

Edexcel GCSE History: Crime and Punishment Revision Guide

Medieval England (c1000–c1500)

What were the main crimes?

- Most crime involved **theft**, often due to poverty and lack of resources.
- **Violence** was common, especially in disputes and feuds.
- **Treason** and **heresy** were considered very serious crimes against the king and the Church.
- **Outlawry** was used when someone avoided justice; they became outside the law and could be killed without punishment.

How were people punished?

- **Fines** and **public shaming** (e.g. stocks) were used for minor crimes to deter others.
- **Corporal punishment** like whipping was used to physically punish offenders.
- **Capital punishment** was used for serious crimes like treason (e.g. hanging).
- Early on, the **wergild** system allowed victims to be paid compensation (later replaced by fines paid to the king).

How was law enforced?

- Law enforcement was **community-based**: people in a tithing (group of 10 households) were responsible for each other.
- The **hue and cry** meant the whole village had to help catch criminals if an alarm was raised.
- **Church courts** dealt with moral and religious crimes and offered more lenient punishments.
- Before 1215, accused people might be tried by **ordeal**, believing God would decide their innocence.

What were attitudes toward crime and punishment?

- Crime was seen as a **sin against God**, so punishments often had a religious element.
- **Collective responsibility** was expected—everyone had to help keep law and order.
- Harsh punishments were meant to **deter others**, not rehabilitate.
- The Church had a powerful influence, affecting both laws and punishments.

Comprehension Questions:

1. What types of crimes were most common in medieval England?
2. How did the wergild system work?
3. What was the purpose of the hue and cry?
4. Why were punishments often harsh and public?

Quick Quiz: Medieval Crime and Punishment (True or False)

In medieval England, if a person did not join the hue and cry when a crime was committed, they could be fined.

Trial by ordeal was used to let the king decide if someone was guilty or innocent.

In early medieval England, the wergild was a fine paid to the victim's family as compensation for their injury.

Only priests and nobles could use benefit of the clergy to avoid harsh punishments in medieval England.

The most common crimes in medieval England were violent crimes, especially murder.

Exam Questions

- **12 Mark Question:** Explain why the Church had so much influence over law and order in Medieval England.
- **16 Mark Question:** "Medieval punishments were designed to deter others rather than reform the criminal." How far do you agree?

Early Modern England (c1500–c1700)

What were the main crimes?

- **Treason and heresy** increased due to changes in religion during the Reformation.
- **Vagrancy** became a major concern as unemployment rose, partly due to population growth and enclosure.
- **Witchcraft** was treated as a serious crime—people believed witches caused harm using magic.

- **Smuggling and poaching** grew as taxes increased and poverty spread.

How were people punished?

- **Whipping and branding** were common punishments for vagrants.
- People found guilty of **heresy** could be burned at the stake.
- **Pillory and stocks** were used to shame criminals in public.
- **Transportation** to America or Australia began in the 1600s for repeat or serious offenders.

How was law enforced?

- Law enforcement was still local: **parish constables** and **night watchmen** patrolled towns.
- **Justices of the Peace (JPs)** took on more responsibility for law and order.
- There was no national police force, but rewards were offered to catch criminals.
- Communities continued to play a key role in enforcement.

What were attitudes toward crime and punishment?

- People feared **rebellion** and **disorder** due to social and religious changes.
- Belief in **supernatural causes** for crime led to harsh punishment for witches.
- Punishments were harsh to **discourage crime** and protect the social order.
- The rich wanted to control the poor and limit threats to their power.

Comprehension Questions:

1. Why did witchcraft become a serious crime in this period?
2. What role did JPs play in law enforcement?
3. How were vagrants punished and why?
4. How did transportation work as a punishment?

Exam Questions

- **12 Mark Question:** Why did witchcraft become a more serious crime between c1500 and c1700?
- **16 Mark Question:** "Punishments became harsher in the early modern period due to the fear of disorder." How far do you agree?

