



The century of war, plague and disorder

Lecture 5

Plan

- 1. The Hundred Years War**
- 2. The century of plagues**
- 3. The poor in revolt**
- 4. The Wars of the Roses**
- 5. Society, culture and language in Late Medieval England**



The Hundred Years War

- lasting from 1337 until 1453,
- between England and France.
- on the territory of France

The reasons of war:

- ✓ both the English and French kings believed they should rule France.
- ✓ Charles IV (France) died in 1328 without an male heir.
- ✓ Edward III (England) believed he had the right to become the new king of France through his mother,
- ✓ The French did not want a foreign king.

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The stages of war

Four stages of war:

STAGE ONE (1337 – declaration of temporal piece in Bretigny, 1360)

- England had success,
- the English army was better organized (better discipline in army, the usage of the longbow by the archers),
- defeated the French in 3 important battles (Crecy (1346), Poitier (1356), Calais (1347)),
- At Poitier the French king was captured by the English and had to buy his freedom for an enormous ransom.
- English army sacked French towns and villages,
- French townspeople and peasants started to organize partisan detachments for self-defense (the base of the future liberation movement in France),
- peace pact between England and France (in Bretigny, 1360),
- France lost enormous lands in south-west,
- France remained an independent country as Edward III gave up his claim to the French crown.

The stages of war

STAGE TWO (1369-1396)

- successful for the French,
- French king Carl V managed to reorganize the army,
- the English army was forced out form south-east of France,
- But the English stayed in strategically important ports of France such as Calais, Cherbourg, Brest, Bordeaux and Bayonne,
- Both armies were exhausted,
- peace pact was signed in 1396 (did not solve any problems between the two countries).

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The stages of war

STAGE THREE (1415-1420)

- the most dramatic period for France,
- the English army landed out in Northern France,
- the French army was defeated at Azincourt (1415),
- the French king signed the Treaty of Troyes with Henry V:
 - ✓ Northern France was over English rule,
 - ✓ Henry V would inherit the crown of France on his death.

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The stages of war

STAGE FOUR (1420s-1450s)

- liberation war in France,
- 1429, Jeanne d'Arc:
 - ✓ saved Orleans from the English army,
 - ✓ managed to organize the coronation of Carl VII,
- Carl VII defeated the English army in several important battles,
- formal treaty between England and France was signed in 1475:
 - ✓ England lost all its French territories except the port of Calais

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The century of plagues

- **1348-1349**
- the terrible plague (the Black Death),
- killed one third of British population,
- killed mostly the young and healthy.

The “advantages” of the epidemic:

- ✓ the shortage of the workers and high expense of labour,
- ✓ landlords let out their land to energetic freeman,
- ✓ smaller farmers who rented the lands became a new class, known as the "yeomen",
- ✓ this led to the end of serfdom (in 1574).

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The Peasants' Revolt

- The Peasants' Revolt was a popular uprising.
- had a clear set of political demands (**less harsh laws, money for the poor, freedom and equality, end of serfdom**),
- though it was not successful it was the start of the English people's fight for freedom,
- can be compared with [Chartists](#) the 19th century and the [Suffragettes](#) the 20th century.

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The factors which caused the Peasants' Revolt

- peasants were serfs who belonged to their lords,
- their life was strictly controlled by the local lord,
- after 1369, during the war against France, ordinary people became even more poor,
- Poll Tax was introduced (tax to pay for the war against France),
- in March 1381, the government demanded the third Poll Tax in four years,
- people in Essex avoided paying it, the commissioners were appointed to make them pay,
- the commissioners' methods were brutal, it made the peasants angry.

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The Peasants' Revolt

- the rebels' leader Wat Tyler,
- started in Essex on 30 May 1381,
- soon both Essex and Kent were in revolt,
- the peasants marched in London,
- they destroyed the houses of the ministers.
- on 15 June, Richard II, met the rebels' leader Wat Tyler
- during this meeting Tyler was attacked and killed,
- Richard II promised to abolish serfdom.
- the peasants went home,
- Richard II did not keep his promises, later government troops hanged men who had taken part in the Revolt.

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The Wars of the Roses

- was a civil war fought in England,
- lasted for just over 30 years from 1455 to 1487,
- the sides: two rival families who laid claim to the throne of England: the House of Lancaster and the House of York (both houses were branches of the Plantagenet royal dynasty)
- the battles were small.

The reasons of the war:

- ✓ King Henry VI was seen as a poor ruler (lack of interest in politics and being mentally ill),
- ✓ England lost in the Hundred Years' War in France,
- ✓ money problems afterwards,
- ✓ Your Date Here problems with the system of government.

