Peasants Revolt Resources and Questions

(Source 2) Rolls of Parliament (1380)

The lords and commons are agreed that... three groats should be given from each lay person of the realm... who have reached the age of fifteen

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(Source 3) Extract from poem about the 1380 Poll Tax (c. 1381)

A man with goods worth forty pounds has to pay twelve round pence. And another, brought to the ground by poverty, has to pay as much.



(Source 4) John Ball at Mile End
from **Jean Froissart, *Chronicles* (c. 1470)**

(Source 5) Henry Knighton, *Chronicles* (c. 1390)

The rebels returned to the New Temple which belonged to the prior of Clerkenwell... and tore up with their axes all the church books, charters and records discovered in the chests and burnt them... One of the criminals chose a fine piece of silver and hid it in his lap; when his fellows saw him carrying it, they threw him, together with his prize, into the fire, saying they were lovers of truth and justice, not robbers and thieves.

(Source 6) Thomas Walsingham, *The History of England* (c. 1420)

They set out for the residence of the duke of Lancaster... They tore the golden cloths and silk hangings to pieces and crushed them underfoot; they ground up rings and other jewels inlaid with precious stones so that they could not be used again



(Source 1) Richard II by unknown artist (c. 1395)

(Source 10) Jean Froissart, *Chronicles* (c. 1395)

Then the king ordered thirty clerks to write letters, sealed with his seal. And when the people received the letters, they went back home. But Wat Tyler, Jack Straw and John Ball said they would not leave. More than 30,000 stayed with them. They were in no hurry to have the King's letters. They meant to slay all the rich people of London and rob their homes.

(Source 8) *Anonimalle Chronicle of St Mary's* (1381)

> And the king said to Wat Tyler: "Why will you not go back to your own county?" Wat Tyler answered that neither he nor his fellows would leave until they had got their charter as they wished to have it... And he demanded that there should be only one bishop in England... and all the lands and possessions (of the church) should be taken from them and divided among the commons... And he demanded that there should be no more villeins in England, and no serfdom... that all men should be free....
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> The commons got into the Tower. They dragged the archbishop out of the chapel of the Tower and hit him - as they did to the others who were with him. They led these men to Tower Hill. There they cut off the heads of Simon Sudbury, Archbishop of Canterbury, and also Sir Robert Hales, Treasurer of England, and others.



(Source 11) The death of Wat Tyler from Jean Froissart, *Chronicles* (c. 1470)

(**Source 12)** Michael Senior, *Richard II* **(1981)**

> It (Wat Tyler's character) is not a pleasant sight, and Richard undoubtedly benefits by comparison. But history is not written by peasants... One would expect Tyler to have had a bad press... but those reports, however partial, are all we have to go on.

(Source 13) William Grindcobbe was the leader of the rebellion in St Albans. Soon after this speech he was captured and executed (quoted in Thomas Walsingham, *The History of England* (c. 1420)**.**

> Friends, who after so long an age of oppression, have at last won yourselves a short breath of freedom, hold firm while you can, and have no thought for me or what I may suffer. For if I die for the cause of liberty that we have won, I shall think myself happy to end my life as a martyr.

(Source 14) Richard II talking to peasants in Essex after the revolt. (1381)

> You who are not worthy to live when compared with the lords whom you have attacked... You were and are serfs, and shall remain in bondage, but in one infinitely worse.

Question 1: Read sources 2 and 3. How do these sources help to explain why some peasants disliked the poll tax?

Question 2: Use the information in source 8 to explain source 7.

Question 3: Study sources 9 and 14. Explain why Richard II changed his mind on the subject of feudalism.

Question 4: It has been claimed that the Peasants' Revolt was an attempt to bring an end to the feudal system. Select passages from the sources in this unit that supports this view.

Question 5. How reliable is the information in source 10. It will help you to read the other sources in this unit before answering this question.

Question 6: The main sources of information on the Peasants' Revolt come from the writings of Henry Knighton, Thomas Walsingham and Jean Froissart. Follow the links and read about these men and then explain the point being made' by Michael Senior in source 12.

Question 7: Give as many reasons as you can why the peasants revolted in 1381. As well as the information in this unit you should also consider material that appeared in Peasants' Revolt, The Feudal System, The Origins of Parliament, The Black Death, Taxation in the Middle Ages, John Ball, and The Lollards. Put these reasons into the following categories: (i) economic; (ii) political; (iii) religious; (iv) individual.