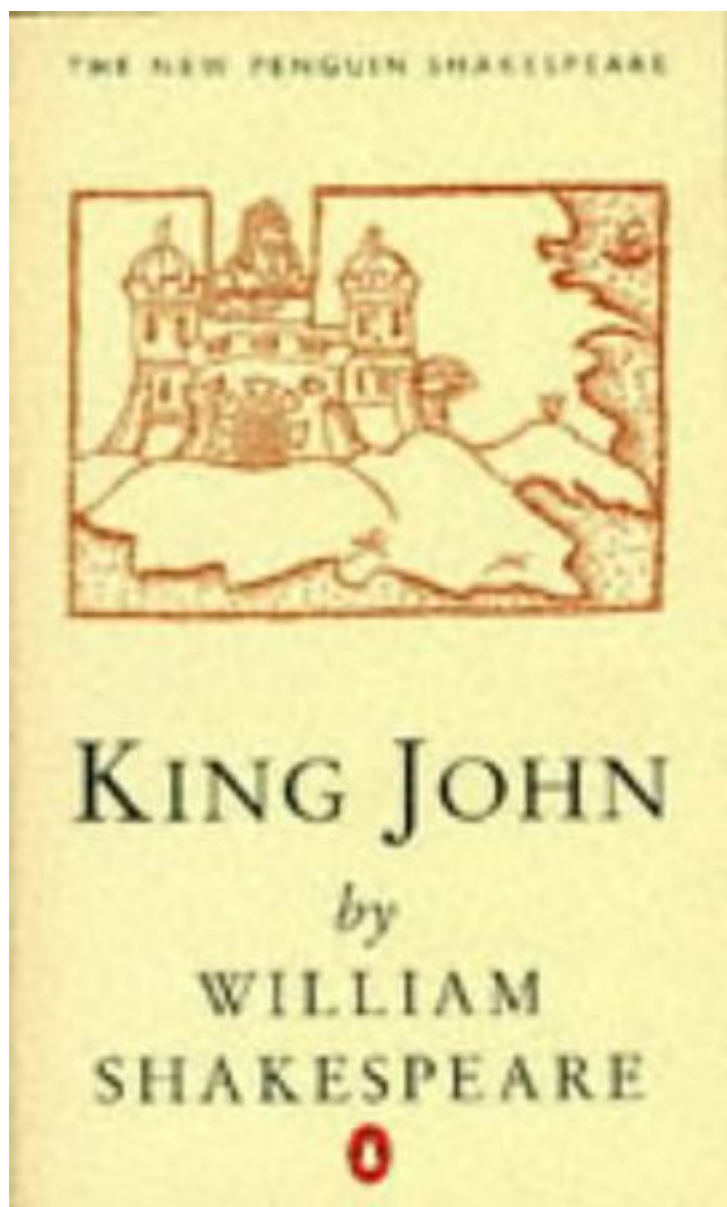


# King John



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King John long ago acquired the epithet 'Bad,' and he is reputed to be the worst of England's kings. Before his death in 1216, his desperate exploitation of his subjects for ever more money had turned him into the mythical monster of Hollywood legend. In marked contrast to his brother Richard, John appeared incompetent in battle, failing to defend Normandy (1202-04), and was unsuccessful in recovering his lost lands in 1214. A continuing crisis was a constant need for money, forcing John to drain England of funds for campaigns in France, demanding unlawful and oppressive new taxes. Adding to his evil reputation was an ill-tempered personality and a streak of pettiness or spitefulness that led him to monstrous acts, including murdering his own nephew. King John's unpopularity culminated in a final crisis, a revolt by the English baronage, 1215-16, aimed at subjecting him to the rule of law, that resulted in his grant of Magna Carta.

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