

Drop Dead, Feudalism:  
How the Black Death Led to Peasants' Triumph  
Over the Feudal System.

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In the year 1348, the Black Death swept through England killing millions of people. This tragic occurrence resulted in a diminished workforce, and from this emerged increased wages for working peasants. In the interests of the upper class, the English Parliament enacted the Statute of Laborers which set maximum wages, riling the lower classes, fueling the Peasants' Revolt in 1381. The Black Death left in its wake a period of defiance and turmoil between the upper classes and the peasantry. The dispute regarding wages led to the peasants' triumph over the manorial economic system and ultimately ended in the breakdown of feudalism in England.

The feudal system, the form of government in Medieval Europe, was a system of rights and obligations to the king. The king owned all the land in the country, parceling out chunks to lords in exchange for money and military support. These lords gave land to knights, who promised them loyalty. "The nobles' place in society was essentially to function as middle-men between the peasants and the royal family. Nobles provided work, land, and protection to the peasants while providing funding, supplies, and military service to the king."<sup>1</sup>

Under the overarching term of feudalism, there was the manorial system, which referred to the relationship between the lord of an estate, called a manor, and the peasant workers.<sup>2</sup> The lord rented out the land of their manor to peasants in return for part of the peasant's harvest or various forms of compensation. The manorial system was the base of the feudal system and everyday life:

Kettering Abbey provided land for forty villeins.<sup>3</sup> In exchange for holding 30 acres, the villeins had to provide several feudal services. Three days a week work on the 88 acres held by the abbey. Every year they had to provide 50 hens, 640 eggs and 2s. Id.<sup>4</sup> in cash.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Newman, Simon. "Nobles in the Middle Ages." The Finer Times. The Finer Times. 2019. <http://www.thefinertimes.com/Middle-Ages/nobles-in-the-middle-ages.html> 12 Jan. 2019.

<sup>2</sup> The owner of a manor could also be an institution, such as a monastery or college.

<sup>3</sup> Peasants legally bound to manorial land, and forced to work, unpaid, as rent for the land they lived on.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Shillings 1 Denarius. The currency at the time, worth £47.93 now, or \$63.27.

This strongly hierarchical system was beneficial for the nobility and king, as they received services and wealth from the peasants beneath them. For the general peasantry, this was a never ending cycle of work; they could not move up in status for they were legally bound to the land. Due to the fact that there were more peasant laborers than jobs, many chose to accept serfdom, despite the consequences of permanent service to their lords.<sup>6</sup>

Life was hard for peasants stuck in a position of serfdom. “Chief among these was the serf’s lack of freedom of movement; he could not permanently leave his holding or his village without his lord’s permission...Serfs were often harshly treated and had little legal redress against the actions of their lords.”<sup>7</sup> Nearly 85% of the population was in serfdom; the lords of the feudal system owned everything the peasants had, except for their ability to work.<sup>8</sup> “Being forced to provide unpaid labour service was not the only way that villeins were made to pay ‘rent’ for the land they worked. Another way was for some to pay a portion of their crops and animals - known as *champart* payments. Yet another to pay money rents.”<sup>9</sup> The villeins, or serfs, had to earn their keep, while also providing enough food for their families. The disgruntled peasants wished to speak against their lords, but they lacked power. Consequently, peasants remained in poverty, while the elite benefited.

The feudal system created dispensable wealth for the upper class. Exotic goods such as sugar, salt, spices, porcelain, and silk from the Middle East and China became highly prized

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<sup>5</sup> Simkin, John. “Classroom Activity : The Feudal System.” Spartacus Educational. Spartacus Educational Publishers Ltd. 2016. <https://spartacus-educational.com/EXnormans3.htm> 16 Jan. 2019.

<sup>6</sup> Serfs, otherwise known as villeins.

<sup>7</sup> “Serfdom.” Britannica.com. Encyclopedia Britannica Inc. 2019. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/serfdom> 5 Jan. 2019.