Industrial Britain (c1700–c1900)

What were the main crimes?

- **Smuggling** increased due to high taxes on goods like tea and alcohol.
- **Highway robbery** was common due to isolated roads.
- **Political protest** and **trade union activity** increased as workers demanded rights.
- Crime in cities rose as they became crowded and poverty grew.

How were people punished?

- The **Bloody Code** made over 200 crimes punishable by death, mostly for property offences.
- **Public executions** were used to terrify people but were stopped in 1868.
- **Transportation** continued until 1868 as an alternative to execution.
- Prisons were reformed to focus on **rehabilitation** with separate and silent systems.

How was law enforced?

- The **Bow Street Runners** (1749) were London's first paid detectives.
- The **Metropolitan Police Force** was established by Sir Robert Peel in 1829.
- The **Criminal Investigation Department (CID)** was set up in 1842 to tackle serious crime.
- The police became more organised and professional throughout the century.

What were attitudes toward crime and punishment?

- Growing belief in **reform** and rehabilitation instead of just punishment.
- Campaigners like **Elizabeth Fry** worked to improve prison conditions.
- The public began to view the death penalty as unfair, especially for minor crimes.
- A focus on preventing crime, not just responding to it.

Comprehension Questions:

1. Why was the Bloody Code introduced?
2. What was the role of the Bow Street Runners?
3. Why did transportation end?

4. What changes did Elizabeth Fry promote in prisons?

Exam Questions

- **12 Mark Question:** Why was the Metropolitan Police Force established in 1829?
- **16 Mark Question:** "The most important change in crime and punishment in the period c1700–c1900 was the development of the police." How far do you agree?

Modern Britain (c1900–present)

What were the main crimes?

- **Cybercrime** and **identity theft** have grown with the rise of technology.
- **Terrorism** has been a significant concern since the 1970s and 9/11.
- **Hate crimes** against minority groups are now recognised as criminal offences.
- Overall, violent street crime has decreased due to better policing.

How were people punished?

- The **death penalty** was abolished in 1965 for all crimes.
- **Probation, community service, and electronic tagging** are common punishments.
- Technology has improved courts' ability to track evidence.
- Young offenders are treated differently in **Youth Offending Institutions**.

How was law enforced?

- **National police forces** use radio, CCTV, and computer databases.
- **Specialist units** work on terrorism, organised crime, and fraud.
- **Forensics and DNA evidence** have improved solving crimes.
- Reforms like **Police and Criminal Evidence Act (1984)** protect citizens' rights.

What were attitudes toward crime and punishment?

- Focus on **rehabilitation** and addressing causes of crime.
- Concern for **human rights** and fair treatment of prisoners.
- Media shapes public views on crime, sometimes causing fear.
- Debate continues over police powers and effectiveness.

Comprehension Questions:

1. When was the death penalty abolished and why?
2. How has technology changed modern policing?
3. What are hate crimes?
4. How are young offenders treated differently today?

Exam Questions

- **12 Mark Question:** Why has the nature of crime changed since 1900?
- **16 Mark Question:** "Modern punishments are more effective than those used in earlier periods." How far do you agree?

	Types of crime	Types of punishment	Law enforcement	Attitudes
Medieval				
Early Modern				

Industrial				
Modern				
What's changed?				

Anglo-Saxons and Normans Revision Guide

1. What was Anglo-Saxon England like before 1066?

- **Government:** England was divided into earldoms, ruled by powerful earls; the king relied on the Witan (council of advisors) for major decisions.
- **Law and order:** Collective responsibility; tithings, hue and cry, and wergild used to maintain peace.

- **Society:** Clear hierarchy—king, earls, thegns, ceorls, peasants, slaves; most people lived in villages and farmed.
- **Economy:** Strong trading links with Europe; towns such as York and London were important centres.

