

LESSON 4

Guided reading from Helen Carr

This could be either a homework task or a class reading task. The questions are designed to lead the students through the passages. My students were VERY excited to find out whether their ideas of Carr's argument matched what she actually said.

The Red Prince: John of Gaunt by Helen Carr (2021)

1. What word does Carr use to describe the Revolt?
2. What does this word MEAN?
3. How SERIOUS does Carr think that the event was? What REASONS does she give in the rest of the paragraph?
4. What happened at the Savoy Palace? Why?
5. Carr uses her description of this event to signal the serious nature of the Revolt. Highlight the parts that tell you that she thinks this event was very serious.
6. According to Carr, how SERIOUS did John of Gaunt think that the attacks on his property and land were? How do you know?
7. If I were to ask Helen Carr how 'serious' she thinks the Revolt was, what do you think she'd say? How would she JUSTIFY her view?
8. Do you agree? Explain why.

On the Peasants' Revolt (p. 137)

The Rising of 1381 was cataclysmic for England. It polarised towns and villages and exposed the divisive alliances that tore into communities, even families. There was no simple side, for men and women from various backgrounds and social classes banded together to advocate for change. For some, it was a revel, an opportunity for anarchy, and others it was a revolution. For some it was peaceful and, for others, exceptionally violent.

On the destruction of the Savoy (pp. 142–3)

At around 4 o'clock on the 13th of June, the rebels broke into the Savoy Palace with ease. With John of Gaunt absent, the delighted rebels found their way inside his rooms and destroyed cloth, coverlets, books, beds, a valuable headboard decorated with heraldic devices, napery and jewels. They found a jewellery set with precious stones which they smashed with axes and ground into dust, they threw silverware into the river and shredded garments pulled from chests in the wardrobe. The rebels were enraged to find Gaunt was not at home – they had hoped to make an example of the hated Duke. Instead, their revenge was material and they made do with a mock puppet of his person. Having obtained his jacket they impaled it on the end of a lance and shot arrows at it before hacking it to pieces with their axes. Gaunt's belongings were collected and carried into the Great Hall where they formed a pyre. The point of the destruction was to show the wealthy the limits of their...

On John of Gaunt's reaction to news up in Scotland (p. 147)

The Savoy lay in ashes, the King had sanctioned the rebels' desire to bring the 'traitors' to justice and his loyal servants had been murdered... After he absorbed the news, John of Gaunt did not appear surprised. He was aware of the malice of Londoners – the Savoy having previously been a target for their rage – but he had underestimated the capability and extent of the root ruthlessness...