



Highsted Knowledge Organiser

Subject: History

Year 7

What I need to know

Who was responsible for the death of Thomas Becket?

Was the Black Death a disaster for England?

Can sources tell us about the lives of medieval women?

Key Vocabulary

Archbishop – a powerful Church leader

Bishop – a man in charge of the affairs of the Christian Church over a large area called a diocese

Bubonic Plague – connected with the transmission of the plague by fleas on rats

Mortality – death rates

Student reference point

Who was responsible for the death of Thomas Becket?

- Thomas Becket was Archbishop of Canterbury.
- The Archbishop of Canterbury is the most important person in the church in England.
- England at the time was Catholic.
- The overall head of the Roman Catholic Church was the Pope.
- The King at the time was Henry II.
- Henry appointed Becket to try to get more control over the church; in particular, he disliked the way that church courts allowed members of the church to escape the law.
- Henry thought Becket (an old friend) would do this for them.
- However, Becket had become very religious and refused to do what Henry wanted. Becket took steps to attack Henry (e.g. excommunicating some of his followers).
- In 1170 Henry lost his temper and said 'Who will rid me of this troublesome priest?'
- Some knights overheard Henry and rode to Canterbury Cathedral, where they murdered Becket.
- There is debate over whose responsibility this was – Henry's, Becket's, or the knights'

Was the Black Death a disaster for England?

- The Black Death was a deadly disease which came to England in 1348.
- Symptoms included swellings (buboes), fever, cramps, vomiting, and internal bleeding.
- If you caught it, you stood little chance of survival.
- People blamed it on punishment from God, bad air (miasma), and the stars being out of alignment.
- They tried to avoid it through prayer, burning sweet smelling substances to drive away miasma, herbal remedies, and running away.
- By 1349 it had killed up to half of the population of England – in some villages nearly everyone died.

This was highly traumatic.

- For those who survived, there were higher wages, an end to forced labour, and more land to work or even own. It increased peasants' self-confidence and may have contributed to the Peasants' Revolt (1381).

Can sources tell us about the lives of medieval women?

- We do not know much about the lives of women in the Middle Ages (c.1000-c.1500) because it was a patriarchal society (=society controlled by men).

- Most of the sources we have from the time were written by men and show us men's view of women.
- Rich and poor women were controlled by their husbands.
- Women had very few legal rights.
- Women were expected to work in the countryside and in the town and were paid less for their work than men.
- Women were expected to marry and have children.
- Women were expected to run the home, raise children, and care for the sick.
- Rich women would have servants.
- The only other route for women was to join a religious order and become a nun.
- Nuns helped to run medieval hospitals.
- Women could also be midwives.
- Some women could become powerful and important, e.g. Queen Isabella, or abbesses who had authority over monks.
- The Virgin Mary was the most respected female figure in medieval society.

Challenge question

- Did the King prove he was the ultimate power in Medieval England?

Suggested reading

Thomas Becket

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/zrfm7yc/articles/zmc6m39>

Black Death

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/z3xb3j6/revision/7>

Women in Medieval England

<https://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/medieval-england/medieval-women/>



Highsted Knowledge Organiser

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Term 4 Year 7

What I need to know

1. Women in medieval England
2. The Benin Bronzes

Key Vocabulary

Middle Ages – roughly 1000-1500 AD
Textiles – fabrics for clothing
Nuns – women who live, work and pray in a nunnery
Virgin Mary – the mother of Jesus
Benin – a country in Africa

Student reference points

1. Women in medieval England
 - Poor women worked mainly looked after the home
 - In the countryside they also helped men looking after animals and crops
 - In towns women helped in some trades like textiles
 - Poor women were paid less than men for their work
 - Women offered medical care, e.g. as nuns
 - Some women could have power as the wives of lords or even as queens
 - However, women had few legal rights and, unless they became nuns, were expected to marry
 - The Virgin Mary was worshipped in medieval society
2. The Benin Bronzes
 - This was a collection of over 1000 bronze plaques and sculptures from Benin in Africa
 - In 1897 most of the plaques were looted and brought to the British Museum in London
 - There is now debate about whether they should be returned to Benin. Some would argue that they were stolen by the British. Others would argue that they are safe in London and have a better chance of being seen and appreciated there.

Challenge question

- Why did women have fewer rights than men in the Middle Ages?

Suggested reading

Alixé Bovey, 'Women in medieval society, The British Library website – available at <https://www.bl.uk/the-middle-ages/articles/women-in-medieval-society>