

# Late Medieval Crime and Punishment Knowledge Organiser

## Keywords

assize	A moving court that would travel around England in circuits.
The Black Death	A particularly deadly outbreak of the bubonic plague.
high treason	Directly plotting against the king's life.
expelled	Removed from the country.
Justice of Eyre	Travelling judges that led an assize.

## Timeline

1166	- King Henry II's Assize of Clarendon
1194	- Richard I introduces coroners.
1290s	- Jews were expelled from England.
1327	- Edward III appoints the first Justices of the Peace.
1348	- The Black Death ravages England. Statute of Labourers introduced.
1382	- First laws against heresy introduced.

## Justices of the Peace

Edward III introduced Justices of the Peace to keep an eye on particularly unruly areas of towns. These people were knights that were given the duty of protecting the 'king's peace'. It was a high-profile job, but not an easy one.



## Statute of Labourers

**The Black Death** ravaged England in the 1340s, killing around a third of the population. This led to a shortage of workers across the country. People saw this as an opportunity to demand higher wages for their labour. King Edward III disliked this so much that he made it illegal for peasants to ask for higher wages in the Statute of Labourers.



## Crime

During the Late Medieval period, some new crimes were created. The crime of heresy was introduced as England began to be solidly Christian. Anything that went against Orthodox Catholic teaching was made a crime, making different types of Christians and Jews unwelcome in England. Jews were **expelled** from England altogether, prior to the new laws, in the 1290s. The other new crime was the Statute of Labourers (see above).

King Edward III repealed the Forest Laws and the Murdrum law.



## Punishments

Punishments from earlier periods were consistent. Execution, fines, mutilation and public humiliation were all used. A new method of execution was introduced for those convicted of **high treason**, these people would be hanged, drawn and quartered. The victim would be hanged until nearly dead, have their innards 'drawn' out and would then be hacked to pieces which could be displayed around the country.



### Henry II

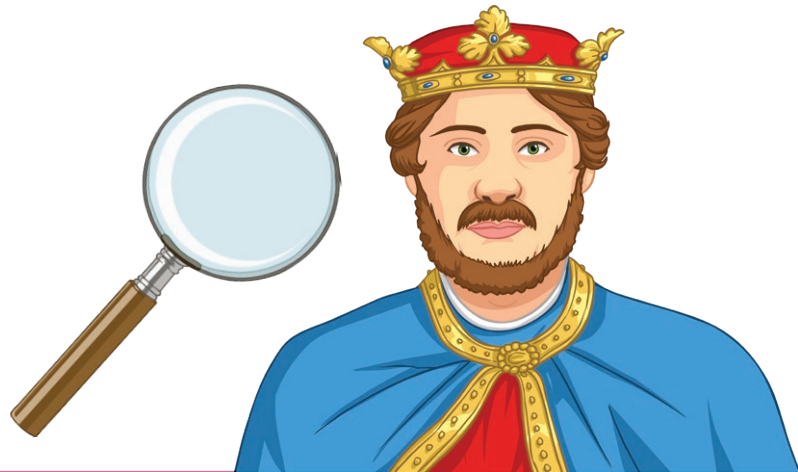
In 1166 King Henry II made some changes to the courts and the legal system. These were known as the 'Assize of Clarendon':

- prisons were established to hold criminals awaiting trial;
- the courts were reorganised, making them more uniform across the country;
- **Justices of Eyre** were appointed to travel the country hearing cases;
- local sheriffs were given clearer instructions from the crown, increasing uniformity.



### Richard I

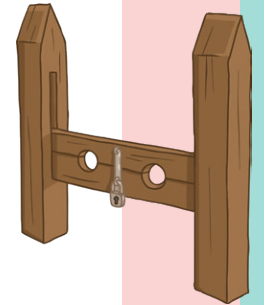
Richard the Lionheart appointed coroners to investigate mysterious deaths. They would examine corpses and try to figure out how they were killed.



### Towns

Towns grew rapidly over the Late Medieval period. This had many effects on crime and punishment over the period:

- Larger populations in one place meant that crime became more common.
- Unlike the close communities of earlier periods, towns were full of people that did not know each other, making anonymous crimes more common.
- Public humiliations were more humiliating as there was more 'public' to witness them.
- Some towns were so unruly that Justices of the Peace were hired to control them.
- Towns were divided into wards which would be patrolled by Parish Constables.



### Outlaws

Medieval England did not have a police force, so apprehending criminals was hard. People who broke the law would be labelled as outlaws. Any person could kill an outlaw without it counting as murder. Outlaws often lived in the forests or wild places. The most famous outlaw is probably Robin Hood who lived in Sherwood Forest during the Late Medieval period.

