

Working For The Lord



I must make sure I harvest enough for my family as well as for my Lord and the tithe.

KEYWORDS

Villein - a peasant

Tithe - tax on produce paid to the Church

Week-work - work done by a peasant each week on the Lord's land

Reeve - a foreman

A villein's life was hard. He had to obey his lord and do work for him. He spent most of his time working out in the fields, doing week-work. He needed his lord's permission to travel outside the village, and to get married. He had to take his grain to the lord's mill to have it ground into flour. He had to give his lord some of his produce in return for his land, and he had to make payments of money to him.

All Villagers had to give one tenth of everything they produced to the Church. This was called the tithe.

Peasants had to make sure that they produced enough food for themselves and their families and make sure they had enough for the tithe and for their lord! At some times in the year, they had to give extra gifts to the lord, as Source 1 below explains:

Source 1. WORK SERVICE

Each villein must give the lord 5 shillings at Christmas and 5 shillings at Easter and 32 pence at St. Peter's feast... and all the villains must give 32 hens at Christmas.



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* Read the packet directions on each page and do what it asks. *

Source 2: The Village Year

SPRING: Plough Ground, clear stones, sow barley, oats & wheat, put animals out to grass, shear sheep.

SUMMER: Harvest time, pick fruit and gather crops.

AUTUMN: Thresh barley and wheat, plough ground, clear stones, sow winter wheat, store hay, kill pigs and other animals, hang meat in chimney to smoke it or salt it.

WINTER: Mend tools, fences and buildings, move animals into barns.

ALL YEAR: Brew beer, make cheese, spin wool, work in garden.

7. Look closely at Source 2. Which jobs does a villein have to do all year?
8. Using Source 2, write a paragraph to explain what a villein has to do throughout the whole year.

Bonus Question.

Do you think a villein's life is hard?
Explain your answer.

Making sure that all the villeins were always working was the reeve. The reeve watched over the villeins at work and could punish them if they did not work hard enough. The reeve was also in charge of the land the villeins worked on. He decided what was planted and who got the strips of land. He also sold spare crops and could hire extra people at busy times, like the harvest.

Now try and complete the tasks below.

Put today's date and the title 'Working for the Lord' in your exercise book. Remember to answer each question in a full sentence.

1. Write down the following words and their meanings:
Villein, Reeve, Tithe, Week-work.
2. Write down three things that a villein had to do for his lord.
3. Write down two things that a villein had to ask permission from his lord for.
4. Write down one thing that a lord gave a villein in return for his hard work.
5. Look at Source 1. Why might a villein have grumbled about such payments to the lord?
6. Look at the unfinished job advert for a reeve shown below. Copy the outline and finish it.

REEVE WANTED FOR LOCAL
VILLAGE

Required for this coming Harvest. Your jobs will be.....

Keywords!

Fallow - Empty
Crop Rotation - farming system used on the manor
Gruck/House - typical peasant's cottage
Manor - an area of land owned by a lord

Village life

The land that was owned by the lord was called the manor. A manor consisted of a village with land around it. The villeins lived in the village, which was surrounded by three large fields. Each field was divided into long strips. A villein would farm strips in each of the fields. This made sure that everyone had a share of the good land and the bad land. The strips were divided by mounds of earth or by rocks.

Each year, the villeins changed the crops they grew in each field. This was called crop rotation. Have a look at the table below to see how it worked.

Source 1: Crop Rotation

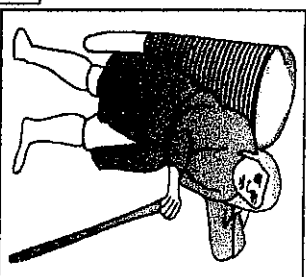
YEAR	NORTH FIELD	WEST FIELD	SOUTH FIELD
1	Fallow	Barley	Wheat
2	Barley	Wheat	Fallow
3	Wheat	Fallow	Barley

Every year, one field was left fallow, or empty, so that the soil could get its goodness back.

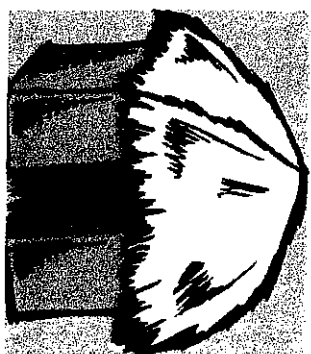
Strip farming meant that villeins had to work together. A whole field would be sown and harvested, and each villein worked closely with his neighbour to get his work done.

The other land around the village was also important. Villeins collected wood from the woodland, their animals grazed on the common land, fish could be collected from the river, which was also used for washing and cooking. The land around the village supplied the villeins with nuts, berries and mushrooms.

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Villeins lived on the manor in cruck-houses. Their house would have a small garden, where vegetables like carrots and cabbages could be grown. The villeins usually built their own house, and had very few possessions. They would have some animals like pigs, sheep, cows and chickens, but other than their day-to-day tools and equipment, they owned very little.



Source 2: A Cruck-house

Source 3: A Villein's possessions.

- Animals
- Cruck-house
- Hay, to wear as socks, to cover the floor & to use as mattress
- A chest
- A few stools
- Table
- One change of clothes
- A few small blankets

A Villein's diet was very different to ours. It did not change very much year in, year out. Have a look at source 4 below.

Try and spot similarities and differences to your own diet.

Sometimes a villein might have meat, usually bacon because pigs were easy to keep. There were no fridges, so meat was salted or smoked to keep it fresh. Poor families often went hungry. One child in every three would die before its first birthday, because there was not enough food

Source 4: A Villein's Daily Diet

6 a.m. – Breakfast. Coarse black bread, with ale to drink
10 a.m. – Dinner. Coarse black bread, eggs and cheese, with ale to drink
4 p.m. – Supper. Coarse black bread, portage (a thick soup of vegetables and sometimes meat), with ale to drink

TASKS

1. On your own copy of the Medieval manor map, add the following labels:
Woodland, River, Road.
Then, draw and label a church, tithe barn, water mill and cottages.
Finally, add colour.

3. The Woodland, River, Common land and land around the village were important too. Make a list of each area of land and give reasons why it was important.
e.g. The River was important for cooking and washing and for collecting fish.

4. Look at source 3. List all the items that a villain would own. Draw a small picture to show each item and label it.

5. Look at source 4. What did a villain eat for:
a) Breakfast?
b) Dinner?
c) Supper?
d) What kinds of meat did villeins eat?
e) How did they keep their meat fresh?

2. a) Copy and complete the paragraph:
A Village had _____ fields around it. Each field was divided into _____, and each strip was farmed by a _____. Different crops were grown in each field, and every year the Villeins changed the crops they grew. This is called _____. One field was always left _____ so that the soil could get its goodness back.
b) Make your own copy of source 1 (crop rotation) in your book.

Bonus question!
Imagine you are a villain working for your lord to feed your family. Try and explain to someone from the 21st century what Medieval village life is like.

Answer NEATLY in your exercise book, using FULL SENTENCES!



What a Life!

As a peasant farmer, write an entry in your diary describing how you feel about your lot in life. *Your entry must be a minimum of 8 sentences.*

You must reference the readings in the packet.

April 14,
(April)