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10 best history books. From Mary Beard on Ancient Rome to tales of Soviet espionage, delve into the past with these recently published works. Joshua Burt. The popular historian made a TV show of the same name, which has essentially been adapted into this punchy, concise read, which offers an account of the political happenings that changed the course of history in 1215. The question is: were they as successful as everyone would have us believe? Not so much.