Comprehension Questions

1. What role did the Witan play in Anglo-Saxon government?
2. How did tithings help maintain law and order?
3. What was the basic social hierarchy in Anglo-Saxon England?
4. Why were towns such as York and London important?

2. Why was there a succession crisis in 1066?

- **Edward the Confessor left no heir**, creating uncertainty and competition.
- **Three claimants emerged:** Harold Godwinson (chosen by Witan), William of Normandy (claimed Edward promised him the throne), and Harald Hardrada (Viking claim).
- **Harold Godwinson crowned quickly**, as he was the most powerful English noble.
- **Leads to two invasions:** Hardrada in the north, William from Normandy.

Comprehension Questions

1. Why did Edward the Confessor's death create a crisis?
2. What were the key claims of the three main contenders?
3. Why was Harold Godwinson crowned quickly?
4. How did the crisis lead to invasions?

3. Why did William win the Battle of Hastings?

- **Harold's army exhausted** after marching north and then rushing south after Stamford Bridge.
- **William used mixed tactics:** archers, infantry, cavalry, and feigned retreats.
- **Norman leadership stronger:** William controlled the battlefield and kept discipline.
- **Luck and timing:** wind change allowed William to sail; Harold killed in battle, collapsing English resistance.

Comprehension Questions

1. Why was Harold's army tired before the battle?
2. What tactics did William use during the battle?
3. How did leadership affect the outcome?
4. Why was Harold's death important?

4. How did William control England after 1066?

- **Castles:** Motte-and-bailey castles built quickly to intimidate and control important areas.
- **Feudal system:** Land taken from Anglo-Saxons and given to Norman barons in return for loyalty and soldiers.
- **Church reforms:** Anglo-Saxon bishops replaced with Normans; Church used to spread Norman authority.
- **Land surveys:** Domesday Book recorded land, taxes, and resources to strengthen royal control.

Comprehension Questions

1. Why did William build motte-and-bailey castles?
2. What was the purpose of the feudal system?
3. How did William use the Church to control England?
4. What was the Domesday Book used for?

5. How did the Normans change landholding and power?

- **Tenants-in-chief replaced Anglo-Saxon earls,** reducing the chance of rebellion.
- **Oath of loyalty:** All landholders swore the Oath of Salisbury to William.
- **Knight service:** Soldiers owed directly to the king through feudal obligations.
- **More central control:** William reduced the size and power of earldoms.

Comprehension Questions

1. Who replaced the Anglo-Saxon earls and why?
2. What was the Oath of Salisbury?
3. How did knight service help William control the country?
4. Why did William reduce the size of earldoms?

6. What rebellions did William face and why?

The main rebellions:

- **1067–68: Rebellions in the South West (Exeter):** Caused by high taxes and dislike of Norman rule. William besieged Exeter and built a castle.
- **1069: Rebellion in the North:** Led by Edgar Atheling, supported by the Danes. Northern hatred of Norman rule was strong.
- **1070–71: Hereward the Wake (Ely):** Resistance in the Fens; local anger over land seizures.

How William responded:

- **Harrying of the North:** Villages burned, crops destroyed, population devastated to stop further rebellion.
- **Castle-building:** Used everywhere rebellions occurred.
- **Replacing Anglo-Saxons:** After rebellions, even more land given to Normans.
- **Harsh punishments:** Ensured fear and obedience.

Comprehension Questions

1. Why did people in Exeter rebel in 1067–68?
2. Who led the northern rebellion in 1069?
3. What methods did William use during the Harrying of the North?
4. What happened during Hereward the Wake's rebellion?

7. How did Norman rule change England?

- **Language:** Norman French became language of government; Anglo-Saxon language evolved into English.
- **Law and justice:** Trial by combat added; forest laws introduced to protect royal hunting lands.
- **Church:** Became more centralised and Norman-led; architecture changed to Romanesque.
- **Everyday life:** Most people remained peasants, but towns grew and trade increased.

