

Terms for Common Entrance History

A	
Abbot	A man in charge of an abbey or monastery ; often a person of great influence. He was elected by his fellow monks, often from within the monastery itself. He was expected to be fair and not give orders that were wrong. He was like a father to all the monks. He was assisted in this work by a prior. <i>An abbess was a woman in charge of an abbey or nunnery.</i>
Alderman	A member of the governing council of a town . There were normally up to 24 aldermen, who were under the leadership of an elected mayor. Also known as a jurat. Also the head of a merchant guild.
Anarchy	This occurs when there is a lack of rule or order and often as a result of the weakness of the current ruling monarch. An anarchist is someone who seeks to create anarchy and believes government is both harmful and unnecessary. An example of anarchy is the chaos and lawlessness during the civil war of Stephen's reign -1135-1153.
Apprentice	Apprenticeship was the most common method of entering a craft guild and this enabled masters to control the quality of its workers. The apprenticeship could last from 5-12 years. His parents would pay a master craftsman to take him on, often from the age of seven. The master taught him the skills of the job and the boy lived in the master's house and was provided with food and clothes. <i>When ready he could become a journeyman and later a master craftsman.</i>
Arquebus	A heavy portable matchlock gun invented during the 15 th Century. Also called hackbut. It weighed up to 8 kg and could fire an ounce shot approx 100 metres. It was cumbersome and required a forked staff to support it when fired. The butt was held against the gunner's chest.
Assize	A sitting of a court of justice in which criminals were tried by an itinerant judge; Twelve local men were expected to prepare the cases and present them to the judge who would then decide on the verdict. One of the most famous assizes was the Bloody Assizes of Judge Jeffries during the reign of James II. Also a royal law e.g. Assize of Arms.
B	
Bailey	The ward or courtyard inside the castle walls , includes exercise area and parade ground. Several buildings such as stables, barracks, chapel and stores would be found built against the walls. In times of siege, animals would graze the grassed area.
Bailiff	The head villager who oversaw the farming of the lord's land. He met regularly with the lord or his steward to discuss matters. He then instructed the reeve who ensured that the required work was carried out. He would be paid a wage and would often have accommodation and meals in the manor house.
Barbican	The gateway or outworks defending the drawbridge that was often seen as a castle's weak spot. Often built at right angles to the drawbridge to restrict the use of battering rams. It served to narrow and delay the advance of the enemy. Often reinforced by a series of portcullises and murder holes as seen in Beaumaris Castle
Baron	A term used to describe important landowners and military leaders who were below the king and many of whom were tenants in chief . They became increasingly powerful at the expense of the king as seen by the Magna Carta.
Bondage	The owing of heavy labour services in return for a small grant of land . This system kept the peasants (serfs) of England (Villeins, Bordars and Cottars) in near slavery. This system lasted until 1430. A bondman was almost totally under the control of the lord and unable to leave the village without the lord's permission

C	
Chainmail	Flexible squares or garments of small, interlinked iron rings for armour . It proved to be very heavy and cumbersome and was gradually replaced by ever more reliable and increasingly flexible plate armour. A suit of chain mail could weigh up to 20kgs.
Chancellor	The highest royal official, often acting as regent; called justiciar under the Normans. Until about the 13th century, few people besides priests, clerks, and monks were literate, and the chancellor was normally a churchmen. As keeper of the great seal used to authenticate royal documents, the chancellor became, in most medieval kingdoms, the most powerful official.
Charter	An important royal document sold to a town. The charter allowed the town to govern themselves by electing a council of Alderman led by an elected mayor, build walls around a town, make laws for the town, and to fix their own prices and local taxes. Lords and kings who wanted to make quick money often sold charters to towns. London was granted its charter of freedom in 1130 by Henry I.
Crusade	A holy war. A fighting pilgrimage. Military expeditions organized by Christians against the Muslims to recapture Jerusalem and other holy places, particularly the shrine of the Holy Sepulchre. Part of the program of aggressive Christianity encouraged by various popes. The crusaders symbol was a red cross. There were nine crusades in total, although the First Crusade was the only successful venture.
D	
Domain	(demesne) - The part of the lord's manorial lands reserved for his own use and not allocated to his peasants or freeholder tenants. Peasants worked the demesne for a specified number of days per week. The demesne may either be scattered among the peasants land, or a separate area, more commonly the meadow and orchard lands.
Domesday Survey	A survey ordered by William I in 1086. He wanted to establish whether correct amounts of tax were being paid to him and to assess the payment of geld. (war tax). The officials compiled detailed accounts of the estates of the king and of his tenants in chief (those who held their land by direct services to him). From these documents the king's clerks compiled a summary, which is the Domesday Book.
E	
Excommunication	A form of church punishment by which a person is excluded from the communion, the rites of a church, (including burial) and the rights of church membership. There were two kinds of excommunication, that which makes a person <i>toleratus</i> , tolerated, in which case he could be spoken to, and that which makes him <i>vitandus</i> , one who is to be avoided. The latter was for more serious offences.
Exchequer	Introduced by Henry I. An off- shoot of the Magnum Concilium. Royal department dealing with taxes (counted on chequered board). Headed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer aided by Treasurer, and the Justiciar . Sheriffs, present reports to the exchequer at Easter and Michaelmas.
F	
Fallow	Medieval farming used a method called crop rotation. In a three-field system, every third year a field was left fallow (empty). It would naturally turn to grass and clover, that would provide grazing for cattle in the autumn who fertilised the field naturally. The grass, clover and dung were then ploughed back into the soil, revitalising it.
Feudalism	The social system under which the kings granted land to vassals in return for military or farming services. Along with this granted land, came rights and duties and they were bound by personal loyalty.
Fief	Land granted to a nobleman or knight in return for military service. The land contained a number of unfree peasants who were attached; the land was supposed to be sufficient to support the vassal and supply him an income. Also called a holding

