

0. CROSS PURPOSES AT RUNNYMEDE - Story Preface

1. WHAT IS THE MAGNA CARTA

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James William Edmund Doyle (1822–1892), a British author and artist, created his artistic impression of what it might have been like on the day King John signed the *Magna Carta* in the presence of some of his barons. Produced in 1864, Doyle's work was engraved by Edmund Evans (1826–1905) and included in his book *A Chronicle of England* (published in London, during 1864, by Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, & Green). The image, entitled "John Signs the Great Charter," appears on page 226 of the 1864 edition of the book. Click on the image for a better view.

In order to appease his nobles, John agreed to meet at Runnymede (a field near Windsor Castle) on June 15, 1215. Even as he agreed to meet, however, John did not intend to keep his word.

Presented with the *Magna Carta*, he agreed to its terms for one purpose only: to buy time. A contemporary chronicler, Roger of Wendover (a monk who worked at St. Albans Abbey), tells us what happened:

King John, when he saw that he was deserted by almost all, so that out of his regal superabundance of followers he scarcely retained seven knights, was much alarmed lest the barons would attack his castles and reduce them without difficulty, as they would find no obstacle to their so doing; and he deceitfully pretended to make peace for a time with the aforesaid barons...

As the king and his nobles met, John continued to recognize he was in no position to bargain. Roger of Wendover continues:

...At length, after various points on both sides had been discussed, king John, seeing that he was inferior in strength to the barons, without raising any difficulty, granted the underwritten laws and liberties, and confirmed them by his charter...

King John granted rights because he perceived he had no other choice. But another powerful man - Pope Innocent III - had a different reaction to the barons' demands.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/CROSS-PURPOSES-AT-RUNNYMEDE-Magna-Carta)

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Map Depicting Runnymede

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Windsor Castle

Image online, courtesy the besttourism.com website.

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Pope Innocent III

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