

Was the Peasants' Revolt a failure? (Making Sense of History, 1066 – 1509)

5

Did rats and rebels change people's lives completely?

Was the Peasants' Revolt really a failure?

We left the Peasants' Revolt at a crucial moment. Wat Tyler had been stabbed and the king had asked the protesters to go home. What happened next?

Look at Picture A. What do you think is happening? It might help to think back to the work you did on pages 84–87.

A

The picture shows a fifteenth-century artist's interpretation of the death of Wat Tyler and the end of the peasants' march to London. With their leader dead the rebels went home. It seemed that the Peasants' Revolt had failed.

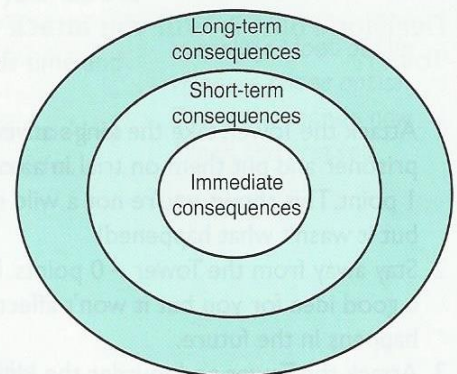
You are going to decide whether this interpretation is true: **Was the Peasants' Revolt really a failure?**



Activity

To help you to reach a conclusion about whether the Peasants' Revolt was really a failure or not you will need to gather evidence.

- First make a copy of the ripple diagram on the right.
- As you read about the events following Tyler's death on page 89 make notes on your ripple diagram to show the immediate, short-term and long-term consequences.
 - Immediate = anything that happened on the day Wat Tyler was killed
 - Short-term = anything that happened in the days and weeks following the death of Wat Tyler
 - Long-term = anything that happened in the years after the Revolt.
- Note down in red, evidence that the rebellion had failed and in blue, evidence that it was successful.

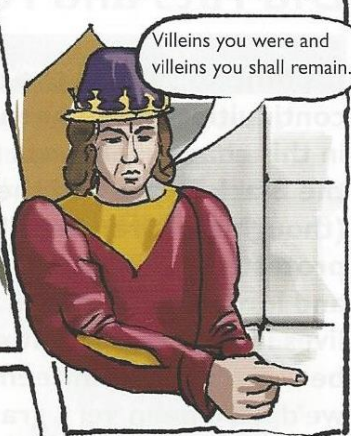


The king calms down the rebels. He tells them that if they return home peacefully their demands will be met. The rebel army heads back to the villages of Kent and Essex.

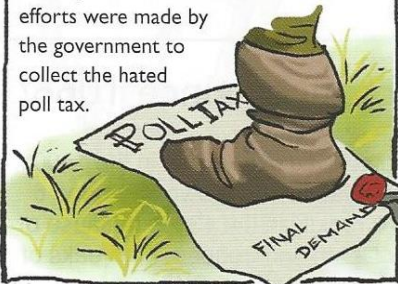


The king quickly raises an army which pursues the rebels, rounding up and executing their leaders. As many as 1500 rebel leaders are hanged.

The king goes back on all of the promises he made to the peasants.

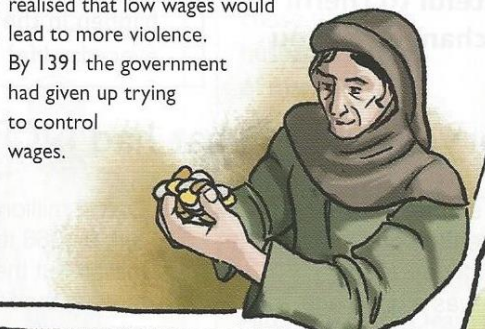


In the years after 1381 no further efforts were made by the government to collect the hated poll tax.

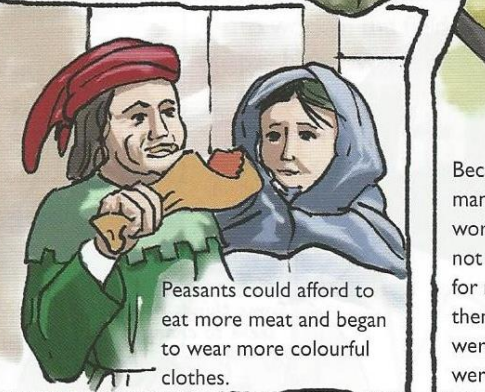
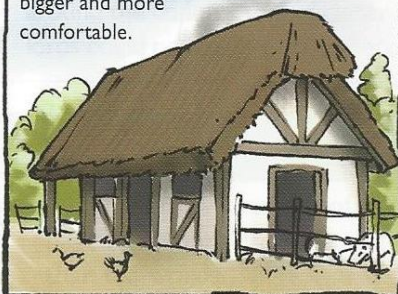


Wages for peasants slowly began to rise. Nobles realised that low wages would lead to more violence.

By 1391 the government had given up trying to control wages.



Peasants became better off. They rebuilt their houses making them bigger and more comfortable.



Peasants could afford to eat more meat and began to wear more colourful clothes.

Because the Black Death had killed so many people there was a shortage of workers. This meant that lords could not keep demanding that people work for no pay. They could no longer stop them leaving the village. By 1500, there were no more villeins: all labourers were free.

Activity

2 Now that you have completed your ripple diagram you can answer the question: **'Was the Peasants' Revolt really a failure?'**

Think about the following questions:

- a) Have you got more red or blue points on your diagram?
- b) How would you describe events immediately and shortly after the death of Wat Tyler?
- c) How would you describe the situation for peasants 100 years after Wat Tyler's death?
- d) What is your conclusion? Was the Peasants' Revolt really a failure?

Write a short answer in your notebook. Remember, as a historian it is important to support all of your arguments with evidence. Try to give examples of ways in which the Peasants' Revolt was a success or a failure.