

6.6

WORKING LIFE

Who worked on a manor?

If the manor was small the lord often looked after the day-to-day running of the manor himself. On large estates the lord would often employ people to do this for him. He would usually employ a **seneschal** or general manager.

A seneschal was usually a gentleman, not a peasant, and he sometimes looked after several estates. His job often meant that he travelled away from the estate on the lord's business. If this was the case, a **bailiff** or farm manager supervised the actual running of the estate.

The bailiff told people which jobs needed to be done and supervised the work. He might also have kept the accounts. Bailiffs were free peasants and in England they might have had a **reeve** working for them.

A reeve was a peasant who either worked for the lord as a kind of supervisor or foreman, or who was elected by the peasants as someone who would speak up for them if they were treated unfairly.

There were also **beadles**, who collected rents or fines. A **hayward** was a person chosen by the lord or elected by the villagers to look after the sowing and harvesting of the crops and to look out for stray farm animals. Haywards carried a horn that they blew to warn everyone that cows or other animals had strayed onto the crops.

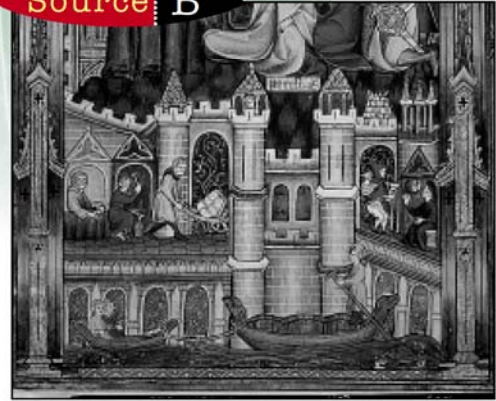
The manor was generally self sufficient, that is, people did not have to go outside the manor to get the things they needed. The manor could not, however, provide everything. For goods such as salt, the people had to trade at a market.

Source A



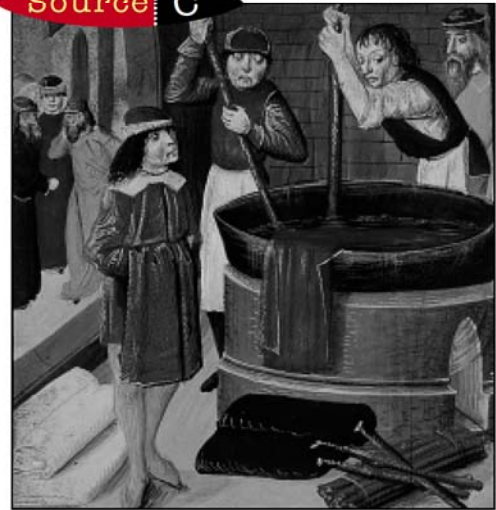
A reeve supervising the gathering of the harvest.

Source B



A picture of the Grand Pont in Paris.

Source C



Dyeing fabric by stirring it through boiling dye.

INQUIRY QUESTIONS

- How did people live?
- What were the main features of the society or time?

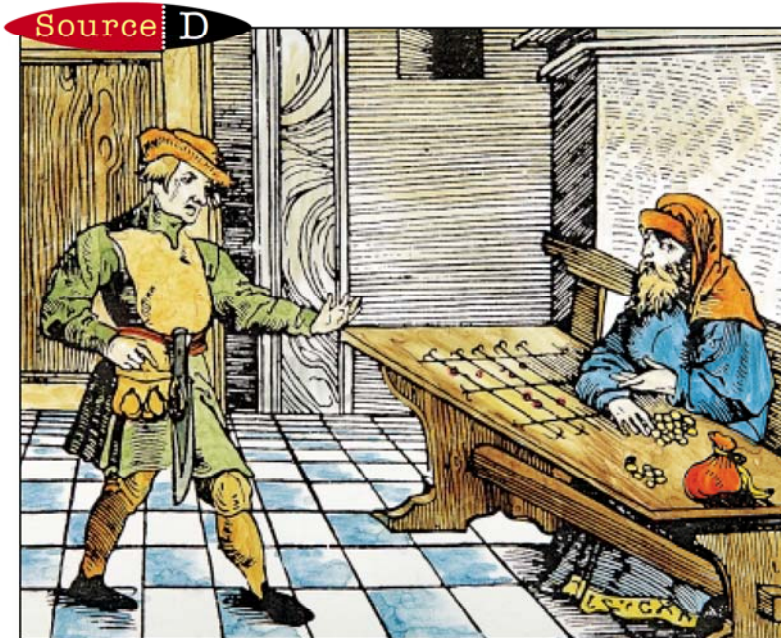
The village

Both free people and serfs could work in more specialised jobs in the village. The smith was an important person because he made and repaired farm tools, shod horses and made metal objects such as nails, locks, knives, hinges and sometimes weapons. The miller refined grains for food. There might also be carpenters, barbers and shoemakers.

Medieval towns

Although the manors were self sufficient, sometimes more was grown than was needed. This surplus was sold so that things (including food) that the farmer or lord could not get for himself could be bought. Market towns began to develop so that there would be a place where this buying and selling could take place.

There were many goods that were only grown and made in certain places and some parts of Europe could always grow a surplus. This led to trade between European countries in food. Salt, which was used to keep meats from rotting, was sent from France to Eastern Europe. The herbs and spices that nobles used in their foods led to a trade in pepper, ginger, cinnamon and other spices from the East Indies. Much of the sugar used in Europe came from Arabic countries. Considering how much ale and beer was drunk by people at this time (monks were given an allowance of between one and two gallons of ale per day), it is not surprising that beer and ale were also exported.



Medieval money-changers at work.

QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

1 Communication

Look carefully at Source A and answer the following:

- What are the skills that the people in this source have?
- Imagine you are the reeve in this source. Write a report to the lord of the manor describing how the serfs are working.

2 Look carefully at Source B. List all of the different types of work being done by the people in this source.

3 What does Source C show about the working conditions of people who dyed fabric?

4 Empathy

Look carefully at Source C. Write a conversation between the workers that describes what they are doing, what it is like to stir heavy material through boiling dye all day and some of the dangers of the job.

KEY TERMS

- seneschal
- bailiff
- reeve
- beadle
- hayward
- serf

FASCINATING FACTS

The first universities began during the Middle Ages. At first they did not have the rules or organisation that universities have today. At the University of Bologna in Italy, students were in charge—they hired teachers and punished them for lateness or not answering students' questions.