

Henry II (1154-1189) Establishing Royal Authority

CE – Crown and Parliament - Problems faced by a monarch B3 & B4



1) Introduction

a) Henry Plantagenet was a very intelligent man with a dynamic personality; impatient; keen, observant, tenacious, a good soldier, strong willed and with endless energy.

He was just the man many barons didn't want as king.

"He had a sound mind in a sound body; whether he was fighting at the head of his armies, sitting in council, or talking with friends, the superiority of his talents was always manifest."



b) Henry ruled over an enormous empire. Through either marriage or inheritance, England, Normandy, Maine, Touraine, Brittany, Aquitaine, Anjou, Gascony, Ireland, Southern Wales and Southern Scotland came under his control. With such an empire, it is hardly surprising that in his 35 year reign, Henry visited England only six times, amounting to no more than three years in total time spent in the country. This makes his achievements appear even more impressive.

2) What problems did Henry II face?

a) Stephen's reign was a dark chapter in English history. Stephen had been unable to control his **barons**. Stephen had **failed to keep law and order** (anarchy) and the barons had seized land and built castles illegally, undermining Stephen's feudal authority. Stephen had been forced to give land to barons in order to buy their loyalty.

Problem - Barons increased power = Monarch weaker

b) Stephen had also given **English land to the Scottish King** in order to stop him supporting Empress Matilda in the civil war. Cumberland, Westmoreland, and Northumberland were now under the control of the king of Scotland.

c) The crown's treasury was nearly empty.

d) Both Stephen and Matilda had hired mercenary soldiers. They had not been paid and were threatening trouble.

e) Stephen **had argued with the Pope and lost**. The Church's authority in England had been strengthened. The Benefit of Clergy had been reintroduced to England. Church courts were now dealing with their own wrong doers.

All answer can be found on page 1

Question 1

Give the dates of Henry II's reign _____

Question 2

What was Henry's family name? _____

Question 3

How would you describe Henry's empire? _____

Question 4

How many times did Henry II visit England? _____

Question 5

What was the total length of time that Henry spent in England? _____

Question 6

Which of these countries/regions was not within Henry's empire? Underline your answers

Spain Anjou Normandy Italy Northern Scotland

Question 7 Complete the following with the correct words.

Stephen's reign was a _____ chapter in English history. Stephen had been unable to _____ his _____. Stephen had failed to keep _____ and _____ and the barons had seized _____ and built _____ illegally, undermining Stephen's feudal authority. Stephen had been forced to give land to barons in order to buy their loyalty. Stephen had also given English land to the _____ King in order to stop him supporting _____ in the civil war. Cumberland, _____, and Northumberland were now under the _____ of the king of Scotland. The crown's _____ was nearly _____. Both Stephen and Matilda had hired _____ soldiers. They had not been _____ and were threatening trouble. Stephen had argued with the _____ and lost. The Church's authority in England had been _____. The _____ of _____ had been reintroduced to England. Church _____ were now dealing with their own _____.

To help him solve these problems, Henry needed a very able man who he could trust to run the country in his absence. He chose **Thomas Becket** and made him Chancellor in 1154. The first five years of his reign were devoted to **rebuilding a stable government**.



3) How did Henry regain authority from the barons?

a) **First actions 1154- 1159**

Immediately Henry and Becket took steps to restore law and order and reduce the power of the barons who had built up their power and estates during the anarchy of Stephen's reign.

- 1) All **375 unauthorized castles (adulterines)** were either pulled down or taken under Henry's control.
- 2) All **mercenaries** were persuaded to leave the country. (promise of future work)
- 3) He refused to accept any **grants of land** given by Stephen. All barons had to prove that they were lawful owners of the land they claimed to own. If they couldn't Henry confiscated the land or returned it were possible to its rightful owner.

b) Henry solved the Scottish problem by meeting with king Malcolm of Scotland. Henry didn't want his kingdom to be divided and therefore told Malcolm he intended to retrieve the land by force if necessary. Malcolm realised Henry's better argument and greater strength and therefore he agreed. In return Henry granted Malcolm the earldom of Huntingdon.

By 1159 all attempts at opposition were suppressed, and Henry ruled supreme in England. However he continued with actions that further controlled the barons.

b) **Further actions 1159 - 1181**

- In **1159**, he introduced the **shield tax or scutage**. Instead of barons providing knights to fight in Henry's army, each baron was to pay 20 shillings for each knight he owned. Any baron who refused or tried to evade scutage was fined heavily. £180,000 raised in 1159 alone. Money raised was used to reemploy mercenaries.