G	
Garderobe	A toilet, found mainly in medieval castles , so called because clothes were hung there as the stink kept moths away. It consisted of a wooden bench that overhung the outside of a tower. A hole cut into the bench provided a sitting position. Human excrement then fell straight into the moat.
Gleaning	The picking up of individual grains of corn from the strips left behind after harvesting. This job was carried out by the women and children of the village.
Glebe	The village land that had been granted to the church, and off which the priest lived.
Guild	In early towns merchant guilds looked after numerous traders. As towns grew, craft guilds represented members of a particular trade e.g. weavers. Each organisation was headed by a warden and two searchers. The guilds regulated all aspects of each craft in a town. Guild members were forbidden to compete with each other, and merchants were required to sell at a "just price".
H	
Heraldry	The science of organising patterns on battle shields, flags and armour so that each was unique and clear and knights were not killed accidentally by their own side. There were strict rules that had to be followed. Heralds kept a record of patterns in order to avoid duplication.
Heretic	A fellow Christian who believed in different forms of worship. e.g. a Lollard. A term used frequently during the Reformation and Counter-Reformation where individuals such as Cranmer and Ridley were not seen as following the recognised religion of the country.
Housecarl	Also spelled Huscarl, from Old Norse meaning "house man". He was a member of the personal or household troops or bodyguard of Saxon and Scandinavian kings. Housecarls were famous for their great personal loyalty to their king and in exchange they received booty and lived in the kings household or court.
I	
Interdict	The power of the Pope to order all churchmen in a country to stop holding all church services including marriages, funerals and baptism. England was placed under an interdict in John's reign (1208). Interdicts or the threat of an interdict were frequently used, against monarchs who would not do what the Pope wanted.
J	
Joust	Single tournament combat battle between two knights. Riders were separated by a fence called a tilt. The object of the joust was to unhorse, or unhelm (knock off the helmet) his opponent, or to break his lance by a fair and square blow on his opponents shield or helmet. Points were awarded for a fair break of a lance and for a square blow to shield or helmet. <i>6 to 8 courses were run by the knights, and umpires kept the score by a regular system of points. (Points were also lost for a) missing a stroke, b) striking the horse of an opponent, c) hitting below the belt, d) hitting your opponent in the back, e) striking the lance across the body instead of with the point. f) striking the saddle of your opponent.)</i> Early on before strict regulations were brought in to control the safety of combatants, there were two types of joust. Joute à Outrance to the death with a pointed lance or a Joute à Plaissance with a blunted lance.
Judge on assize	An important travelling royal judge who checked up on local justice. Used effectively by both Henry I and Henry II to thwart the abuses of certain barons.
Justiciar	The king's chief official in Norman England. It originated in the king's need for a responsible person who could take a wide view of the affairs of the kingdom, act as regent when the king was abroad, and on other occasions took charge of those matters with which the king had no time to deal.

