

Working For The Lord



KEYWORDS

Villein - a peasant

Tithe - tax on produce paid to the Church

Week-work - work done by a peasant each week on the Lord's land

Reeve - a foreman

A villein's life was hard. He had to obey his lord and do work for him. He spent most of his time working out in the fields, doing week-work. He needed his lord's permission to travel outside the village, and to get married. He had to take his grain to the lord's mill to have it ground into flour. He had to give his lord some of his produce in return for his land, and he had to make payments of money to him.

All Villagers had to give one tenth of everything they produced to the Church. This was called the tithe.

Peasants had to make sure that they produced enough food for themselves and their families and make sure they had enough for the tithe and for their lord! At some times in the year, they had to give extra gifts to the lord, as Source 1 below explains:

Source 1. WORK SERVICE

Each villein must give the lord 5 shillings at Christmas and 5 shillings at Easter and 32 pence at St. Peter's feast... and all the villains must give 32 hens at Christmas.



Making sure that all the villeins were always working was the reeve. The reeve watched over the villeins at work and could punish them if they did not work hard enough. The reeve was also in charge of the land the villeins worked on. He decided what was planted and who got the strips of land. He also sold spare crops and could hire extra people at busy times, like the harvest.

Now try and complete the tasks below.

Put today's date and the title 'Working for the Lord' in your exercise book. Remember to answer each question in a full sentence.

1. Write down the following words and their meanings:
Villein, Reeve, Tithe, Week-work.
2. Write down three things that a villein had to do for his lord.
3. Write down two things that a villein had to ask permission from his lord for.
4. Write down one thing that a lord gave a villein in return for his hard work.
5. Look at Source 1. Why might a villein have grumbled about such payments to the lord?
6. Look at the unfinished job advert for a reeve shown below. Copy the outline and finish it.

REEVE WANTED FOR LOCAL VILLAGE

Required for this coming Harvest. Your jobs will be.....

Source 2: The Village Year

SPRING: Plough Ground, clear stones, sow barley, oats & wheat, put animals out to grass, shear sheep.

SUMMER: Harvest time, pick fruit and gather crops.

AUTUMN: Thresh barley and wheat, plough ground, clear stones, sow winter wheat, store hay, kill pigs and other animals, hang meat in chimney to smoke it or salt it.

WINTER: Mend tools, fences and buildings, move animals into barns.

ALL YEAR: Brew beer, make cheese, spin wool, work in garden.

7. Look closely at Source 2. Which jobs does a villein have to do all year?
8. Using Source 2, write a paragraph to explain what a villein has to do throughout the whole year.

Bonus Question.

Do you think a villein's life is hard?
Explain your answer.