**THE LIFE OF A SERF IN MEDIEVAL TIMES**

**INTRODUCTION**

* My name is James and I am a serf. A serf is a peasant who farms the land on a manor, which belongs to a Lord. I am tied to the land which means that I cannot move outside the village or marry anyone from another manor without the permission of the lord.
* I have to pay taxes to the lord and I also have to work on his private farm a few days a week. I have to give 10% of my crops to the church as a tax called a tithe

**HOME**

* I live in a very small house made out of wattle and daub
* It has one room with an earthen floor and a hearth in the middle where we cook our food. The smoke from the fire escapes through a hole in the roof.
* We eat and sleep in this one room. In winter we also have our animals sleeping with us so that they will be safe and warm.

**WORK**

* Most of my time is spent farming and I work very hard.
* Peasants use the open field system of farming. Each farmer has a strip of land in three different fields and they rotate the crops they grow each year
* Every year, one of these strips is kept fallow – this means that no crops are grown in it so that the ground can rest.
* I grow crops like wheat, oats and barley

**FOOD**

* Our main food is a dark bread made out of rye grain
* We also eat pottage which is a soup made from porridge, beans, peas and onions.
* We do not eat meat very often as we are too poor to buy it
* We drink ale/beer with our meals because the water here is not always very clean.

**CLOTHES**

* My wife makes all of our clothes.
* I wear a short tunic with woollen leggings/stockings. My wife wears a long woollen tunic and a wimple (headdress).
* We wear sheepskin cloaks and woollen hats to keep us warm in winter.

**ENTERTAINMENT**

* On Sundays and feast days, we serfs like to have a good time.
* We put on religious plays, and play chess and noughts and crosses.
* We also like to have archery contests, wrestle, dance and sing.

**CRIME**

* The bailiff is in charge of law and order in my village and he decides on the punishments if crimes are committed.
* Thieves often have their hands chopped off. Gossipers are put in the dunking chair and plunged in and out of cold water. Murderers are hanged. For smaller crimes, people are put in the stocks and other serfs throw rotten fruit and vegetables at them.
* I a serf escapes from a manor and hides out for a year and a day, he becomes a free man.