



0. WAT TYLER and the PEASANT UPRISING - Story Preface

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8. EXECUTION OF WAT TYLER
9. KING RICHARD II

This illumination depicts John Ball—a priest who believed that all people should be equal—encouraging rebels in the Peasant Revolt of 1381. The illustration, by an unnamed artist, appears in a 1470 manuscript of Jean Froissert’s *Chronicles* maintained at the British Library. Historians believe the illustration may exaggerate the actual number of peasants who were rebelling against King Richard II (who was still a teenager at the time). Click on the image for a full-page view.

**NOTE: THIS CHAPTER CONTAINS GRUESOME CONTENT ABOUT MEDIEVAL EXECUTIONS**

It was a time when prisoners were dragged behind a horse to the place of execution. Tortured, their intestines were ripped out and burned before their very eyes. Death, when it finally came, was a relief. But relief did not occur until the victim was practically lifeless.

William Wallace (of Braveheart fame) endured such an end. So did Hugh Despenser, favorite of King Edward II. If a King’s favorites were subject to such treatment, one can only imagine the fate of a lowly peasant. A peasant like Wat Tyler.

What we know of Wat is based on the stories of known (Jean Froissart) and unknown contemporary chroniclers. Although accounts vary, they are clear on one thing. It was the issue of taxes that really upset Wat in 1381. Taxes - and how they were collected by the government.

A forceful tax collector wanted to know if Wat’s daughter was old enough to be taxed. To find out, he stripped her naked and assaulted her.

Wat heard her screams and rushed to protect her. Using a hammer, he decimated the tax collector’s skull. Tyler’s bravery caused him to be elected "leader" of many other over-taxed, disgruntled people in Kent.

Joining forces with another group of upset peasants, Tyler and his fellows (numbering in the tens of thousands and not all peasants) decided to invade London. Contemporary accounts tell us the mob broke open prisons and destroyed the homes of lawyers and judges. They killed the Archbishop of Canterbury (Simon of Sudbury) and other notables.

King Richard II, about 15 years old at the time, agreed to meet with the revolt’s leaders. He asked for their demands.

***We will be free forever, our heirs and our lands.***

The King agreed. But Wat suspected Richard II was not telling the truth.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

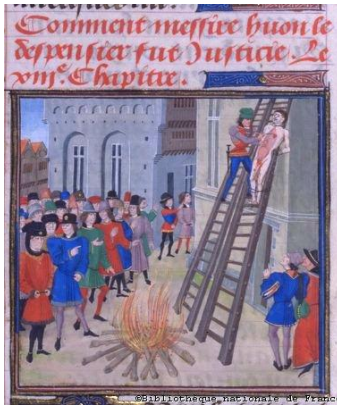
<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/WAT-TYLER-and-the-PEASANT-UPRISING-Knight-s-Tale>

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See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/WAT-TYLER-and-the-PEASANT-UPRISING-Knight-s-Tale>

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### Hugh Despenser and Prisoner Torture - Medieval Times

Image online, courtesy BNF.

PD

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Hugh-Despenser-and-Prisoner-Torture-Medieval-Times0>



### Braveheart - Movie Poster

Image of a poster, advertising the film *Braveheart*, online courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Braveheart-Movie-Poster>



### Jean Froissart

Image online, courtesy BNF.

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View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Jean-Froissart>



### Richard II of England and the Kentish Rebels

The miniature, maintained at the BNF in Paris, is identified as follows:

(BNF, FR 2644)

Jean Froissart, *Chronicles*

fol. 154v

From Bruges, 15th Century

PD

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Richard-II-of-England-and-the-Kentish-Rebels>