Your notes

GCSE History: revision notes

Britain: Power and the people, c1170 to the present

Contents

1. Challenging royal power, c1170–c1540
2. Parliament and revolution
3. Reform and reformers
4. Workers, women and minorities
5. Key terms
6. Quick questions
7. What to do next

Challenging royal power, c1170–c1540

- **Magna Carta** (1215): the barons forced King John to accept limits on his power, including that free men could only be punished after a lawful judgement. It established the idea that the king was not above the law.
- Simon de Montfort's **Parliament** (1265) included knights and townspeople (burgesses) for the first time.
- The **Peasants' Revolt** (1381): after the Black Death, peasants resented the Statute of Labourers (1351), which held wages down, and a new **poll tax**. Led by Wat Tyler, they marched on London. Richard II met them, Tyler was killed and the revolt collapsed, but the **poll tax** was dropped and serfdom slowly declined.
- The Pilgrimage of Grace (1536) was a northern rebellion against Henry VIII's religious changes, including closing the monasteries. Henry promised concessions, but then executed about 200 people, including its leader, Robert Aske.

Parliament and revolution

- The English Civil War (1642–49) between Charles I and **Parliament** was fought over money, religion and power. Charles was executed in 1649, and England became a republic under Oliver Cromwell until the monarchy was restored in 1660.
- The American Revolution (1775–83) rejected 'taxation without representation' and inspired British radicals such as Thomas Paine, who wrote Rights of Man (1791).

Reform and reformers

- The slave trade was abolished in the British Empire in 1807, and slavery in 1833. Campaigners included Thomas Clarkson, William Wilberforce and Olaudah Equiano, alongside the resistance of enslaved people themselves.

- At Peterloo (1819), cavalry charged a peaceful crowd in Manchester demanding the vote, killing about 15 people.
- The Great Reform Act (1832) gave more middle-class men the vote and removed 'rotten boroughs'. The Chartists (1838–48) demanded six points, including votes for all men and a secret ballot. They failed at the time, but most of their points later became law.
- The Tolpuddle Martyrs (1834) were transported to Australia for forming a union; public protests won their release.

Workers, women and minorities

- **Trade unions**: skilled workers formed 'New Model Unions' (1850s); unskilled workers won the matchgirls' strike (1888) and the London Dock Strike (1889). The General Strike (1926) failed, and the miners' strike (1984–85) against pit closures was defeated.
- Votes for women: **suffragists** (the NUWSS, led by Millicent Fawcett, from 1897) used peaceful methods; **suffragettes** (the WSPU, led by Emmeline Pankhurst, from 1903) used militant ones. The Representation of the People Act (1918) gave the vote to women over 30 (who met property conditions) and all men over 21. The Equal Franchise Act (1928) let women vote at 21, the same as men.
- Minority rights: the Bristol Bus Boycott (1963) helped lead to the Race Relations Acts (1965 and 1968). The Equal Pay Act was passed in 1970.

Key terms

Magna Carta	The 1215 agreement that limited the power of King John.
Parliament	The body that makes laws and approves taxes.
Peasants' Revolt	The rebellion of 1381, sparked by a poll tax.
Poll tax	A tax charged at the same rate on each person.
Chartism	The movement demanding the six points of the People's Charter, including votes for all men.
Suffrage	The right to vote.
Suffragist	A campaigner for women's votes who used peaceful methods.
Suffragette	A campaigner for women's votes who used militant methods.
Trade union	An organisation of workers that protects their pay and conditions.
Abolition	Ending something by law, such as slavery.

Quick questions

Cover the answers and test yourself: remembering is what makes it stick.

1. What was Magna Carta (1215)?

Your notes

2. What was new about Simon de Montfort's Parliament (1265)?
3. Which tax sparked the Peasants' Revolt of 1381?
4. Who led the Peasants' Revolt?
5. What was the Pilgrimage of Grace (1536) against?
6. What happened to Charles I in 1649?
7. When was slavery abolished in the British Empire?
8. What happened at Peterloo in 1819?

Answers

1. An agreement limiting King John's power
2. It included knights and townspeople
3. A poll tax
4. Wat Tyler
5. Henry VIII's religious changes, including closing the monasteries
6. He was executed
7. 1833
8. Cavalry attacked a peaceful crowd demanding reform

What to do next

Practise 13 questions on this topic

Try 4 exam questions, with mark schemes

Read the lesson, one step at a time

Free revision for GCSE and KS3 at lycolearn.co.uk. Some notes are for one exam board only, and say so in brackets.

Your notes