K	
Knigh	The first medieval knights were professional cavalry warriors, some of whom were vassals holding lands as fiefs from the lords in whose armies they served. The process of entering knighthood often became formal with him having to become a page at about seven, then serving as a squire before eventually being knighted. The ideals to which a knight had to follow were prowess, loyalty, generosity and courtesy.
M	
Martyr	A person who died because of their religious beliefs , or through defending the Church. e.g. Becket, Latimer. Martyrdom refers to the death or suffering of a martyr.
Merchant Adventurers	A company of English merchants who engaged in trade with the Netherlands and Northwest Germany from the early 15 th century to 17 th century. The company, principally engaged in the export of finished cloth from the prosperous English woollen industry. <i>By the middle of the 16th century, as much as ¾ of English foreign trade was controlled by the London officers of the company, many of whom served as financiers and advisers to the Tudor monarchs.</i>
Monastery	The range of buildings where monks lived and worshipped; if large, called an abbey and run by an abbot . Most monasteries followed a similar layout with the church and cloisters at its centre.
O	
Ordeal	Method used to determine guilt or innocence with God acting as the Judge. Methods used included trial by fire and water. If found guilty, sentence would be passed Abolished during the reign of Henry II.
P	
Parliament	In Medieval England, a meeting of important landholders and townsmen (burgesses) called by the king. First parliament called by Simon de Montfort in 1264, and his ideas were further developed by Edward I's Model Parliament in 1295.
Penance	A voluntary, religious punishment to show sorrow e.g. Henry II's penance in 1174. Punishment could take various forms such as whipping, wearing a horse hair shirt, limited to eating bread, and drinking water for a set period of time.
Pilgrim	A man or woman making a journey for religious reasons . These pilgrimages were to holy places such as Rome, Compostella, Jerusalem and Canterbury. These trips helped people to atone (make up) for their sins.
Poll Tax	A new tax on each person (poll means head) (rather than possessions) raised three times in 1377-80 and a major cause of the Peasants' Revolt in 1381.
R	
Ransom	A large sum of money to secure the release of a captured knight or lord . An example was the 3 million gold marks paid for the release of Richard I. A common practice of the Free Companies in the 100 Years War. Also the money paid by an unhorsed knight to his opponent during a tournament in order not to forfeit his horse and armour.
Renaissance	Literally " rebirth ," the period in Europe immediately following the Middle Ages, characterized by a surge of interest in classical learning and values. The Renaissance also saw the discovery and exploration of new continents , news ideas about astronomy , the decline of the feudal system and the growth of commerce, and the invention or application of such potentially powerful innovations as paper, printing , the mariner's compass, and gunpowder . To the scholars of the day it was primarily a time of the revival of classical learning and wisdom after a long period of cultural decline and stagnation.

S	
Sanctuary	In English common law a person accused of a felony could take refuge in a church . Once there, he had forty days in which to make a choice between submitting to trial or confessing the crime to the coroner and swearing to leave the kingdom (abjuration of the realm) and not to return without the king's permission. If he didn't submit to trial or abjure the realm after 40 days, he was starved into submission.
Sheriff	Originally a Shire Reeve. The sheriff was in charge of his county and presided in its court. He gathered and led military forces of the shire, executed all writs, and, for the first century after the Conquest, judged both criminal and civil cases. Collected taxes and forwarded them on to the exchequer, after taking his share. Responsible for making sure that the King's table is well stocked while king is in his county. <i>From the time of Henry II, his power was severely restricted as a result of the growing jurisdiction of the Curia Regis ("king's court"). His duty thereafter was to investigate allegations of crime from within his shire, to conduct a preliminary examination of the accused, to try lesser offences, and to detain those accused of major crimes for the itinerant judges.</i>
Statute	An important Act passed by Parliament e.g. the Statute of Labourers of 1351
T	
Tenant in Chief	Certain vassals who held their fiefs directly from the crown were tenants in chief and formed the most important feudal group, the barons.
V	
Vassal	A person, often a knight, owing military service to a lord or the king. In feudal society, one given with a fief in return for services to an overlord. Some vassals did not have fiefs and lived at their lord's court as his household knights.
Villein	The highest and wealthiest class of peasant , (above bordars and cottars) and farming 20-40 acres of land. He was bound to a hereditary plot of land and to the will of his landlord. <i>(Peasants provided their needs by cultivating that was owned by a lord. The peasant provided his own food and clothing from his own efforts. A substantial proportion of the grain the peasant grew had to be given to his lord and the church. Peasants also had to do "week work" by working on the Lord's land a set number of days each week. The peasant also had to use his lord's grain mills and bakery.)</i>
W	
Wool Staple	The Merchants of The Staple were a company of English merchants who controlled the export of English wool from the late 13th century through the 16th century. English wool exports were concentrated in one town (called the staple) in order to reduce the problems of collecting the export duties. The location of the staple varied, but in the 14th century it was fixed at Calais, then held by England. <i>(The crown granted the Merchants of the Staple a monopoly over the export of wool and in return collected the duties. With the growth of English manufacturing in the 16th century and after, more wool was used domestically, and the Staplers became less important as the export trade diminished.)</i>