

ACTIVITY 1

**LORD-PEASANT RELATIONSHIPS IN ENGLAND
BEFORE THE BLACK DEATH**

Name _____

Most land was owned by the nobility (the lords) or by the church. Peasants did not have the freedom to move to another location. If land was sold or transferred from one lord to another, the peasants were part of the purchase.

Each peasant family had the use of 30 acres of land for growing their own food and limited use of pastureland for raising a few animals. The same 30 acres were handed down to the peasant's sons, generation after generation. The fields were planted, cultivated, and harvested according to the plans set by the lord.

Peasants were usually required to work three days per week on the lord's farmland. During the harvesting of the lord's fields, additional work was required of all members of the peasant's family. The lord's officials supervised the work, trying to make sure that peasants worked as hard as possible.

In addition to work, the peasant owed the lord various payments at specified times during the year, such as a goose or chicken at Christmas. His daughters could not marry without payment to the lord. And when the peasant died, his family was required to give his best animal to the lord.

CHANGES FOLLOWING THE BLACK DEATH

The great decrease in the number of peasants available to work the land caused by the Black Death led to drastic changes in the relationship between lord and peasant. Conflicts between peasants wanting a better deal and lords trying to keep the old relationship intact led in England to the Peasants' Revolt of 1381. The leaders of the revolt demanded that the customary obligations of peasants be abolished in exchange for a fixed rent payment. Although the Peasants' Revolt did not succeed in 1381, over the next few decades the lords were forced to grant more freedoms to the peasants.

By the early 1400s, independent farmers producing for the market, and paying fixed money rents to the lords for the use of their land, had replaced peasants tied to the land. These farmers were free to farm their land as they chose, rather than having to follow the lord's methods. They and their children were also free to move to another lord's territory, or to move to the growing towns and cities and seek work there.

Complete the following questions on the back in complete sentences

1. How did the relationship of peasants to their lords change before the Black Death to after the Black Death?
2. Which system provided more incentives for peasants to work harder, produce more, and try to find better methods of farming?

*** Use this assignment along with Blizzard Bag Assignment #1 to assist you with Blizzard Bag Assignment #3