<sup>8</sup> Bovey, Alixe. “Peasants and their role in rural life.” The Middle Ages. British Library. 30 April 2015. <https://www.bl.uk/the-middle-ages/articles/peasants-and-their-role-in-rural-life> . 6 Jan. 2019

<sup>9</sup> Whittock, Martyn. “Life in the Middle Ages.” United States: Running Press Book Publishers. 2009. 30

among nobility and royalty. The main trading route from China to Europe was the Silk Road, which imported these goods and eventually, the manorial systems demise.<sup>10</sup> Trading routes transported rats, stowed away on unsuspecting caravans along the Silk Road. Fleas carrying *Yersinia pestis*, which caused the Black Death, frequently infested rats. “Fleas that infest rodents, including the black and brown rat, can act as vectors for diseases infecting the rodents. The bacteria *Yersinia pestis* that causes plague naturally infects several wild rodents...”<sup>11</sup> European rats were not immune to *Y. pestis*.

In 1348, the Black Death came to Europe aboard trading ships laden with goods from China and carrying infected sailors and rats (*appendix 1*). This microbial plague spread like wildfire by virtue of the unsanitary conditions. “When passing along the water of Thames, we have beheld dung and lay stools and other filth accumulated in diverse places within the city, and have also perceived the fumes and other abominable stenches arising therefrom...”<sup>12</sup> Sanitation was rudimentary; waste was emptied into rivers, contaminating the water supply. Due to the lack of effective sanitation, rats were common in large cities at the time; fleas lived and fed off the animals and people alike - the perfect scenario for the spreading a contagious disease. Henry Knighton, a chronicler, wrote:

There died in Avignon in one day one thousand three hundred and twelve persons, according to a count made for the pope, and another day four hundred and fifty-eight persons and more. Three hundred and fifty-eight of the friars preachers in the region of provence died during lent.<sup>13</sup>

This was one of the worst tragedies to strike Europe. The Black Death killed hundreds of

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<sup>10</sup> “Trade Routes between Europe and Asia during Antiquity.” The MET. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. 2019. [https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/trade/hd\\_trade.htm](https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/trade/hd_trade.htm) 12 Jan. 2019.

<sup>11</sup> Barnes, Ethne. “Diseases and Human Evolution.” (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006) 241.

<sup>12</sup> Whittock, Martyn. “Life in the Middle Ages.” United States: Running Press Book Publishers. 2009. 114

<sup>13</sup> Knighton, Henry. “The Impact of the Black Death.” eds. Ross, James B. and Mary M. McLaughlin. “The Portable Medieval Reader.” United States: Penguin Publishers. 1977. 217

people daily (*appendix 2*). Two-thirds of the overall population became infected with the Black Death, and half of those died, resulting in one-third of the population succumbing to the disease.

<sup>14</sup> The likeliness of death differed, however, based on social rank:

Documentary sources, such as royal genealogies and inquisitions post mortem for well-off tenants-in-chief of the crown, do show that there were very few casualties among the English royal family, that the higher nobility had a mortality rate of perhaps 4.5 percent in 1348 and 13 percent in 1349, and that the mortality rate among wealthy land-owners may have been a relatively low 27 percent.<sup>15</sup>

Nobility had the lowest rates of infection, while peasants were more susceptible. “People died as if the whole strength of the town were seized by a sudden death. For there was few who lay in their beds more than three days or two and a half days; then they were snatched by that savage death.”<sup>16</sup> People contracting the plague developed painful pustules, and their skin withered and turned black. With such horrible symptoms and high death rate, the fear of the Black Death led to pandemonium and confusion (*appendix 3*). Wealthy people fled cities, fleeing to the remote countryside to escape the plague. Upper class members of society called upon doctors to drain the pustules. Others locked themselves in their houses and refused to come out for fear of catching the plague.<sup>17</sup> Adding to the chaos, flagellants appeared, men who took it upon themselves to end the Black Death by harming themselves:

In the Year of Grace 1349, the penitents [flagellants] went about, coming first out of Germany. They were men who did public penance and scourged themselves with whips of hard knotted leather with little iron spikes. Some made themselves bleed very badly between the shoulders...The object of this penance was to entreat God to put a stop to the mortality...<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Barnard, Bryn. “Outbreak: Plagues that Changed History.” New York: Crown Publishers. 2005. 4.

