

Year 7 History: Were the Middle Ages dangerous or just disgusting?

Key words:	
Monarch	King or Queen
Scold's Bridle	An Iron Gag used as a punishment for women
Plague	Another name for the Black Death
Peasant	Bottom of the feudal system
Pilgrimage	Journey to a holy place
Poll Tax	Everybody had to pay the King money

Medicine in the Middle Ages

People didn't know about germs. They thought that disease happened when **four humours (liquids)** were not balanced in the body. They also blamed bad air and God.

They would try to cure illness by

- balancing the humours – this involved letting blood out or making someone sick
- Using herbs
- Going on **Pilgrimages**
- Praying

In the Islamic world, towns had proper hospitals and made discoveries years before the west. There were female doctors as well as male ones. BUT The Christian Church was at war with Islam, therefore Muslim ideas spread only slowly.

How and why did Castle Design Change?

Motte and Bailey castles could be burnt down and were not permanent. Over time they were replaced with stone castles. Round towers and curtain walls developed. By the 1400s the country was peaceful so castles became **fortified manor houses**.



Methods of Attack	Methods of Defence
Siege Tower	Built on hills
Siege Ladder	Barbicans
Longbow	Portcullis
Crossbow	Murder Holes
Trebuchet	



Medieval Towns

- Life was smelly. People dropped rubbish into the streets
- Dirty water, sewage tipped out of windows into the streets
- Streets were narrow and dark. It would be noisy with people trying to sell their wares
- Walking through town could be dangerous. No town had a police force or street lighting.

The Black Death 1348

The Black Death is also known as the Plague. It spread across Europe and arrived in England on trade ships in 1348. The Plague spread by fleas living on rats but nobody knew this and blamed God, bad air and an imbalance of humours



The symptoms were: a fever, huge boils (Buboes) under the arms and in the groin, and black spots appearing under the skin.

Nobody knew how to treat the plague. By the end of 1349 40% of the population had died (2-3 million people). Some treatments included:

- Bleeding
- Praying
- Whipping themselves
- Herbal Remedies
- Applying a chicken to the buboes
- Sitting in a sewer

Medieval Women

A lot of information we have about the Middle Ages come from monks. They didn't have much to do with women so monks didn't bother mentioning them

- Women's main job was to look after the children and make sure that food was prepared.
- A Scold's Bridle could be used as a punishment for women
- Their only education came from their mothers.

There were some exceptions:

- Some women helped defend castles in times of war
- Some women could learn a trade in bigger towns
- Eleanor of Aquitaine was rich and powerful

The Peasants Revolt 1381

The Black Death had led to a shortage of workers. Peasants wanted higher wages and more freedom but the lords weren't happy and made sure that nobody was paid more than they were in 1348. Wages were really low again.

In 1379 the government set out a **Poll Tax**. This made everybody pay money to the king. People were angry.

Led by Wat Tyler, peasants from Kent and Essex marched to London demanding to speak to the King. They became violent and starting to murder his key advisors. King Richard II met with the Peasants but there was a fight and Wat Tyler was murdered. King Richard stood in front of the peasants and promised them things would be better, then sent them home. But the King didn't keep any of his promises.

However, over the next 50 years peasants ended up getting most of their demands.

