

The People of 1381: Suggested historical enquiry questions

Picking from the allotment of historical enquiry: asking different questions about the people of 1381

Selecting which historical enquiry to follow is rather like deciding what to grow on an allotment, and will be determined by a whole host of questions that you will need to consider before making your decision. For example, what type of crop do you want? How much time do you have to plant, nurture and harvest? How big a crop do you want?

We suggest that you use the following to help you in making decisions about what sort of historical enquiry you want your pupils to follow on the 1381 Peasants' Revolt.

Planning and preparation for producing a bountiful crop of history learning on the people of 1381

Planning what to grow on your allotment is key to reaping a successful harvest. It is not just a question of what tasty crops you want to grow but also of how much time and how many resources you have in order to be successful. Do you want a quick return on your planting or do you have more time to enrich your soil, weed and water? Similarly, in planning a sequence of lessons on the people 1381, consider the following questions:

1. What do you know already about 1381, the fourteenth century, etc.?
2. What do you already do/have on 1381?
3. How long have you got to prepare? How many lessons will you have?
4. What history do you want your pupils to learn? Substantive knowledge? Disciplinary knowledge?
5. What outcomes do you want from their learning? What do you want your pupils to know and be able to do after the lessons? How will they demonstrate this? What will they produce?
6. What history will your pupils be doing before and after the 1381 lessons? When do the lessons fit in? What leads up to them? What comes afterwards? What concepts will you revisit during and after the 1381 lessons?

Picking from the allotment of historical enquiry on the people of 1381

1. Radishes – quick-growing, tangy appetiser: *one- or two-lesson historical enquiries on 1381 that can fit in with an existing scheme of work*

- Where was the Peasants' Revolt? (A geography of the Revolt/mapping lesson)
- How did the peasants revolt?
- What happened in 1381? (A lesson of storytelling – eruption, violence, repression – that ties into bigger themes pursued in broader enquiry questions)
- Why did the 1381 Revolt scare people in power? (It could introduce the concept of 'a mob', a revolt in London but also in many other places, something fast-moving and violent, with a radical edge to demands, etc.)
- What does the 1381 Revolt tell us about people in the late Middle Ages?
- Poll tax or war? What caused the 1381 Revolt?
- Why did the people of St Albans revolt in 1381?

2. Potatoes – quick-growing, bigger staple crop: *a sequence of two to three lessons with an overarching enquiry question, which can be standalone or fitted within an existing scheme of work*

- Why/how did the 1381 Revolt spread?
- Who were the 'people' of 1381? (Focusing on two or three stories and looking for patterns across the lessons)

- What don't the chronicles tell us about the people of 1381? (And why not?)
- What mattered to the people of 1381?
- Who were the people of 1381? (Local lens or more tailored focus:
 - Who were the women of 1381?
 - Who were the Londoners of 1381?
 - Or focused on one person: Who was John Ball? Who was John Peper?)
- What do/does the events in X place/the story of Y person/people reveal about the revolt of 1381?
- How do historians research and debate the 1381 Revolt?
- Was the 1381 Revolt a failure?
- Why do historians disagree about the 1381 Revolt?
- What does the 1381 Revolt tell us about the people of St Albans?

3. Pumpkin – a big, colourful, single crop: *a new unit of work, six to seven lessons, with an overarching enquiry question that pupils answer as part of an assessment of pupil learning*

- How serious was the Peasants' Revolt?
- Who were the 'people of 1381'? (Expanded version with more stories!)
- What did the rebels of 1381 want?
- How powerful were the peasants in 1381?
- How can we find out about the people of 1381?
- What can we learn about the people of 1381 from what has been left behind?
- How should we present the story of the 1381 Revolt?
- What should be remembered about the Revolt of 1381?
- Riot, revolt or revolution? What does 1381 tell us about power and the people?
- St Albans and the people of 1381: why is there no blue plaque to William Grindecobbe?
- Rioters or revolutionaries? Were the aims and actions of the people of 1381 the same?

4. Raspberries – take time and investment over several seasons, but with the reward of lots of juicy fruit for puddings and jams: *a full scheme of work covering a whole term or even longer, with a series of interconnected enquiries that can be put together to make a jam of history learning*

- What did it mean to have 'power' in the medieval period? (Recurring theme – could be used to discuss fluctuations in monarchical or Church power, as well as the 'expectations' of those in authority)
- What can the people of 1381 teach us about late medieval society?
- What mattered to the people of 1381? (Expand to cover the whole late medieval period)
- When did the people of 1381 actually get what they wanted? (Legacy/interpretations focus)
- What did the people of 1381 know? (Or choose an individual, e.g. What did John Peper know? Grappling with the world as it was seen and experienced. Could also do John Ball, John of Gaunt, Goditha, etc.)
- What does the 1381 Revolt reveal about England in the later Middle Ages?
- What do we need to know to understand the people of 1381?