

KS3 History

Lesson 4 of an enquiry of 4 lessons

Was the Peasants' Revolt a threat to monarchic power?

Enquiry: How big a threat was the Peasants' Revolt to the power of monarchs?

Mr Madeley



Aftermath of the Peasants' Revolt?

Throughout June 1381, there were a number of small peasant rebellions across the country. These were quickly defeated by the King's forces. All the promises that Richard had made were forgotten. The ringleaders of the Peasants' Revolt were hunted down. Once they were captured, they were hanged.

Richard was determined that the peasants would remain peasants. There would be no challenging the order of English society. However, the lords were more careful when dealing with the common Englishman in the future. The Peasants' Revolt failed to suddenly change England but it contributed to the beginning of the end for the feudal system. For the peasants, though, they did succeed in one other matter - the Poll Tax was not collected again in the Middle Ages.



Was the Peasants' Revolt a threat to the king's power?

The Peasants' Revolt never aimed to challenge the king and his power. The peasants saw the king as being controlled and used by his royal advisors. They were willing to support and follow Richard. This was shown by Richard convincing the peasant army to leave London after the death of Wat Tyler. The peasants believed that the king would keep his promises.



Was the Peasants' Revolt a threat to the lord's power?

The power of the lords was tested. Historians debate about whether Richard was willing to keep his promises to the barons. The historian, Kathryn Warner, claims that Richard tried to end **serfdom** in November 1381. He was willing to pass a law abolishing it but only if Parliament supported him. Parliament, filled with lords, refused to abolish serfdom. This would have challenge the lords' power and wealth. This is because they would no longer have had the villeins to work for them without pay.

Ultimately, the Peasants' Revolt showed the lords that they could push the ordinary people so far before they rebelled. However, the lords could use force and the law. This ensured that they could not be properly challenged.



Were there other threats to monarchic power?

Kings of England had faced threats to their monarchic power before the Peasants' Revolt. If Richard had kept his promises then he may of increased royal power by gaining the full support of the ordinary people. However, the peasants were not the main threat to monarchic power. Richard would experience a similar threat to other monarchs. Richard failed to keep the support of his lords or Parliament. In the end, it was his lords not his peasants, who overthrew him. Richard was not the first king to be challenged by the lords. King John was forced to sign the Magna Carta. This limited monarchic power by making the king rule with help of the barons. Henry III had lost a war against the barons. This meant that the monarch had to rule with parliament's support.



Glossary

Overthrown - When a king is forced to give up the throne for someone else. This is usually done by using violence or through a civil war.

Serfdom - Another word for villeins and the fact that they were owned.



Comprehension Questions

1. What happened to the ringleaders of the Peasants' Revolt?
2. Did anything change as a result of the Peasants' Revolt?
3. Did the Peasants' Revolt challenge the power of the king?
4. What other challenges did the king face?
5. Was the power of the lords challenged by the Peasants' Revolt?

Starter sentence - The power of the lords was/was not challenged because...

