

WB 17th January / 24th January

Lesson one: Effects of the Black Death

Types of effects:

- Social – society
- Economic – money
- Political – power
- Religious - beliefs

Task – read the information and write down the positive and negatives of each. For example, a positive social impact is that...

Social impact - Whole villages were wiped out. Around half the population was killed.

It could also be argued that the Black Death had brought down rich and poor alike. Having faced and survived the plague, people at the bottom of society were more prepared to question their position in society.

Poor people began to hate their poverty and their 'betters' – some historians think this helped to destroy the feudal system.

Economic impact - Plague created food shortages: so the price of food went up, creating more hardship for the poor.

Landowners switched to sheep farming as this needed fewer workers.

Farm workers demanded higher wages and were less willing to be tied to the land and work for the feudal lord.

Political impact - Peasants were prevented from getting higher wages after the Black Death with the Statute of Labourers, 1351. A statute passed after a large part of the English population had died of the Black Death. It attempted to prevent labour, now so much scarcer, from becoming expensive. Everyone under the age of 60, except traders, craftsmen, and those with private means, had to work for wages which were set at their various pre-plague levels. It was made an offence for landless men to seek new masters or to be offered higher wages.

Demands for higher wages contributed to the Peasants' Revolt (1381) and the weakening of the feudal system.

Religious impact – damage to the Catholic Church as experienced priests died and others had run away.

Many people were angry and bitter, and blamed the Church.