<sup>15</sup> DeWitte, Sharon. “Black Death Bodies.” Fragments. Michigan Publishing. <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/f/frag/9772151.0006.001/--black-death-bodies?rgn=main;view=fulltext#N57> 2 Feb. 2019.

<sup>16</sup> Knighton, Henry. “The Impact of the Black Death.” eds. Ross, James B. and Mary M. McLaughlin. “The Portable Medieval Reader.” United States: Penguin Publishers. 1977. 218.

<sup>17</sup> “Social and Economic Effects of the Plague.” Decameron Web. Brown University, March 10, 2010. [https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian\\_Studies/dweb/plague/effects/social.php](https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Studies/dweb/plague/effects/social.php) Nov. 6, 2018.

<sup>18</sup> Froissart, Jean. “Chronicles of Jean Froissart.” AD 1322-1400. MS. Translated by Geoffrey Brereton. Penguin Books, 1968. 111.

The flagellants the plague was punishment from God.

However, priests did not have greater immunity than the rest of the population, impacting both the church and society. Many chronicles kept by monks remained unfinished, due to the fact that there was no one to maintain them. “I am leaving parchment for the work to continue if, by chance . . . anyone of the race of Adam should be able to escape this plague . . .”<sup>19</sup> Many times, there was not a priest to properly sanctify and bless the body for burial. Bodies were thrown in mass graves and hastily buried,<sup>20</sup> for no one wanted to catch the plague from the dead. This unexpected plague with tragic results caused widespread disorder that spanned across Europe.

The plague lasted from 1348 to 1349, killing an estimated 25 million people in Europe. In England, the social repercussions of the plague were devastating:

...there was such a shortage of servants, craftsmen, and workmen, and of agricultural workers and labourers...[that] churchmen, knights and other worthies have been forced to thresh their corn, plough the land and perform every other unskilled task if they are to make their own bread.<sup>21</sup>

The Black Death killed thousands of people, but due to the rigid social structure, the remaining upper classes were unskilled in professions peasants usually held. Working to produce crops or goods was a socially unacceptable behavior for nobility. Thus, the work fell upon the reduced peasant class, leading to an increase in demand for workers. The nobility needed workers, and therefore were more likely to pay the higher wages peasants demanded. Ironically enough, these same jobs were performed by peasant workers for no wages in previous years. Now that peasants received wages for working, this led to a change in economic status. Instead of paying rent with

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<sup>19</sup> Clyn, John. “The Annals of Ireland.” ed. Bernadette Williams. Dublin: Four Courts P., 2007; pp. 252.

<sup>20</sup> “The Black Death, 1348.” Eyewitness to History.com. 2001. <http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/plague.htm> 6 Feb. 2019.

<sup>21</sup> Dene, William. “History of Rochester.” AD 1315–1350. MS. British Library. British Library Collections. 13 Jan. 2019. <https://www.bl.uk/learning/timeline/item103973.html>

grain and labor, they could pay with money. This was a triumphant turn of events for the peasant classes, but a rather negative one for the nobility.

The wage increase affected the price of everyday items. “The hides of cattle went up from a low price to 12 pence, and shoes the price went up to 10, 12, 14 pence; for a pair of leggings, to three and four shillings.”<sup>22</sup> There was a sudden price inflation, due to increased labor costs to manufacture products. The price of the materials needed to make products also increased as there were less people to gather the raw materials.

Naturally, the nobility did not want to pay increased prices for goods, nor increased wages for jobs. Ten years previously, it had been easy to find plenty of peasants willing to work. The English Parliament, comprised of nobility, then decided to enact the Statute of Labourers in 1351:

Against the malice of servants who were idle and unwilling to serve after the pestilence without taking outrageous wages it was recently ordained by our lord the king, with the assent of the prelates, nobles and others of his council, that such servants, both men, and women, should be obliged to serve in return for the salaries and wages which were customary (in those places where they ought to serve) during the twentieth year of the present king’s reign (1346-7) or five or six years previously.<sup>23</sup>

The lower peasant class, at whom the statute was directed, was outraged by this attack on their newfound monetary security. It became apparent the upper class had made an imprudent move. Despite the statute, with the peasants’ bigger economic ‘muscle’<sup>24</sup>, the peasants were still able to demand higher wages.

