5 Life on the Manor

They were called open fields because they had no hedges or fences in them. Instead, they were divided into strips, which had earth banks in between them. Everyone in the village had some strips in each of the fields. This made sure that everyone had a share of both the good land and the bad land.

Because they had no fertilisers, they changed the crops they grew, year by year. In the plan above, there is barley growing in west field. Next year, it will be wheat. Then it will lie fallow, which means it will rest to get back its goodness.

But the other land was just as important. The meadow provided hay for the cattle. The common land was where the sheep grazed. The villagers got fish from the river and all kinds of things, like berries and mushrooms, might be found on the wasteland. The woodland supplied them with wood, and also nuts and roots for the pigs. And, in their gardens, the villagers kept chickens and grew vegetables, such as carrots or cabbages.

1. Write sentences to explain each of these words: week-work; fallow; villein.
2. Draw the plan of the village on page 18.
3. Divide your page into two columns, using a pencil. At the top of the columns, write these titles:
   - Piece of land
   - What it was used for

Using your plan, write down the name of each piece of land in turn and, in the second column, list as many uses as possible. Try to think of uses which are not mentioned on page 18. For instance, what else could the river be used for, apart from fishing?

4. Look at the evidence above and try to decide which description fits which picture. When you have decided, write down the months and, beside each, the letter of the picture.

Some months are missing. In September, they picked fruit and in December, they killed a pig ready for Christmas. Draw pictures for each of these months.

These pictures show life on the manor in different months of the year.

FEBRUARY: Breaking up the soil and sowing new crops.
MARCH: Pruning trees and planting vegetables.
APRIL: Planting new fruit trees.
MAY: The lord goes hunting.
JUNE: Haymaking begins.
JULY: Getting in the harvest.
AUGUST: Threshing the corn, to separate the grain from the chaff.
OCTOBER: Sowing seeds in the open fields.
NOVEMBER: Knocking down horns to listen up the pigs.
Imagine one of the open fields. It is early in the morning and a villein is out with the oxen ploughing his lord's strips. He was up at dawn to go to the fields, despite the cold weather. He is dressed in a rough coat and wears a hood that is full of holes. His shoes are caked with mud and his toes are sticking out through them. Even his mittens have got holes in them. His fingers are covered in mud.

His work does not end with the ploughing. He will have to clean out the sheds, water the oxen and carry out the dung. Meanwhile, his wife has to do the cooking, make their clothes and look after their animals.

They are all crying. All the man can do is to sigh and say, 'Children, be quiet'.

A villein's food and drink was much the same, year in and year out. There was no tea and coffee and the water usually wasn't fit to drink. So he and his family drank ale.

The frame is made of wood and the spaces between are filled with wattle (twigs woven together) and daub (mud and straw). Inside, there was often just one room. There were no floorboards; just earth covered with rushes or hay. The windows were holes in the wall, with wooden shutters or waxed cloth to keep out the wind. In the middle was the fire, its smoke rising up through a hole in the roof, which was made of straw or turf. It must have been very smoky here in the evenings, when the villein brought his animals in from the cold.

B There are two of the most important craftsmen in a medieval village.

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His basic food was coarse black bread. He ate it for breakfast at 6 a.m. He ate it with his dinner at 10 a.m., along with eggs or cheese. And he ate it at 4 p.m. when he had a supper of soup or stew. The villeins mainly ate potage - a sort of thick soup, mostly of vegetables. Bacon was the most common meat because pigs were easy to keep. There were no refrigerators to keep food fresh so, in winter, meat was usually salted or smoked.

A villein's diet was probably healthier than a noble's diet because villeins ate plenty of vegetables. The nobles ate mainly meat. But the nobles did not get hungry. The villeins often did. On one occasion, a starving mob stopped a traveller and seized his horse. They were so hungry that they ate it on the spot. It is not surprising that one child in three died before its first birthday.