


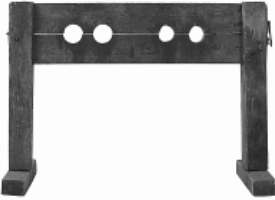

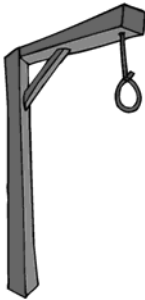
# Crime and Punishment

## Punishment

Throughout the medieval period it was believed that the only way to keep order was to make sure that the people were scared of the punishments given for crimes committed. For this reason all crimes from stealing to murder had harsh punishments.

Although there were gaols, they were generally used to hold a prisoner awaiting trial rather than as a means of punishment. Fines, shaming (being placed in stocks), mutilation (cutting off a part of the body) or death were the most common forms of punishment.

The table below shows typical punishments given for the most usual crimes.

Punishment	Description	Crime
<p>Fine</p> 	<p>A sum of money had to be paid to the Lord of the Manor or the King. Most people could not afford the fines so faced the punishments listed below.</p>	<p>Most minor crimes</p>
<p>Shame</p> 	<p>A period of time had to be spent in the stocks. The stocks were usually positioned in a public place and villagers would often throw rotten vegetables at the criminal.</p>	<p>Drunkenness, Swearing, Telling lies</p>
<p>Mutilation</p> 	<p>Cutting off part of the body. Amputation of ears, hands and tongue were all common punishments.</p>	<p>Stealing Hunting on royal ground without permission</p>
<p>Death</p> 	<p>The usual method of execution for men was by hanging. Most towns had a gibbet and bodies were left to rot as a warning to others. For treason the punishment was to be hung drawn and quartered.</p> <p>Women were usually strangled and burnt.</p> <p>Execution by beheading was used as a punishment for nobles found guilty of treason</p>	<p>Treason Murder, Arson, Mugging, Adultery Forgery, Guilty by Trial by Ordeal</p>

# **Guilty or Not Guilty**

There was no police force in the medieval period so law-enforcement was in the hands of the community.

## **The Manorial Court**

The manorial court dealt with all but the most serious crimes. It was held at various intervals during the year and all villagers had to attend or pay a fine.

All men were placed in groups of ten called a tithing. Each tithing had to make sure that no member of their group broke the law. If a member of a tithing broke a law then the other members had to make sure that he went to court.

The Lord's steward was in charge of the court. A jury of twelve men was chosen by the villagers. The jury had to collect evidence and decide whether the accused was guilty or not guilty and, if found guilty, what the punishment should be.

## **The King's Court – Trial by Ordeal**

Serious crimes were heard by the King's court. The accused had to face trial by ordeal to decide whether they were guilty or not guilty.

### **Ordeal by Fire**

The accused had to pick up a red hot iron bar and hold it while they walked three or four paces. Their hand was then bandaged. After three days they had to return to the court where the bandages were removed. If the wound was beginning to heal they were innocent but if the wound showed no sign of healing then they were pronounced Guilty.

### **Ordeal by Water**

The accused had their hands and feet tied together. They were then thrown into water. If they floated they were guilty but if they sank they were innocent.

### **Ordeal by Combat**

Noblemen would fight (usually to the death) in combat with their accuser. The winner of the battle would be considered to be in the right.

After 1215 Trial by Ordeal was replaced by Trial by Jury