On top of the new statute, the English Parliament added a poll tax in 1377 that everyone

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<sup>22</sup> Knighton, Henry. “The Impact of the Black Death.” eds. Ross, James B. and Mary M. McLaughlin. “The Portable Medieval Reader.” United States: Penguin Publishers. 1977. 220.

<sup>23</sup> “Edward III: Statutes and Ordinances.” Constitution Society. Constitution Society.org. [https://www.constitution.org/sech/sech\\_062.htm](https://www.constitution.org/sech/sech_062.htm) 14 Jan. 2019.

<sup>24</sup> Whittock, Martyn. “Life in the Middle Ages.” United States: Running Press Book Publishers. 2009. 51.

over age 14 had to pay.<sup>25</sup> This tax was introduced to fund the Hundred Years' War.<sup>26</sup> "A man with goods worth forty pounds has to pay twelve round pence. And another, brought to the ground by poverty, has to pay as much."<sup>27</sup> The tax was designed to take the money from the majority of the population: the poor. In many cases, peasants had to sell their belongings in order to pay the tax. This kept society heavily divided, as to provide the upper class with a steady flow of free labor. Slowly, the nobility began to force the peasantry back into what they thought was their rightful place. However, the peasants were resistant to accept a lower economic status.

The peasants found a champion in John Ball, a defiant priest who was traversing the countryside, giving fiery sermons that catered to the peasants' distrust and anger towards the nobility. The church, fearing a rebellion, imprisoned John Ball in Maidstone. Influenced by John Ball, and fueled by their pent-up anger at the nobility, several peasant villages rebelled against tax collectors, chasing them out of their villages in 1381. These spontaneous uprisings combined to become an organized revolt. A former soldier named Watt Tyler emerged as a leader. As an army, they marched towards Maidstone to free John Ball. After freeing him, they marched to London. King Richard II ordered the gates to be closed; however, some Londoners sympathized with the rebels and arranged for the gates to be left open. The rebels stormed London and demanded a meeting with the King Richard II. The King agreed and said he would meet the rebels outside the gates:

Thereupon the said Walter [Watt Tyler] rehearsed the points which were to be demanded; and he asked that there should be no law within the realm save the law of Winchester, and that from henceforth there should be no outlawry in any process of law, and that no lord should have lordship save civilly, and that there should be equality among all people save

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<sup>25</sup> Simkin, John. "Taxation in the Middle Ages." Spartacus Educational. Spartacus Educational Publishers Ltd. 2014. <https://spartacus-educational.com/EXnormans23.htm> 16 Jan. 2019.

<sup>26</sup> The Hundred Years' War was the current ongoing war with France.

<sup>27</sup> Simkin, John. "Taxation in the Middle Ages." Spartacus Educational. Spartacus Educational Publishers Ltd. 2014. <https://spartacus-educational.com/EXnormans23.htm> 16 Jan. 2019.

only the King, and that the goods of the Holy Church should not remain in the hands of the religious, nor of parsons and vicars, and other churchmen...<sup>28</sup>

The peasants hoped these revolutionary demands, to end the feudal system, would disintegrate the extremely rigid class system, thus allowing peasants to have similar rights to nobles.

However, King Richard II had no intention of complying with their demands. When a valet of the King's entourage insulted Tyler, the meeting turned violent:

... for these words, Watt tried to strike him with his dagger, and would have slain him in the king's presence; but he strove to do so but the mayor of London, William Walworth, reasoned with Watt... And the said Watt stabbed the mayor in the stomach with great wrath... the mayor was wearing armor and took no harm ... in the scuffle one of the kings household drew his sword and ran Watt two or three times through, mortally wounding him.<sup>29</sup> (*appendix 4*)

