



Summary

The **Medieval Period, also called the Middle Ages**, lasted from around 400 CE to around 1500 CE. The 'Late Middle Ages', starting around 1250 CE, was a period where many changes started to happen to ordinary people in England. In the 1300s, the **Black Death** swept across Europe for the first time, causing the population to fall by up to 60% in a few years. This caused massive changes in society. Peasants were angry that they were being underpaid and abused by their lords, and ignored by their king. In the **Peasants' Revolt** 1381, a peasant army from Kent rioted through London before meeting the King to demand change. All of his promises were taken back, and dozens of peasants were executed.

Key Figures

Edward III	King of England during the Black Death. He passed the Statute of Labourers to restrict peasants' wages.
Richard II	King of England during the Peasants' Revolt. He was only 14, so ruled with a council of advisors.
Watt Tyler	The main leader of the rebels from Kent. He was killed when meeting King Richard, and his death ended the Peasants' Revolt. The Revolt is sometimes known as Watt's Rebellion.
John Ball	A radical priest and preacher who helped start the Peasants' Revolt.

Other Resources

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zm4mn39/revision/1>

<https://kids.britannica.com/students/article/Middle-Ages/275833>



Key Vocabulary

Peasant	A farmer who owns very little/no land. They had to pay taxes to their local lord.
Villein <i>(where the word 'villain' comes from)</i>	A peasant who is 'tied to the land'. They must work for free for their local lord, and in exchange they are allowed to grow food on a small part of land. They are sometimes called 'serfs'.
Reeve	A peasant in charge of the other peasants. Sometimes he was chosen by the local lord, but usually the peasants voted.
Plague	A disease which spreads across a large area very quickly.
Buboes	The most famous sign that someone had the Black Death. A bubo is a large swelling under the skin, often in the armpits.
Revolt	An attempt to get rid of the King/government using violence
Trial by jury	12 men would be chosen to decide whether a person is guilty of a crime. <i>(Women weren't allowed until 1918!)</i>
Trial by ordeal	God would decide if a person is a guilty by testing them. For example, seeing if God healed a burn within 3 days.
Source	Something that has survived from the past (letter, painting etc)
Evidence	Information used to support a statement
Interpretation	A historian's point of view backed up by evidence

Challenge

Did peasants' lives change more economically (money, jobs), or socially (day-to-day lives)?

How can historians work out what peasants thought, said or did if there are very few written sources from peasants?

