

The Life of Peasants

**feudal system | back-breaking labour | obligations | constraints | taxes
menial | servitude | subsistence | manor | oppression | inequality**

Using both books and internet sites, carry out research on the life of peasants in the medieval period. Maintain a **bibliography** of all sources used.

Your assignment should include:

- ◆ A picture or quotation from a **primary source**, along with your **evaluation** of the source. To what extent do you believe the source is valuable, accurate and useful? In what ways is it limited? A possible choice for a documentary source could be the Luttrell Psalter, a beautiful illuminated manuscript, or accounts written by Jean Froissart.
- ◆ An analysis of the peasants' position in the **feudal system**, with details about their varying **roles**, their **obligations** to their lords, their opportunities or lack of opportunities. For instance, you should explain the differences between free peasants and serfs.
- ◆ A set of pictures or diagrams in which you provide detailed and carefully researched information on peasants' life, health, food, housing and clothing. Try to show your understanding of how experiences such as war, plague and famine could affect their lives dramatically. This may be presented as an "infographic", if desired or in any other way that appeals to your creative tendencies.
- ◆ Two to three paragraphs in which you reach some **conclusions**. What does your study of peasant life reveal about the medieval period? What changes occurred after the Black Death? Which factors determined whether a peasant's life was moderately comfortable or desperate and poor? For example, how did violent skirmishes, battles and wars affect peasants' lives? To what extent was the feudal system a **rigid hierarchy** in which people remained in the position their birth had defined?



The glowing pages of the Luttrell Psalter often reveal the work of the common people, such as the plowman shown above.