

What was life like in Tudor Times?

Tudor England was a farming society. Most of the population (over 90%) lived in small villages and made their living from farming. Under the rule of the Tudors, England became a more peaceful and richer place. Towns grew larger and the mining of coal, tin and lead became very popular. Home life was very different to what it is today. Water was collected from village pumps, wells or streams, and toilets were a hole in a ground by the back door.



There was no proper drainage in towns. Open sewers often ran straight through streets into river and wells, from where people collected drinking water. All waste, including toilet waste, was dumped in the streets. Diseases were common and spread very quickly.

Townhouses were built close together on both sides of the street which made the streets gloomy as they blocked the sunlight. The streets were also narrow and crowded, which made it easy for criminals to rob and steal from shops, traders and people.



Most ordinary homes in Tudor times were half-timbered. They had wooden frames and the spaces between were filled with small sticks and wet clay, called wattle and daub. Tudor houses are best known for their 'black and white' effect. The less well off lived in more basic houses, made of wooden frames, straw and mud. There were window shaped openings to let light in, but no panes of glass to keep cold air out. They used bits of cloth to act like basic curtains.



Wealthy Tudors liked to show off their riches. The clothes people wore, the food they ate and the homes they lived in were signs of their place in society. They could afford all kinds of meat and fish and drank expensive wine. Sports and pastimes were also signs of their wealth. The rich had time for hunting, jousting, tennis and bowls.



On the other hand, the poor had to work hard and struggled to survive. They worked six days a week and only had Holy days and public holidays off work. They ate coarse grey bread made of rye and barley. Meat was a luxury, but poor people kept animals to provide milk, cheese and bread. Life for the poor in Tudor times was harsh. If harvest failed, it was tempting for the poor to steal food. When they did break the law, they risked being publicly stoned or hanged.



1. Name two good things that happened under the rule of the Tudors.
2. How did the working class people earn their living?
3. Which three products became popular to mine in Tudor Times?
4. How was home life in Tudor times different to today?
5. How did diseases spread in Tudor times?
6. What were the disadvantages of houses being built close together?
7. What were rich Tudor houses made from?
8. How did poor people try to keep their houses warm?
9. What things were signs of wealth in Tudor times?
10. What food did rich and poor people eat in Tudor times?
11. What pastimes did the rich enjoy in Tudor Times?
12. What was likely to happen if the harvest failed?

Now

Look at the titles below, and match them up to the pictures used in the text about the Tudors.

Tudor England was a farming society
Water was collected from village pumps, wells or streams
Townhouses were built close together both sides of the street
The streets were narrow and crowded
Tudor houses are best known for their 'black and white' effect
The poor people's houses had no windows
The clothes that the rich wore was a sign of their wealth
The poor had to work hard and struggled to survive