

How did the guilds influence the towns?

KS3 History- Lesson 2 of 4

Enquiry:

Teacher name



What are Guilds?

A guild was an **organisation** of individuals in the **same trade**. The guild worked to improve the conditions of its members. In the first guilds, merchants **banded together** to control the number of goods being traded and to keep prices up. Members of a guild had the opportunity to rise in society through hard work. Only **free men** could be a member of the guild.

Peasants could be free men once they had been in the town for one year and a day without having been caught by their masters.



Guilds in the Middle Ages played an important role in society:

- They **provided** a way for trade skills to be learned and passed down from generation to generation.
- The guild **protected** members- Members were **supported** by the guild if they came onto hard times or were sick.
- They set **standards** for quality of work, wages and **controlled** working conditions and hours of work. For example, bakers were required to sell loaves of bread of a standard size and weight.
- They **prevented** non-guild members from selling competitive products.
- They **created plans** for supervised training of new workers.



Guilds

In a major city during the Middle Ages, there could be as many as 100 different guilds. Examples include weavers, dyers, bookbinders, painters, bakers, leatherworkers, embroiderers, cobblers (shoemakers), and candlemakers. These were called **craft guilds**.

There also were **merchant guilds**. These controlled the way trade was handled in the town. They could become very powerful and controlled much of the local economy.



There were very well defined positions in the Guild.

Apprentices - There are boys in their teens who signed up with a master for around 7 years. They would work hard in exchange for learning the craft plus food, clothing, and shelter.

Journeyman- Once the apprenticeship was complete, he would still work for a master, but would now earn a wage.

Master-This is the highest position of the craft and he would have to prove his skill. Once a Master, he could open his own shop and train apprentices. A Journeyman had to produce a "masterpiece" to be approved by the guild masters.



Glossary

Free men: Men who had run away from their villages and had stayed there for more than a year and a day- this made them free



Comprehension Questions

1. What was a guild?

Sentence starter: *A guild was...*

2. What was the role of the guilds?

3. What was the difference between craft guilds and merchant guilds?

4. Explain how the guilds were hierarchical.

Challenge: How did the guilds have power over the towns?



The guilds controlled who could sell and trade and at what prices

The worst punishment was to be expelled from your guild as it meant that you could no longer trade in your town

Local merchants had monopoly over majority of local trade

There were craft and merchant guilds

The guilds controlled who could make a living doing what.

The guilds permitted the persons with local citizenship to join a guild of their liking.

