

Year 7 Life in the Middle Ages

Key Words

Some of our key words are difficult to remember.

Catholic Church – Hugely powerful institution that dominated all areas of people’s lives in the Middle Ages

Monastery – Where monks went to devote their lives to God

Pilgrimage – A religious journey

Purgatory – The Catholic Church taught you would go here when you died to be purged of your sin.

Purged - cleansed

Indulgence – A payment you could make when you are alive to reduce time in purgatory.

Doom Painting – Painting in church showing heaven, hell and purgatory

Town Charter – Freedom from the King for the town to govern itself

Strip system – How farming was organised in the Middle Ages

Merchant - trader

Four Humours – medical belief in Middle Ages

Black Death – deadly disease (1348-49)

Flagellant – someone who whips themselves to say sorry to God.

Role of the Church

The Catholic Church dominated life during the Middle Ages. It did not only control people’s beliefs about life and death. The Church controlled education and people’s beliefs about medicine – it told people what they could and could not believe. The Pope was Head of the Catholic Church and incredibly powerful. He had the power to influence the decision making of kings, asking them to go to war for him during the Crusades.

It is not possible to really understand anything about life at this time without first understanding the role of the Church.



Medicine in the Middle Ages

The Church controlled medical beliefs during this period. Therefore, if you were ill the best person to treat you might be a monk. Monks knew about herbal medicine. However, the Church clung on to a number of incorrect theories, like the Theory of the Four Humours and encouraged Flagellation.



The Black Death

The Black Death arrived in England in 1348. The disease was carried in the blood stream of the black rat and spread by the Oriental Rat Flea. The symptoms of the Black Death included shivering, great blotches on your body and growing buboes the size of a small apple. In England between 1/3 and ½ of the population died of this terrible disease. Nobody knew the cause.

Life in the towns

During this period the number of towns grew. For example, in 1066 there were only 15 towns, by 1400 there were well over 300 in England. Towns began to grow after the Norman Conquest. William brought stability to England and, as a result trade flourished. Many towns during this period became Market Towns. However, the appalling conditions allowed plague to spread. Kings had little interest in looking after the living conditions of their people.

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| 1066 | ➡ | 1095 | ➡ | 1300 | ➡ | 1300 | ➡ | 1348 | ➡ | 1381 | ➡ | 1400 |
| The Battle of Hastings | | The Pope urges kings to invade Holy Land | | There are now over 12,000 monks in England! | | Gunpowder first used in Europe | | The Black Death | | The Peasants' Revolt | | London's population reaches 40,000 |