This altercation was the end of the revolt. The rebel army fled London, returning to their villages and towns. The leaders of the revolt, Watt Tyler and John Ball, were killed and their heads stuck on poles to be paraded around London.<sup>30</sup> The King then suppressed other sporadic outbursts of rebellion and ignored the peasants' requests. The Peasants' Revolt, however, did not fail. King Richard II and the Parliament were shocked by this outburst of rebellion and violence, and stopped trying to regulate peasant wages. The manorial system could no longer function profitably due to the increased economic power of the peasants, and consequently, during the following decades, the feudal system declined, becoming obsolete by the time of Queen Elizabeth I.<sup>31</sup>

The Black Death, one of the most tragic epidemics in human history, was a harbinger of a new age. However deadly and devastating the plague was for the population, it set the course for

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<sup>28</sup>Anonimale Chronicle. eds. Ross, James B. and Mary M. McLaughlin. "The Portable Medieval Reader." United States: Penguin Publishers. 1977. 189

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid* 190

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*. 190

<sup>31</sup> (1533-1603)

the surviving peasants to triumph over the manorial system, leading to the dissolution of feudalism, through immense changes in the economics of England, and in turn, its society. The Black Death was a plague that changed not only England but the course of history. “...no one would to-day deny that the Black Death was of the greatest economic and social importance as well as hideously dramatic in its progress.”<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Ziegler, Philip. “The Black Death.” United States: Harper & Row, 1969. 1.





## Appendix 2



*Victimes de la peste de 1349*, (victims of the 1349 plague), a drawing made by Gilles le Muisit in his chronicle covering the years of 1272-1353. The drawing depicts the villagers of Tournai, a village in in modern-day Belgium, burying their victims of the plague.  
Source: The Annales of Gilles le Muisit: The plague in Tournai 1349. France Brussels, Royal Library.

### Appendix 3



In the chronicle of Giovanni Sercambi, an Italian chronicler of the time, was drawn a sketch of those dying from the plague.

Sercambi, Giovanni. The Chronicle of Giovanni Sercambi, fol. 49v The Black Death of 1348 with corpses. c.1400. Artstor,

[https://library-artstor-org.fortlewis.idm.oclc.org/asset/ARTSTOR\\_103\\_41822001091477](https://library-artstor-org.fortlewis.idm.oclc.org/asset/ARTSTOR_103_41822001091477)

Appendix 4



This image is a illustration out of a later volume of Jean Froissart's chronicle. It depicts William Walworth attacking Watt Tyler, in the meeting outside of London.  
Source: "Death of Watt Tyler." *British Library*. Learning Timelines.  
<http://www.bl.uk/learning/timeline/item132518.html> 7 Mar. 2019.



## Primary Sources

Anonimale Chronicle. eds. Ross, James B. and Mary M. McLaughlin. "The Portable Medieval Reader." United States: Penguin Publishers. 1977.

The Anonimale Chronicle was a detailed account of the storming of London by the peasant rebels, and the meeting between the rebels and King Richard. It was very useful to hear the requests Watt Tyler, on behalf of the rebels, had of the King. I used it multiple times throughout my paper as it precisely stated the factor that led up to the revolt, as well as the conversation between the two groups..

Sercambi, Giovanni. The Chronicle of Giovanni Sercambi, fol. 49v The Black Death of 1348 with corpses. c.1400. Artstor, [https://library-artstor-org.fortlewis.idm.oclc.org/asset/ARTSTOR\\_103\\_41822001091477](https://library-artstor-org.fortlewis.idm.oclc.org/asset/ARTSTOR_103_41822001091477)

The Italian chronicler, Giovanni Sercambi a author and chronicler, and his chronicle, The Chronicle of Giovanni Sercambi, was well illustrated with hundreds of miniature illustrations. One of which depicted a pile of plague victims, dying or dead. I used it in my appendix 2, as it was extremely helpful to see a illustration of the Black Death as witnessed, for many did not survive it.

Clyn, John. "The Annals of Ireland." ed. Bernadette Williams. Dublin: Four Courts P., 2007; pp. 252.

