

### Learning objectives

- Explore and understand significance criteria in history.
- Categorise consequences of the Peasants' Revolt effectively.
- Apply significance criteria effectively to the consequences of the Peasants' Revolt to make a substantiated judgement.

### Task 1: Retrieval practice

1. What did Richard II promise the rebels to encourage them to disperse?
2. What happened to the leading rebels in 1381?
3. Who was John Ball?
4. Why had the rebels attacked Simon Sudbury and buildings of the wealthy?
5. What government demand triggered the start of the Peasants' Revolt?

### Task 2: Significance criteria

Historians judge the significance of people and events in the past in several different ways. This allows them to come to a supported judgement. We are going to use these criteria:

- **Turning point:** did it change the course of events? Did people act differently as a result?
- **Long-lasting:** how long did the consequences continue to affect people?
- **Deep impact:** did the consequences deeply affect people's lives?

To 'warm up' your thinking on significance, pick an event from the past you have already studied (like the Battle of Hastings) and give it a score out of five for each of the significance criteria.

(Remember that an event does not have to have been positive for people for it to be significant - often very significant events caused a great deal of pain and suffering, like the Black Death.)



### Task 3: Categorising the consequences

Each of the consequences of the Peasants' Revolt in the table below can fit into one or more of these three categories. Discuss in your pairs/groups where they should go and add the letters of the events next to each bullet point category.

- **Political consequences** (things to do with power, who was in charge, how much power they had).
- **Social consequences** (things to do with the people and their place in the country).
- **Cultural consequences** (things to do with attitudes, religion and entertainment).

a. Richard II broke his promises to the rebels as soon as it was safe to do so. Wat Tyler had already been killed by Mayor Walworth. John Ball was hanged, as were hundreds of other 'leading' rebels.	b. The 1351 Statute of Labourers made it illegal for peasants to earn higher wages than before the Black Death, and Richard II swore after the revolt that peasants would remain 'rustics' (poorly-paid farm workers). However, the Statute was not always enforced because the population took a very long time to recover from the Black Death. Serfdom gradually died out.
c. Richard II was one of the few English kings to be usurped (successfully challenged for the crown). Some historians argue that the way he handled the Peasants' Revolt contributed to this because it made him arrogant. By the time of his downfall in 1399 he had very few supporters and his cousin took the throne from him.	d. John Ball had been a Lollard priest. The Lollards believed the official Church had lost sight of the teachings of Jesus. (This was partly a result of the Black Death when some people questioned the Church's powerlessness to stop all the suffering). Because Ball was a Lollard, the government linked Lollards to the threat of rebellion, and they were heavily persecuted. Some were burned as heretics.
e. No monarchs or governments tried to collect a poll tax again until 1990. Even then, there was such widespread resistance to it that it had to be abandoned. The revolt had clearly terrified the rich.	f. The English idiom 'fobbed off' is still used today - it means to trick or persuade someone to go away or stop asking for something. It comes from the event that triggered the revolt, when tax collectors arrived at the village of Fobbing in Essex and the villagers attacked them instead of paying their poll tax.
g. Wat Tyler and Jack Straw, despite being killed by Richard II's government, became popular heroes. Poems and songs were written about them.	h. Historian Steven Justice has argued that the 'peasants' of the revolt were well-organised and had clear political beliefs. He claims that 1381 saw the beginning of ideas about freedom amongst English commoners. These would later be developed and used by Levellers in the 17th century and Chartists in the 19th century.

### Task 4: Applying the significance criteria to the Peasants' Revolt

Discuss the consequences from task 3 again as you complete this grid. The consequences have been summarised for you in the table below, but you should still refer back to the longer versions in task 3 to aid your evaluation. Some examples have been added below.

	For each of these criteria, give the consequence a score out of five, with five being the most significant, and add your reasons.			These will help you make a more supported judgement.
Consequence	Turning point?	Long-lasting?	Deep impact?	Questions to ask
a. Richard II broke his promises to the rebels. John Ball was hanged, as were hundreds of other 'leading' rebels.				
b. Richard II swore after the revolt that peasants would remain 'rustics'. However, the Statute was not always enforced and serfdom gradually died out.				
c. Richard II was in 1399. The Peasants' Revolt may have contributed to this because it made him arrogant.				

d. John Ball had been a Lollard priest, so the government linked Lollards to the threat of rebellion, and they were heavily persecuted. Some were burned as heretics.		<i>4 - Persecution of the Lollards continued until the 16th century.</i>		
e. No monarchs or governments tried to collect a poll tax again until 1990. The revolt had clearly terrified the rich.	<i>4 - The government feared provoking another rebellion, so it changed its thinking.</i>			
f. The English idiom 'fobbed off' is still used today: it comes from when tax collectors arrived at the village of Fobbing in Essex and the villagers attacked them.			<i>1 - It gives the phrase an interesting story but did not affect anyone's life deeply.</i>	
g. Wat Tyler and Jack Straw, despite being killed by Richard II's government, became popular heroes. Poems and songs were written about them.				
h. Historian Steven Justice has argued that 1381 saw the beginning of ideas about freedom amongst English commoners. These would later be developed and used by others.				



### Task 5: Significance criteria

After discussing it with a partner, write a paragraph explaining to what extent the Peasants' Revolt was significant. You should use precise facts as evidence and refer to the significance criteria.

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### Teaching notes

This lesson is the final part of a four-lesson scheme of work on the Peasants' Revolt (see resources 35366, 35367, and 35368). It is designed to help students apply significance criteria effectively to the consequences of the Peasants' Revolt to make a substantiated judgement.

Task 4 could be used to inspire further research and extension work - the 'questions to ask' could provide a list of student-generated questions with many possibilities. Suitable activities could include pairing students up and tasking them to research each other's questions or collating all questions and then setting the whole class a list of the most common (or most interesting) questions.

### Answers

#### Task 1

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1. Richard II promised the rebels that he would accept their demands - an end to the poll tax, a new Magna Carta for all, and the end to Feudalism.
2. The leading rebels were found and executed, including the leaders Wat Tyler and John Ball.
3. John Ball was a priest who sympathised with the protesters in the Peasants' Revolt (or the 'Great Revolt') - he had been giving sermons critical of Feudalism for years prior to the Revolt.
4. The rebels attacked Simon Sudbury (the Archbishop of Canterbury) for two main reasons. The first was that they were angry about the poll tax - they were angry that the rich and poor had to pay the same amount. Secondly, the rebels had stormed the Tower of London in search of Richard II - when they did not find him, they attacked Sudbury and the king's main advisor as the rebels blamed them for the poll tax.
5. The start of the revolt was triggered by the imposition of a poll tax, and the king's increasingly harsh measures to collect it when they refused to pay.

#### Task 3

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Possible answers:

- Political consequences (things to do with power, who was in charge, how much power they had): a, c, e, h
- Social consequences (things to do with the people and their place in the country): b, h
- Cultural consequences (things to do with attitudes, religion and entertainment): d, f, g