Comprehension Questions

1. How did the Norman Conquest affect language in England?
2. What new type of trial did the Normans introduce?
3. How did the Church change under Norman rule?
4. What were forest laws and why were they unpopular?

Sample Edexcel Exam Questions

4-Mark Questions

- Describe two features of the feudal system introduced by William.
- Describe two features of motte-and-bailey castles.

12-Mark Questions

- Explain why William was able to win the Battle of Hastings in 1066.

- Explain why there were rebellions against Norman rule between 1067 and 1071.
- Explain why the Norman Conquest changed landholding in England.

16-Mark + Judgement Questions

- ‘The most important reason William maintained control of England was the use of castles.’ How far do you agree?
- ‘The biggest change brought by the Norman Conquest was the change to the Church.’ How far do you agree?

Weimar and Nazi Germany Revision Guide

1. What problems did Germany face after WWI? (Weimar begins)

- **War defeat + abdication:** Kaiser abdicated; new republic created suddenly.
- **Treaty of Versailles:** Blamed Germany for war, reduced army, took land, and demanded reparations.
- **Economic hardship:** High unemployment, food shortages, and debt.
- **Political instability:** Many groups disliked democracy; frequent uprisings.

Comprehension Questions

1. Why was the new republic created in 1918–19?
2. What was one key term of the Treaty of Versailles?
3. How did defeat in WWI affect Germany’s economy?
4. Why was democracy unpopular with some groups?

2. How did Weimar recover 1924–1929?

- **Stresemann’s leadership:** Introduced new currency (Rentenmark) to end hyperinflation.
- **Dawes Plan:** USA loans helped rebuild industry.
- **Improved stability:** Fewer attempts to overthrow government.
- **International respect:** Germany joined the League of Nations in 1926.

Comprehension Questions

1. What new currency helped stop hyperinflation?
2. How did the Dawes Plan help Germany?
3. Why did Germany become more stable after 1924?
4. What did joining the League of Nations show?

3. Why did the Nazis gain support?

- **Great Depression:** Mass unemployment made people turn to extreme parties.
- **Hitler's promises:** Jobs, strong leadership, and removal of the Treaty of Versailles.
- **Propaganda:** Nazis used posters, speeches, radio to spread simple messages.
- **Weakness of others:** Weimar governments seemed weak and unable to fix problems.

Comprehension Questions

1. How did unemployment help the Nazis?
2. What did Hitler promise voters?
3. How did propaganda help the Nazi Party?
4. Why did some people lose faith in Weimar politicians?

4. How did Hitler become Chancellor and then Dictator?

- **1933: Hitler appointed Chancellor** because he was popular and elites thought they could control him.
- **Reichstag Fire:** Blamed on communists; emergency powers used to arrest opponents.
- **Enabling Act:** Allowed Hitler to make laws without the Reichstag.
- **Eliminating opposition:** Trade unions banned; political parties banned; Night of the Long Knives.

Comprehension Questions

1. Why was Hitler appointed Chancellor in 1933?
2. How did the Reichstag Fire help Hitler?
3. What did the Enabling Act allow him to do?
4. What happened to Hitler's political opponents?

5. What was life like in Nazi Germany?

- **Control:** Gestapo and SS enforced fear and obedience.
- **Women:** Encouraged to marry, have children, and stay at home.
- **Youth:** Hitler Youth and League of German Girls taught loyalty.
- **Persecution:** Jews and other groups faced discrimination, violence, and exclusion.

Comprehension Questions

1. What was the role of the Gestapo?
2. How were women expected to behave?
3. Why were youth groups important for the Nazis?

4. Who was persecuted under Nazi rule?

Sample Edexcel Exam Questions

12-Mark Questions

- Explain why the Nazis gained support during the Great Depression.
- Explain why Hitler was able to become dictator of Germany by 1934.

16-Mark + Judgement Questions

- 'The most important reason the Nazis came to power was the Great Depression.' How far do you agree?
- 'Nazi policies towards young people were successful.' How far do you agree?