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Was King John really a 'bad' King?

Overview: King John was the fourth son of the popular Henry II and became king in 1199 after the death of his brother Richard 'The Lionheart'. During his reign as monarch, which lasted until his death on 19 October 1216, he famously lost Normandy at the Battle of Bouvines in 1214 and was forced to sign 'Magna Carta' at Runnymede in 1215, by a group of discontented Barons. This document put explicit limits on the power of the King. Contemporary Chroniclers harmed John's reputation, accusing him of wickedness, a lust for money and of murdering his nephew. Furthermore, his negative portrayal in numerous productions of Robin Hood has served to further tarnish his standing, but was he *really* a 'bad' King?

Elliott & Patrick's arguments that King John deserves to be called a 'bad' King.	Special Guest; Conal's arguments that King John was a 'good' King.
John lost the Battle of Bouvines in 1214, and subsequently claims to Normandy. Given that losing battles was seen as a sign of losing God's favour at the time, this was a mortal blow to his authority and prestige as a King.	Most of the 'losses' suffered by King John were as a result of the poor decision-making and inadequate military planning of his allies.
John was both unpopular and cruel. He allowed himself to be associated with the murder of his nephew Arthur. John was also rigorous about collecting additional revenue through taxation and 'scutage', indicating that he was greedy. Furthermore, he failed to forecast that this would inevitably lead to opposition and reaction from the Barons.	John was hamstrung by inheriting a virtually bankrupt kingdom due to the ransom paid to get his brother – Richard the Lionheart – returned to England. Additionally, Richard spent a fortune indulging in vainglorious crusades, spending years away from England at a time.
John's failure to support the Papal candidate for the position of Archbishop of Canterbury meant that he actively courted the opposition of two powerful and astute domestic and international enemies; Stephen Langton and Pope Innocent III.	John's refusal to support the papal candidate for Archbishop of Canterbury, was not that unusual – it happened relatively frequently. King John was entirely unfamiliar with Stephen Langton (the Pope's candidate) and he interpreted the move by the Pope as encroaching on his authority. He later reconciled with the Pope, anyway.
King John was compelled to sign Magna Carta which put distinct and explicit checks on his power; this was a result of opposition from the powerful Barons, of which his poor Kingship was a direct cause. His subsequent failure to uphold Magna Carta is further evidence of his perfidious nature.	The Magna Carta was a set of checks on the king's power that had long been in the offing – it was merely one of many steps towards a more collaborative method of ruling. King John just happened to be king when these rules came into being.

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Don't forget to check out Patrick O'Shaughnessy's free website: www.historychappy.com and follow him at @historychappy on Twitter.

Don't forget to follow Conal Smith at @prohistoricman on Twitter.