According to historians, Friar John Clyn died from the Black Death before completing his chronicle. The quote I use from his chronicle portrays his plea for someone to find and finish his life's work, should, he believes, anyone survive the plague. The quote was important in my paper to show the hopelessness of some of the victims; many thought it was the end of the world.

Dene, William. "History of Rochester." AD 1315–1350. MS. British Library. British Library Collections. 13 Jan. 2019. <https://www.bl.uk/learning/timeline/item103973.html>

The chronicle of William Dene was written in the first half of the 14th century, in which the Black Death played a significant role. The chronicle also included observations about the lack of workers, and how that affected medieval life. I quoted it once, and it was very important in my paper because I was able to see from an insider's point of view, how disastrous this was to the manorial system.

Froissart, Jean. "Chronicles of Jean Froissart." AD 1322-1400. MS. Translated by Geoffrey Brereton. Penguin Books, 1968. 111.

The chronicles of Jean Froissart observed many of the most important events in the mid to late 14th century. He chronicles the onslaught of the Black Death, and its' aftermath, leading to the peasants revolt. In his chronicle, he mentioned the flagellants (penitents), I quoted his musings about them in my paper.

Knighton, Henry. "The Impact of the Black Death." eds. Ross, James B. and Mary M. McLaughlin. "The Portable Medieval Reader." United States: Penguin Publishers. 1977.

This chronicle was written by Henry Knighton in the mid-14th century, during the time of Black Death. It was quite fascinating to read the perspective of someone who live through the plague, and to see what happened during and after the plague. I quoted it in my paper several times, regarding the death rate, and the immediate economic outcomes.

The Annales of Gilles le Muisit: The plague in Tournai 1349. France, Brussels, Royal Library.

Gilles le Muisit was a chronicler in modern-day Belgium. He wrote about life in the 1300s, which naturally covered the Black Death. In his manuscript, there were also illustrations depicting villagers carrying victims of the plague to graves. This was important to see because it was one of the only primary source drawings of the plague. I used the picture in appendix 1.

Unknown. "Edward III: Statutes and Ordinances." Constitution Society. Constitution Society.org. [https://www.constitution.org/sech/sech\\_062.htm](https://www.constitution.org/sech/sech_062.htm) 14 Jan. 2019.

This website consisted of a primary source, King Edward III's Statute of Labourers, which played a vital role in the Peasants' Revolt. I was able to see the statute in full, which helped me understand the the full ramifications it would have on the peasantry population.

### Secondary Sources.

Barnard, Bryn. "Outbreak: Plagues that Changed History." New York: Crown Publishers. 2005.

The Black Death was devastating in the fact that it completely upended all social normalities. This source explained some of the major social effects that the plague brought on as well as how the plague was spread. It was extremely helpful in my explanation of the plague and some of its' causes and after-effects.

Barnes, Ethne. "Diseases and Human Evolution." Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006.

This book studied mass epidemics, their causes and many of their effects on human evolution. This was useful in my project because I was able to understand how *Yersinia Pestis*, the strain of bacteria that caused the Black Death was transmitted.

Bovey, Alixe. "Peasants and their role in rural life." *The Middle Ages*. British Library. 30 April 2015. <https://www.bl.uk/the-middle-ages/articles/peasants-and-their-role-in-rural-life> 6 Jan. 2019

Peasants were a very important part in the manorial and in turn feudal systems. This source helped me understand the part that peasants played in the economy of England. It was key in helping me give an accurate description of peasants, and their monumental role in the feudal and manorial systems.

"Chronicle of the Black Death." *Learning Timelines: Sources from History*. British Library. <https://www.bl.uk/learning/timeline/item103973.html> Nov. 6, 2018.

This secondary source provided me with a primary source description of some of the after-effects of the plague, as well as a secondary source explanation. This was important for my project because it gave me a first-hand account of the plague, and with it, I was able to understand the importance of the Black Death.

"Death of Watt Tyler." *British Library*. *Learning Timelines*. <http://www.bl.uk/learning/timeline/item132518.html> 7 Mar. 2019.

The chronicles of Jean Froissart were primary sources, however, this illustration from one of the later publications in 1470 is not a primary source. It does, though, provide an important visual of the death of Watt Tyler, the leader of the Peasants' Revolt.

