A TEACHING RESOURCE - THE MEDIEVAL SURVIVAL GAME

Teacher's Notes

This activity is intended as a reinforcement and extension exercise to the main studies of the medieval period. It can easily be adapted for local studies, by substituting open ended terms like 'town' with a familiar local town name.

The main aim is to promote discussion and some comparisons with their own lives and experiences.

Some additional points worth remembering are;

1. village communities were often very small and needed to be self sufficient. Markets were held in local towns usually under licence from the king, which meant he had to be paid rent.
2. boys were expected to learn to use a bow at approx. 7 years of age, and join weekly practice sessions.
3. both men and women were responsible for the work of the village, and everyone would be involved with the harvest. Children were expected to contribute to the work as well.
4. honey does have antiseptic properties and was frequently used for healing wounds.
5. rabbits were kept in warrens and considered to be the property of the lord of the manor.
6. traditionally it is still said that outbreaks of plague caused a 30% death rate in the population. However, more recent detailed research shows that the death rate was at least 50%, and some areas could suffer as much as 70% reduction in population, which accounts for the considerable numbers of deserted and abandoned villages, in some parts of the country.
7. it was not unusual for cattle to die after an outbreak of plague in a community. This was probably linked to the fact they may not have been looked after very well while the villagers were sick.

TO PLAY

You will need to download and print off the board and twenty villagers. According to your own classroom arrangements, you may choose for the game to be played in groups of two or three 'villages', or for each 'village' to play alone. This will determine the number of boards and villagers you need to print off. Each village group needs 20 villagers - 10 male and 10 female. The villager sheets can be printed on card and sliced into separate individuals. If this is not possible, then lost village members will have to be crossed off a paper village sheet, rather than physically removed.

To play the game each group (1 - 3 children) represents a village and will need a small item of identification for their village e.g. eraser, pencil sharpener, coloured paper clip etc. to move around the board. Coloured counters are ideal for this if available.

The villages move around the board by tossing a two pence piece. If it comes down 'heads' the village moves forward one place (one head on the coin, so only move one space). 'Tails' means move forward two places, either 2 or two appears on the reverse of the coin. If playing in groups each village takes turns to toss the coin and move.

There are various instructions that need to be followed on the board when arriving on each square. These should be carried out before throwing the coin again. When the instruction is 'Throw 1 before moving on' the village counter stays in its place, until one is thrown, then the village moves forward one place. The same applies to the instruction to 'Throw 2 before moving', when the village cannot be moved until the 2 is thrown.

Further discussion points - what evidence is there that the villagers had other animals they cared for? Bees were kept in 'hives' called skeps made from straw. Were all the surviving villagers able to work, i.e. were they all adults? Would it be possible for the village to survive if they were all men or all women?

1 It is Spring, the crops are growing well, the 5 cows belonging to the village are giving plenty of milk and the 8 chickens are healthy. Move forward one space.	**2** One boy becomes a monk and goes to live in a monastery, so he can learn to read and write. Remove one male. Throw again.	**3** Two men join the army as archers, and leave the village. Remove two men. Throw again.	**4** Two girls get married and move to other villages. Remove two women. Throw again.
5 Two babies are born. Put two people back into the village. Move on one space.	**6** Plague is brought into the village on some old clothes. Six people die. Throw 2 and move forward two spaces.	**7** Two men are caught poaching rabbits. They are put in the village stocks. Throw 2 and move forward two spaces	**8** Three cows die. Move backwards one place.
9 One of the boys gets accidentally shot during archery practice. One of the village women uses honey to heal the wound. Throw 1 before moving on again.	**10** A baby girl is born. Put a girl back into the village. Throw again.	**11** Good harvest. Two women sell eggs and butter in the town market. Move on one place.	**12** Four chickens are killed by a fox. A girl chases it away, but falls in the river and is drowned. Take out one girl. Throw again.
13 One person gets badly cut when cutting the corn during the harvest. The cut turns septic and they die of blood poisoning. Take out one person. Throw again.	**14** During a bad storm a tree blows down and crushes a house with three people in it. Two are killed. Take out two people. Throw again.	**15** Very cold winter. The water is frozen and food is short. Three chickens are killed for food. Baby girl dies. Remove one girl. Throw again.	**16** Two people die from a spotty sickness. Remove two people. Throw again.
17 The cold winter goes on. A cow is killed for food; only one cow is left now. Throw again.	**18** One girl dies after eating poisonous berries. Remove one girl. Throw again.	**19** The cow has a calf. Move forward one place.	**20** The year has ended and the Spring has returned. How many people are left in the village? Would you stay or leave the village? Where would you go? Why?