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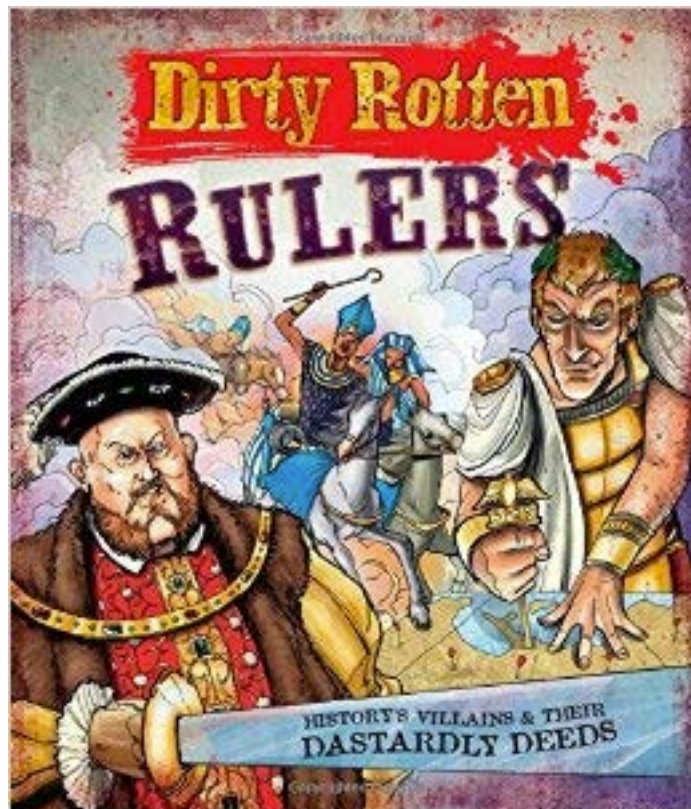
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Pipe, J. (2014). *Dirty rotten rulers*. London: Ticktock.



# Bad King John

In the legend of Robin Hood, King John of England is the classic villain: greedy, violent, cruel and ruthless. But was he really such a rotten ruler? In a word, **yes!**

## » Weak «

John made a complete mess of being king. He faced a huge rebellion by the barons, fell out with the Pope, and he also lost many of the possessions he inherited, in particular large areas of land in France. After he failed to put down a revolt in northern France, the barons gave him the nickname "John Softsword".

## » Untrustworthy «

John tried to snatch the throne (with the help of the French king), while his brother King Richard I was in prison abroad, losing the trust of the people even before he became king.

## » Violent «

John imprisoned and killed anyone who threatened him, most famously his nephew, Arthur of Brittany. He also hanged 28 hostages, the sons of rebel Welsh chieftains.

## » Ruthless «

John seduced the wives and daughters of his friends and enemies then banished their relatives so he could grab their land.



## KING JOHN'S CASTLE, LIMERICK, IRELAND

### » Greedy «

John's favourite hobby was collecting jewellery. After bankrupting the county in a disastrous war with France, John tried to steal as much money as possible from his people by increasing taxes to record levels.

### » Dishonest «

When the English barons threatened to rebel, he reluctantly signed the Magna Carta in 1215, then shamelessly went back on his word and fought back against his enemies.

### So much for greed

John lost all his treasure when he got caught by the rising tide while taking a shortcut across a stretch of water in the Wash, Lincolnshire.



## Rotten Ruling

### JOHN'S BIGGEST MESSSES:

- ☞ Losing almost all English lands in France
- ☞ Trying to steal the throne from his brother
- ☞ Losing his treasure