

Year 8 pupils of all abilities are learning about medieval England. Here is the opening of a pupil's end-of-unit essay. It was completed totally from memory.

of his favourite barons, William de Braose, he exiled him to Ireland and starved his wife and son to death. In 1215, the barons were marched to meet king John at Runnymede (soggy meadow) demanding he change his ways. They presented him with a document called the Magna Carta which stated the king could not tax without baron's permission, he could not send someone to prison without a fair trial by jury and most importantly he could not try to gain control over the Church. No sooner after signing it, John declared the Magna Carta invalid. This shows the barons were only a minor challenge to the king's power in the medieval period.

The peasants were not a significant challenge to the king's power in the medieval period because the king and his nobles successfully defeated rebellions such as the Peasants' Revolt in 1381. Watt Tyler and 4000 men rebelled against the arrogant nobleman John of Gaunt. They rebelled because John of Gaunt had established a new tax to pay for the hundred year war against France. A tax of 4p to be paid by all adults over the age of 14. However Watt Tyler and 200 rebel leaders were killed and 200 of the rebel leaders were hanged. The hanging of the leaders serves as an illustration that the hierarchical structure of the Feudal System continued unchanged and unchallenged. The Peasants' Revolt symbolises the dominance and supremacy of the king and his nobles in the medieval period. The most significant challenge to the king's power in the medieval period came from the powerful and hegemonic Church not disenfranchised peasants.

Notice the attention to detail. Crucial people, places and dates are recalled accurately and used to reinforce the argument: 'William de Braose, 1215, Runnymede (soggy meadow)'

The pupil makes a sophisticated independent judgement. He uses evidence of John's reaction after signing to challenge the importance of the barons' power.

The pupil demonstrates a clear understanding of the chronology and its significance. He accurately recalls the events of the Peasants' Revolt but challenges its real significance.

The pupil finishes by using high level conceptual vocabulary to reflect on the 'hierarchical structure of the Feudal System' which 'continues unchanged and unencumbered'. In this pupil's judgement it is the 'powerful hegemonic Church' that challenged the King's power not the 'disenfranchised peasants'.