



## King John

The king's nephew, Arthur, is backed by the King of France in a rebellion. Refusing the King of France's demand that he surrender his throne, John sends an army to France under the command of Philip Faulconbridge (also known as Philip the Bastard). The English army clashes with the French at Angiers, but neither one can claim a decisive victory. John proposes peace with the French king, ceding to him some English fiefs in France and arranging for the Dauphin to wed his niece, Blanch.

However, John is excommunicated by the Pope over a dispute concerning the appointment of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Pandulph, the Pope's legate, orders the French to resume their warfare upon King John. In the conflict that follows, John's army beats back the French and captures Arthur. John wishes him executed; his chamberlain, Hubert, disobeys the order, but Arthur later plunges to his death while trying to escape. John's nobles ironically suspect John of murder—which was his original intent—and desert him for the French. Meanwhile, John arranges a peace of sorts with Pandulph, to whom he turns over the crown of England; he will receive it back, therefore becoming a vassal of the Church.

Pandulph attempts to stop the warfare, John now being back in the folds of the Church. The French will have none of it, and the forces clash at St. Edmundsbury. During the battle, a fallen French noble named Melun warns the turncoat English noblemen that the King of France will have them executed just as soon as John has been conquered. The nobles, seeing the winds of fortune shift, return their allegiance to King John. Without his allies, the French king comes to terms with Pandulph and John. John, however, will not be in a position to appreciate the victory—he is poisoned by one of the monks while staying at Swinstead Abbey. His son will ascend to the throne as King Henry III.

### *Dramatis Personae*

*King John*

*Prince Henry*, son to the king

*Arthur*, Duke of Britain; nephew to the king

*Earl of Pembroke*

*Earl of Essex*

*Earl of Salisbury*

*The Lord Bigot*

*Hubert de Burgh*

*Robert Faulconbridge*

*Philip the Bastard*, his half-brother

*James Gurney*

*Peter of Pomfreet*, a prophet

*Philip*, King of France

*Lewis*, the Dauphin

*Lymoges*, Duke of Austria

*Cardinal Pandulph*, Papal legate

*Melun*, a French lord

*Chatillon*, ambassador of France

*Queen Elinor*, mother of King John

*Constance*, mother to Arthur

*Blanch of Spain*, niece of King John

*Lady Falconbridge*

*Lords, Ladies, Citizens of Angiers*

*Sheriff, Heralds, Officers, Soldiers*

*Messengers and other Attendants*