DeWitte, Sharon. "Black Death Bodies." *Fragments*. Michigan Publishing. <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/f/frag/9772151.0006.001/--black-death-bodies?rgn=main;view=fulltext#N57> 2 Feb. 2019.

This source was dedicated to scientifically analyzing the Black Death. This was really important for me to be able to see the percentage of nobles, merchants, and peasants that died because it helped me get a better understanding of the death rate per status level.

Dodd, Gwilym. "The Birth of Parliament." BBC. BBC. 2014. [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/middle\\_ages/birth\\_of\\_parliament\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/middle_ages/birth_of_parliament_01.shtml) 18 Jan. 2019.

This source contained a detailed analysis of the change of the English Parliament. This website gave me a better understanding of what the English government was like in the late medieval times and how this affected the power dynamics of the middle ages.

Gascoigne, Bamber. "History of Feudalism." HistoryWorld. 2001.  
<http://www.historyworld.net/about/sources.asp?gtrack=pthc>

Feudalism was the heart of the Middle ages. This source talked about the beginnings of feudalism, to when it dissolved in the 1400s. This was important to my project, because it helped me understand that the feudalism was the heart of Medieval Europe, and how important peasants were for the feudal system to work.

Ibeji, Mike. "Black Death: Political and Social Changes." BBC. BBC. 2011.  
[http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/middle\\_ages/blacksocial\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/middle_ages/blacksocial_01.shtml) 6 Jan. 2019.

This source focused on the social changes the Black Death made through population decimation. This was important to my project because it mentioned many major social changes that were very important to ending the feudal system, such as the noble to peasant ratio, which gave peasantry job leverage.

James, Tom. "Black Death: The Lasting Impact." BBC. BBC. 2011.  
[http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/middle\\_ages/black\\_impact\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/middle_ages/black_impact_01.shtml)

This article was comprised of some contemporary accounts, as well as some of the impacts of the Black Death. It was important for my project, because I was able to see some of the opinions people at the time held of the Black Death.

Newman, Simon. "Nobles in the Middle Ages." The Finer Times. The Finer Times. 2019.  
<http://www.thefinertimes.com/Middle-Ages/nobles-in-the-middle-ages.html> 12 Jan. 2019.

This source was comprised of information regarding nobles, and how they functioned in a manorial and feudal society. This was important for me to be able to accurately describe nobility, and how they functioned in the medieval .

O'Neil, Tim. "How did People in the Middle Ages Get Rid of Human Waste?" Slate. The Slate Group. 24 Dec. 2013.  
<https://slate.com/human-interest/2013/12/did-people-in-the-middle-ages-throw-excrement-out-windows.html> 9 Jan. 2019

This website was dedicated to explaining some of the social normalities involving public health. It helped me understand how the lack of good sanitation and public health led to the rapid spread of the Black Death.

"Serfdom." Britannica.com. Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc. 2019.  
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/serfdom> 5 Jan. 2019.

This secondary source was a website concerning basic information about medieval European serfdom. This source was necessary for my project because it helped me understand serfdom in the middle ages.

Simkin, John. "Classroom Activity : The Feudal System." Spartacus Educational. Spartacus Educational Publishers Ltd. 2016. <https://spartacus-educational.com/EXnormans3.htm> 16 Jan. 2019.

This website talked about the feudal system in Europe, and the corresponding roles of peasants and lords. It also had primary source accounts of serfdom, and peasants accepting the role of serfdom. It was important, because it had good background information on the feudal system, which helped me get a clear picture of mid-14th century England and Europe.

Simkin, John. "Contemporary Accounts of the Black Death." Spartacus Educational. Spartacus Educational Publishers Ltd. 2014. <https://spartacus-educational.com/EXnormans10.htm> 9 Jan. 2019.

This website provided a background description of the plague and primary sources from the time. It was helpful to me because it provided multiple primary source account on the devastation of the Black Death.

