Your notes

KS3 History: revision notes

Life in medieval England

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The feudal system and village life

- Most people were peasants. **Villeins** had to work on their lord's land and couldn't leave the village without permission.
- Villages farmed strips of land in large open fields. Houses were often made of wattle and daub, with a thatched roof.

The Church

- The Church was very powerful. People believed it could decide whether they went to heaven or hell, so they went to services, prayed and went on **pilgrimages**.
- Everyone paid a **tithe**: a tenth of what they produced. Monasteries ran schools and hospitals.
- In 1170, Archbishop Thomas Becket was murdered in Canterbury Cathedral after quarrelling with King Henry II.

Kings and barons

- In 1215, King John's barons forced him to agree to **Magna Carta**. It limited the king's power, and said free men had the right to a fair trial.
- Medicine was based on the **four humours**: doctors thought illness came from an imbalance, and used bleeding to treat it.

The Black Death and the Peasants' Revolt

- The **Black Death** reached England in 1348. It was bubonic plague, spread mainly by fleas on rats. About a third to a half of the population died.
- With fewer workers, peasants demanded higher wages. The **Statute of Labourers** (1351) tried to keep wages low.

- In 1381, a **poll tax** sparked the **Peasants' Revolt**, led by Wat Tyler and the preacher John Ball. The rebels met the 14-year-old King Richard II; Tyler was killed, and the king's promises were broken.

Your notes

Key terms

Villein	A peasant who had to work for their lord and couldn't leave the village.
Tithe	A tenth of a person's produce or income, given to the Church.
Pilgrimage	A journey to a holy place.
Magna Carta	A charter of 1215 that limited the king's power.
Four humours	The medieval belief that illness came from an imbalance of four body fluids.
Black Death	The plague that killed a huge part of the population from 1348.
Statute of Labourers	A law of 1351 that tried to keep wages low.
Poll tax	A tax that everyone paid, whatever they earned.
Peasants' Revolt	The rising of 1381 against the poll tax and low wages.

Quick questions

Cover the answers and test yourself: remembering is what makes it stick.

1. What was the feudal system?
2. Who were villeins?
3. What was a tithe?
4. What was Magna Carta?
5. Which king agreed to Magna Carta?
6. How did the Black Death mainly spread?
7. About how much of England's population died in the Black Death?
8. What was one effect of the Black Death?

Answers

1. A system where land was given in return for loyalty and service
2. Peasants who had to work for their lord and couldn't leave the village
3. A tenth of a person's produce or income, given to the Church
4. A charter of 1215 that limited the king's power
5. King John
6. By fleas carried by rats
7. About a third to a half
8. A shortage of workers, so peasants demanded higher wages

What to do next

Practise 13 questions on this topic

Try 4 exam questions, with mark schemes

Read the lesson, one step at a time

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