- In **1166** the barons and bishops were ordered to **divulge the number of knights** controlling their lands so that Henry could take proper financial advantage of changes that had happened since the Domesday Book in 1086.

- In **1170**, Henry held an **Inquest of Sheriffs**, in which he sent out officials to check on the conduct and efficiency of every sheriff in the land. Many of the sheriffs who were in the pockets of the corrupt barons were dismissed and replaced by men loyal to the King.



- 4) Henry introduced a **new coinage system**. During Stephen's reign coins had been clipped and new coins made from their clippings. All coins were recalled. The weight for an English shilling was set at 2½ oz. Coins were melted down and people issued with new coins to the weight they had handed in. Any older coins not melted down were no longer legal.

- By the '**Assize of Arms**' in **1181**, he **revived the old fyrd system**. "*All freemen were to arm themselves according to their wealth, the rich with sword, lance, helmet and shirt of mail, the poorer man with leather jerkin and lance, and that all should be ready to answer the sheriff's call to arms*". With mercenaries and the fyrd Henry could deal with any baronial uprisings.

How successful was Henry II?

Question 8

What is an adulterine? _____

Question 9

How did Henry deal with the adulterines?

Question 10

What is a mercenary?

Question 11

How did Henry deal with the mercenary problem?

Question 12

Who did Henry enlist to help him run the country when he was away? _____

Question 13

Briefly explain how Henry got back the lands Stephen had given to the Scottish king.

Question 14

What was scutage? _____

Question 15

What happened in 1166? _____

Question 16

What happened in the Inquest of Sheriffs in 1170?

Question 17

Why did Henry introduce a new coinage system?

Question 18

What was the Assize of Arms? _____

4) Henry II (1154-1189) and Reform of the Legal System (Law)

a) Having dealt with the problems left behind by Stephen and feeling that a military threat from the barons was unlikely, Henry II turned his attentions to re-organising the **civil legal system** and it is these reforms which are reckoned to be perhaps Henry's greatest achievement.

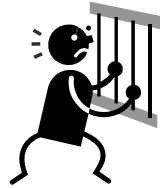
- The system was unfair and corrupt.
- The old systems of trial by ordeal, trial by combat and trial by oaths were now regarded as old fashioned and totally unjust.
- Many people did not have access to the law system.



b) At the **Assize of Clarendon** in 1166,

- Henry decided to establish **royal justice throughout the country**. A group of judges would travel around the country
 - a) Ensuring justice was carried out,
 - b) checking up on barons,
 - c) calculating what taxes should be paid
 - d) supervising the work of the sheriffs.

- When the travelling judge arrived in an area to hear a case, he was to be met by twelve law-abiding citizens from that area. They formed **the jury** and drew up a list of cases needing trying by the judge. They were also responsible for presenting the facts of the case. However, unlike today, it was the judge who made the decision as to whether a person was guilty or innocent.
- All court cases were to be based on **English Common Law** to ensure a fair trial, no matter where you lived in the country. (barons had made their own laws).
- All the **finances** from these cases went **to the treasury**, not the barons' pockets!
- Sheriffs could **confiscate lands and property** of criminals.
- **Local jails** were to be built. (Henry would pay for these)
- **All important cases** were to be dealt with by the **King's court** and taken out of the baron's control.



c) At the **Assize of Northampton in 1176**, Henry made further improvements.

- Travelling judges were organised into six circuits. This made sure that justice was accessible to all.

As a result of Henry's reforms justice was made

- speedier,
- fairer
- more efficient.

d) Summary - Success?

Henry took the English system of law, much of it rooted in Anglo-Saxon custom that was cumbersome, with complex and slow procedures and turned it into an **efficient legal system** closely controlled by the royal court and the king's officers. Much of Henry's reforms can still be seen today in our modern legal system.

However the Church courts still remained untouched by Henry's reforms.

Question 19 Complete the following

When Henry II became king he believed that the law system in England was _____ and _____ . The old systems of _____, _____ and _____ were now regarded as old fashioned and totally unjust. Many people did not have _____ to the law system.

Question 20

What was the intention of the Assize of Clarendon?

Question 21

According to the Assize of Clarendon what were the four functions (jobs) that the travelling judges had to carry out?

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____

Question 22

According to the Assize of Clarendon what were all court cases to be based on?

Question 23

What did Henry order to be built at his own expense? _____

Question 24

In which court were all important cases to be held? _____

Question 25

What further improvement was made by the Assize of Northampton? In what year was this?

Question 26

Do you think Henry's changes to the law system were successful? Explain your answer

HOW HENRY II CHANGED THE METHOD OF TRIAL

