

Did anyone benefit from the Black Death?

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| <p><i>Brian</i></p> <p>My grandfather was very worried about the Black Death, and many people died from his village. He survived, thank God! But things seem to have worked out quite well. With all the carpenters of the village dead, my family was able to set up a business, and now we are far richer than before. With so many people dead, there are lots of jobs, and Sir John has to pay us more to do our work.</p> | <p><i>Sir John</i></p> <p>My grandfather survived the Black Death, but that was only the beginning of our problems! Many of our workers died, and our family have had to pay lots more money to workers. Because there are not many workers about, they can make us pay them more. When it became clear that we were not special and that we could be killed by the Black Death, people did not think we were so important any more.</p> |
| <p><i>Oliver the Priest</i></p> <p>In my grandfather's day everyone was afraid that the Black Death was a sign of the end of the world. Well, the end of the world is still coming! But as the Black Death has gone away it shows that God is less angry than he was. People today are more fearful of God than they used to be, though we are all a load of sinners!</p> | <p><i>Thomas the Messenger & Merchant</i></p> <p>With a third of the population dead, business is not as good for me as it was for my grandfather. Things are slowly picking up, but it's been hard times these last few years. People don't want luxury goods like silk and spices so much anymore.</p> |

How far did the Black Death change England?

Today I will practise...

- Identifying and explaining different types of **change** in History

The survivors

Historians think that just over half the population survived the Black Death. Life was never the same again. People had suffered the terrible fear and horror of the plague years. This fear did not go away.

Pictures like this one became very common in the years after the Black Death.



The fear stayed, but for many survivors everyday life got better...

Wages and prices: After the plague, prices of food and other goods fell. The shortage of labourers meant that wages went up. In 1351, the government passed a law to keep wages low. This was called the **Statute of Labourers**. It said that labourers should not earn more than 2d (pence) a day. The law did not work. The lords needed labourers and they were forced to pay higher wages for them.

More land: Some villages lost nearly all their people. Many were completely abandoned. In other villages, the survivors were able to buy or rent all the spare land. So some peasants became much richer.

The end of labour services: Most peasants were villeins. These people were forced to work on the lord's land for 40 days each year, without payment! After the Black Death the lords were short of labourers, so the peasants could

bargain with them. This helped to free the peasants from the lord's control. Many left their manors, like leaving the manor of Caldicot.

A better standard of living: Because of all these changes, many peasants were better off. They were able to rebuild their houses, making them bigger and more comfortable. They ate more meat and less bread. They even began to wear clothes made of coloured material.

Task: answer these questions in short, Point-Evidence-Explain paragraphs.

1. *How fast did England change in the Black Death?*
2. *What type* of change did England experienced?*
3. *Who experienced the most change?*
4. **CHALLENGE** - *To what extent did England change after the Black Death?*

*** KEYWORDS:**

1. **SOCIAL** – things to do with 'normal people' and how they lived (e.g. home life, leisure, communities & customs)
2. **ECONOMIC** – things to do with money, jobs, trade, wealth & resources.
3. **POLITICAL** – things to do with people's power, leaders (monarchy & Parliament), laws, government and rulers.
4. **RELIGIOUS** - things to do with what people believe & how they worship

SUCCESS CRITERIA:

Have you JUSTIFIED:

- How FAST the change was?

Slow Medium Fast

- The TYPE of change brought about by the Black Death?

Social Economic Political Religious

- WHO experienced the MOST change?

Peasants in villages? Workers in towns? Lords?

- The EXTENT of change brought about by the Black Death?

Little Some Much

1. *How fast did England change?*

- The Black Death arrived in England in 1348, and travelled across the country during the summer. It struck Bristol, then moved on to London and other towns and villages.
- It raged in London until spring 1350, and is generally assumed to have killed between one third and one half of the population.
- In towns people lived very close together and knew nothing about contagious diseases.
- The huge numbers of deaths across two years interrupted trade, farming, travel, jobs...



2. *What type* of change was it?*

- The Black Death affected people's home life (parents ran away from their children!), and people would not travel to visit each other in fear of catching the disease.
- Due to the number of deaths, there weren't enough people to do all the jobs – so this meant that they could charge more for their services, as there was no competition. So peasant survivors made more money, and their standard of living improved.
- Many people became even more religious, because they thought the Black Death was a punishment from God, and some peasants began to question why people like knights were more important than them, if they could also be killed by the Black Death!

3. *Who experienced the most change?*

- Whole villages faced starvation. Fields went unploughed as the men who usually did this were victims of the disease. Harvests would not have been brought in.
- Towns and cities would have faced food shortages as the villages that surrounded them could not provide them with enough food.
- Those lords who lost their peasant-workers to the disease, turned to sheep farming as this required less people to work the land.
- Peasants demanded higher wages as they knew that a lord was desperate to get in his harvest.

4. *To what **extent** did England change?*

This one is up to you! What do YOU think? Did England change to a GREAT extent, to SOME extent, or to a SMALL extent? *Remember to JUSTIFY your opinion!*