

## Support with teaching the consequences of the 1381 Revolt

*Thoughts and ideas from the 1381 Teacher Fellowship participants about teaching the aftermath and consequences of the Revolt*

'It seems that one of the difficulties with teaching the Peasants' Revolt, especially through the eyes of a diverse group of people, is framing a narrative that will enable students to build from. The consequences of the Revolt are part of the uncertainty: they are inconsistent, unclear in places and, in some ways, underwhelming. The Chartist comparison seems to me a good one here. How can we prevent students from dismissing the whole story as a bit pointless if nothing much changed?

There are a few key takeaways here, I suppose. In the short term, surely it is important that students understand that revolts don't always achieve their aims and aren't always "successful" in that sense. Looking at the impact for individuals may also be a way of wrapping up that narrative. In the longer term, it is important that teachers at least can see the larger picture of the impact on Richard II and the changing nature of peasant life. Teachers will need to think carefully about their curricular goals in framing the narrative, and while the complexities may mean that we want to steer clear of too many of the consequences, having an "ending" to the story I think is important for students who will want to know "what happened next".'

'Finally, an explanation for the difficulties in teaching about the CAUSES of the Peasants' Revolt. In many ways, the Revolt is a CONSEQUENCE of the power vacuum at the heart of government from the 1360s onwards (initial collapse of Edward III). Definitely something to chew over for me in terms of how I approach teaching this period – and what I include.

As has already been mentioned, the consequences of the Revolt itself are very difficult to approach; they are messy, ill-defined and without a particular end-point. So as far as Juliet Barker is concerned, not a lot changed. Unless using them for a particular enquiry (which I would argue there is scope for: "How much can we learn from a medieval pardon?") or teaching explicitly about the reign of Richard II in its entirety, I'd steer clear with students. If the consequences are hard for the ACADEMIC team to define, our students will need a lot more time than any of us can afford to devote if they are to do something meaningful with them.

So far as teachers are concerned, I think a broad understanding is needed that there was brutal repression in SOME places, but that much of the outworking went nowhere (hence the general amnesty afforded by the 1390s – it was just too expensive to continue pursuing everyone through the courts!) and there was no long-term change to government structures or political aims. I'd also encourage teachers to steer well clear of "serfdom" or "feudalism" when teaching this topic as a whole; both terms are far too contentious when applied after 1200.

I do, however, think that teachers should be aware that the idea of the Peasant's Revolt stuck – very similar themes were outlined in the Jacquerie in France and Cade's Revolt in 1450, as well as underpinning major Tudor revolts such as Cornwall (1497) and Kett (1549).'

'There's a line in Juliet Barker's *England, Arise* that leaps out from my notes: "One person above all others must have been marked for life by his experiences, and that was Richard II." Being "marked for life" is such a powerful turn of phrase, something on which to hang our approach to aftermath.

It seems remarkable how swiftly power was reasserted and control re-established. We're familiar with the debates over long-term changes in feudalism, serfdom and popular politics, but how did it mark the lives of those involved? I'd love for my students to grapple with that question. We saw their agency, normality and diversity in the Revolt itself; that shouldn't change afterwards, as we instead hurtle back towards sociological change.

Teachers and students need to know about brutal repression and subsequent revolts up to 1383. Two questions I'd focus on: What did it mean for Richard's exercise of kingship (his growing love for the smack of firm government before Bolingbroke's usurpation)? What did it mean for the people of 1381? I think we can make some good links to the Agincourt Muster Rolls!

I think great resources would involve some historical imagination and story-writing – could we put ourselves in Richard's shoes as his final days dwindle away at Pontefract Castle, ruminating on the shadow of 1381 on the rest of his reign? Or the wife of an executed rebel in the decades to come? Or a young rebel who ends up on the muddy fields of France in 1415? An interesting approach could be to ask: What was England like on the eve of the fifteenth century? Obviously, there are clear limitations with this approach, but I think having a go at these stories would help to really flesh out the aftermath.'