Rules for Rulers

Trace how three English documents limited royal power.

SS24.6.12a "Describe how the Magna Carta, Petition of Right, and English Bill of Rights contributed to the development of limited government."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one limit on the ruler in each paragraph, then circle the words that show who or what sets that limit. Use your marks to compare the three documents.

When Kings Had to Follow Rules

1. In 1215, England's King John faced angry nobles who wanted limits on his power. They forced him to accept the Magna Carta, a written agreement. It said the king could not take certain payments from his subjects without the kingdom's common counsel. It also said free people could not be imprisoned or punished except by lawful judgment or the law of the land. These protections did not cover everyone in England. Still, the document planted an important idea: even a king had to follow rules rather than make every decision alone.

2. More than four centuries later, King Charles I clashed with Parliament over money and arrests. In 1628, Parliament presented him with the Petition of Right. It insisted that the king could not collect taxes without Parliament's consent. It also objected to jailing people without showing a lawful reason. Charles accepted the petition but later ignored its limits. Even so, Parliament had stated its case in writing: the ruler needed to obey the law and could not simply demand money or take away a person's freedom at will.

3. In 1689, after another struggle over royal power, William and Mary accepted the English Bill of Rights as they became England's rulers. The law said the monarch could not suspend laws or raise taxes without Parliament's agreement. It also protected free elections to Parliament and speech during its debates. These rules gave Parliament a stronger role in governing. Across the three documents, limits on the ruler grew clearer, although many people still could not vote or enjoy equal rights. Limited government means leaders must act within laws, not above them.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the Magna Carta limit King John's power over free people?

2. How did the Petition of Right limit the king's power over taxes and arrests?

3. Give two ways the English Bill of Rights limited the monarch and strengthened Parliament.

4. How did limits on royal power develop from the Magna Carta to the English Bill of Rights? Use one detail from each document.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a town mayor wants to collect a new fee and jail anyone who objects. Write four or five sentences proposing two rules to limit the mayor. Connect each rule to a different document in the passage and explain how the rules would protect people.

ANSWER KEY

Rules for Rulers

GRADE 6 · SS24.6.12a

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one limit on the ruler in each paragraph, then circle the words that show who or what sets that limit. Use your marks to compare the three documents. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the Magna Carta limit King John's power over free people?	**It said free people could not be imprisoned or punished except by lawful judgment or the law of the land.**
2	How did the Petition of Right limit the king's power over taxes and arrests?	**It said the king needed Parliament's consent to collect taxes and could not jail people without showing a lawful reason.**
3	Give two ways the English Bill of Rights limited the monarch and strengthened Parliament.	**The monarch could not suspend laws or raise taxes without Parliament's agreement. The law also protected free elections to Parliament and speech during its debates.**
4	How did limits on royal power develop from the Magna Carta to the English Bill of Rights? Use one detail from each document.	**The Magna Carta required the king to follow the law when dealing with free people. The English Bill of Rights gave Parliament a stronger role by requiring its agreement on taxes and protecting its elections and debates.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The town council should have to approve any new fee before the mayor collects it. That rule follows the Petition of Right, which said the king needed Parliament's consent to collect taxes. The mayor should not be allowed to jail critics without giving a lawful reason. That rule follows the Magna Carta's protection against unlawful imprisonment for free people, and it would stop the mayor from punishing critics at will.

Accept accurate paraphrases supported by the passage. For Part 3, look for two distinct rules tied to two different documents, with an explanation of how each rule limits the mayor.