cannot be forced to admit you are guilty of a crime and if you choose not to, you don’t have to say anything at your trial at all;
  + You can’t be killed, or put in jail, or fined, unless you were convicted of a crime by a jury and all of the proper legal steps during your arrest and trial were followed; and
  + The government can’t take your house or your farm or anything that is yours, unless the government pays for it at a fair price.

**AMENDMENT 6**

* If you are arrested and charged with a crime:
  + You have a right to have your trial soon and in public, so everyone knows what is happening;
  + The case has to be decided by a jury of your peers (ordinary people), if you wish;
  + You have the right to know what you are accused of doing wrong and to see and hear and cross-examine the people who are witnesses against you;
  + You have the right to a lawyer to help you. If you cannot afford to pay the lawyer, the government will.

**AMENDMENT 7**

* You also have the right to a jury when it is a civil case (a law case between two people rather than between you and the government).

**AMENDMENT 8**

* The government can’t make you pay more than is reasonable in bail or in fines, and the government can’t inflict cruel or unusual punishments (like torture) even if you are convicted of a crime.

**AMENDMENT 9**

* Just because these rights are listed in the Constitution doesn’t mean that you don’t have other rights too.

**AMENDMENT 10**

* Anything that the Constitution doesn’t say that Congress can do, is left up to the states and to the people.

(This translation is from the ACLU website.)