The Wars of the Roses

- the nobles were not pleased with how and who rule the country,
- sixty powerful noble families control England, they kept their own private armies,
- nobility was divided between those who remained loyal to Henry VI, the "Lancastrians", and those who supported the duke of York, the "Yorkists",
- war had finally ended when **Henry Tudor**, duke of Richmond claim the throne, (both Lancastrians and Yorkists joined him),
- Henry Tudor won **the Battle at Bosworth** against the king Richard III (1485),
- Henry Tudor was crowned king on the battlefield (1485),
- Henry VII, defeats the House of York at **the Battle of Stoke Field** (1487). The Wars of the Roses ended.

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The Wars of the Roses

Origin of the name:

- ✓ York's symbol was a white rose, and Lancaster's a red.
- ✓ Henry Tudor's symbol was the Tudor rose - a red rose and white rose joined together.
- ✓ In the 19th century, the novelist Walter Scott in his novel named these wars the "Wars of the Roses".

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Society in Late Medieval England

- **1485** - the end of the Middle Ages in England.
- society was based upon **rank (dukes - earls – lords – knights (gentlemen farmers) - yeoman farmers, esquires)**,
- In towns ordinary **freemen** were equal to the gentlemen in the villiage,
- by the end of the Middle Ages, a **serf** from the countryside could work for seven years in a **town craft guild**, and to become a "**freeman**" of the town where he lived. Towns offered to poor men the chance to become rich and successful through trade.
- in the towns, a new middle class was developing. By the 15th century most **merchants** were well educated, and considered themselves to be the equals of the esquires and gentlemen of the countryside.

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Society in Late Medieval England

- the **lawyers** were another class of city people,
- by the end of the Middle Ages **lawyers, merchants, cloth manufacturers, esquires, gentlemen and yeoman farmers** formed the middle class in England,
- during the time of Edward III's reign Parliament became organised in two parts: **the Lords, and the Commons** (represented the middle class).
- only those who had an income of **40 shillings** or more a year could qualify to be **members of Parliament**. So the poor had no way of being heard except by rebellion.

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The condition of women

- Marriage was the most important event in the lives of women.
- The decision was made by the family (married mainly for financial reasons).
- A woman had to accept her husband as her master.
- The first duty of every wife was to give her husband children, preferably sons. But this duty was dangerous and exhausting.
- Other duties: making food, making cloth and making clothes from the cloth, working in the fields, looking after the children, the geese, the pigs and the sheep, making the cheese and growing the vegetables.
- The animals shared the family houses at night, the houses were dark and smelly.
- The wife of a noble had other responsibilities: (when her lord was away), she was in charge of the manor and the village lands, all the servants and villagers, the harvest and the animals, had to defend the manor if it was attacked, had to run the household, welcome visitors, and store enough food, including salted meat, for winter, was expected to have enough knowledge of herbs and plants to make suitable medicines for those in the village who were sick. She had little time for her own children, who in any case were often sent away at the age of eight to another manor, the boys to "be made into men".

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Middle English

- was a form of the [English language](#) spoken after the [Norman conquest](#) (1066) until the late 15th century
- French had been used less and less by the Norman rulers during the 13th century.
- In the 14th century Edward III had actually forbidden French in his army.
- By the end of the 14th century, English was once again a written language.

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Middle English

- ME had no standard, existed in various dialects.
- A lot of dialects – 4(5) dialects, one of them – East Midland dialect (between the Thames, including London), became the official dialect of English, this was the dialect spoken by royalty and of course Chaucer.
- The writer who helped in the rebirth of English literature: *G. Chaucer (Canterbury Tales)*, in which the members of a group of pilgrims tell each other stories, many of which were funny and humorous.

Middle English

- Middle English was very different from Anglo-Saxon.
- many Old English words disappeared, many French words regarding the subject matters of hunting, luxury, arts, and war were adopted. Similarly Latin words regarding religion, law, and science were adopted by English through French.
- New vowels and consonants appeared: [tʃ,ʃ,dʒ] .
- Spelling was changed via the traditions of French scribes: sc - sh, c[k'] - ch, þ, ð - th.
- Middle English was the period of levelling of endings. All unstressed vowels in the suffixes and flexions were pronounced like **e** or **i**.
- The noun had at that time only two cases – the common case and the possessive case. The adjective lost its case-system altogether.
- New analytical verb forms appeared : Perfect, Continuous and Future.
- The non-finite form of the Gerund appeared.

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Education in Late Medieval England

- The spread of literacy and cultural.
- Education developed enormously during the 14th century. Many schools were founded by powerful men. Reasons: there was a growing need for educated people who could administer the government, the Church, the law and trade.
- The Middle Ages ended with a major technical development: printing press was invented in the middle of the 15th century in Germany by Johann Gutenberg. It was brought to England by William Caxton who set the first printing press in London in 1476.
- Printing press was as dramatic for its age as the technological revolution are for our own.
- Books suddenly became cheaper and more plentiful, printing began to standardise spelling, grammar, and encouraged literacy.

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