Simkin, John. "The Peasants' Revolt of 1381." Spartacus Education. Spartacus Educational Publishers Ltd. 2014. [https://spartacus-educational.com/Peasants\\_Revolt.htm](https://spartacus-educational.com/Peasants_Revolt.htm) 30 Jan. 2019.

This source focused on the causes of the Peasants' Revolt. It helped me understand the motives of the rebel peasants, as well as how the Statute of Labourers and the Poll Tax factored into the peasants' frustration.

Simkin, John. "Taxation in the Middle Ages." Spartacus Educational. Spartacus Educational Publishers Ltd. 2014. <https://spartacus-educational.com/EXnormans23.htm> 16 Jan. 2019.

The poll tax of 1377 was one of the main driving forces of the Peasants Revolt. This website focused on many taxes on in the Medieval times. This was important because it provided background source information on the poll tax, which helped me understand how hard it would have been for the impoverished peasant families to pay and how this affected the Peasants' Revolt.

"Social and Economic Effects of the Plague." Decameron Web. Brown University, March 10, 2010. [https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian\\_Studies/dweb/plague/effects/social.php](https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Studies/dweb/plague/effects/social.php) Nov. 6, 2018.

The Black Death had extreme effects on the economy of England. This secondary source website gave an explanation of some of the social and economic effects of the plague. It helped me get a better understanding of economic ramifications of the Black Death.

Spread of the Black Death. 14th c. Artstor,  
[library.artstor.org/asset/ARTSTOR\\_103\\_41822000287969](https://library.artstor.org/asset/ARTSTOR_103_41822000287969)

The silk road was the way for good to travel between China and Europe. Consequently, when the Black Death broke out in Asia, it followed the silk road, as well as various other trade routes, to spread across Europe. This map illustrated the Black Death's path following trade routes, which was very helpful to see.

“Trade Routes between Europe and Asia during Antiquity.” The MET. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. 2019. [https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/trade/hd\\_trade.htm](https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/trade/hd_trade.htm) 12 Jan. 2019.

This website explained the importance of the Silk Road during the medieval era, whether it be transporting raw goods, to sharing ideas. It was very helpful to understand why the Black Death was spread so quickly.

“THE BLACK DEATH (part 2): History and how it affected Feudalism.” Shoeing in the Middle Ages. 10 Nov. 2011.  
<https://wccshoeing.wordpress.com/2011/11/10/the-black-death-part-2-history-and-how-it-affected-feudalism/> 18 Jan. 2019.

This source was comprised of a basic description of feudalism, and how the Black Death affected the feudal system in England. This helped me because it gave an accurate description of how the feudal system worked.

“The Black Death, 1348.” Eyewitness to History.com. 2001.  
<http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/plague.htm> 6 Feb. 2019.

This source was comprised of multiple primary source excerpts from a book written by one of the plague survivors. It was necessary for me to understand the immediate social effects the plague had on people.

“The Feudal System.” Life in a Medieval Castle. 2014.  
[http://www.castlesandmanorhouses.com/life\\_10\\_feudal.htm](http://www.castlesandmanorhouses.com/life_10_feudal.htm) 6 Feb. 2019.

This source a secondary source account of the beginnings of feudalism. This was important to my project because it supplied me with background knowledge of the feudal system.

“The Peasants’ Revolt.” Bitesize. BBC. 2019.

<https://www.bbc.com/bitesize/guides/z2c2pv4/revision/1> 6 Feb. 2019.

This source provided a summary of the Peasants’ Revolt, as well as one of the factors. It also had images of paintings made at the time, depicting the meeting between King Richard II and Watt Tyler. This was useful in my project because it had good background knowledge.

Whittock, Martyn. “Life in the Middle Ages.” United States: Running Press Book Publishers. 2009.

This book gave a detailed chronology of the change in the Middle Ages over time. It helped me get a clear picture of the life of peasants and nobles, as well as providing a several primary source quotes about public health, wages, and feudal rent that were able to broaden my understanding of average life at the time.

Ziegler, Philip. “The Black Death.” New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1969.

This book was about the Black Death and its’ causes and consequences. It was extremely helpful, for it went in depth about many of the social consequences of the Black Death. I used it for my ending quote on my conclusion.