



0. HEAD CRUSHERS, THE RACK AND WATER TORTURE -
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One of the famous instruments of torture, in England, was the rack at the Tower of London. We read [this description](#), of the Tower's rack, at East of England Broadband Network's E2BN Gallery:

"Probably the most infamous and most widely used instrument of torture, the rack dates back to the ancient Greeks. There are few records of its use before the Middle Ages but, during the Spanish Inquisition from the middle of the 13th century onwards, there was an increase in its use. At the Tower of London the rack was sometimes claimed as the invention of the Duke of Exeter, a 15th-century Constable of the Tower.

"During the religious ferment that gripped England in the 16th-century, the rack was used freely not only by the Catholic Queen Mary, but by those monarchs who had broken with Rome - Henry VIII, Edward VI and Elizabeth I. It continued in use until Stuart times when it was used on Guy Fawkes and his accomplices. Some people did stay silent when tortured but not many." Image by Diane Earl.

With the accused's chin on the lower bar of a [head crusher](#), and the "cap" over the victim's head, authorities forced such an instrument down as the screw was turned. It takes very little imagination to figure out what happened next.

The rack, made popular in movies and television shows, pulled a victim's body in opposite directions. Water torture, on the other hand, was used to simulate [drowning](#), producing an extremely difficult death.

Sometimes these preliminary methods of torture resulted in death, thereby ending the suffering of the accused. Other times death came much more slowly - as when prisoners were locked in a "hanging cage."

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/HEAD-CRUSHERS-THE-RACK-AND-WATER-TORTURE-Torture-Instruments-from-Medieval-Times>

See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](#)

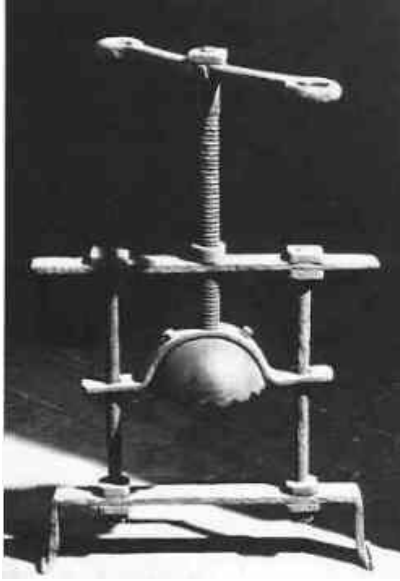
<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/HEAD-CRUSHERS-THE-RACK-AND-WATER-TORTURE-Torture-Instruments-from-Medieval-Times>

Media Stream

Medieval Torture - Head Crusher

Image online, courtesy Medieval Criminal Museum collection, in [San Gimignano, Italy](#).

This instrument of torture, like others profiled in this story, is part of a collection owned by a group of independent scholars. The objects themselves - which have been viewed in numerous venues throughout the world - are maintained at the Medieval Criminal Museum [in San Gimignano, Italy](#).



The curator of the exhibition [tells us more](#):

The collection is owned by Italian independent scholars who have made these instruments available for traveling exhibits on the subject of torture.

...

Our commitment, which we share with all who are interested in combating violence, torture, and capital punishment against living beings, is to show how throughout the centuries human beings have been tortured, both in body and soul, in the name of the truth, its only justification often being submission to the authorities.

All over the world, in the past and in the present, torture has been practiced both against the body and the mind of the victim.

It is devastating and inhuman, in its effect. It certainly cannot be called a punishment, but is merely an exercise in brutality and savagery, akin to the crime often only allegedly committed by the offender.

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Medieval-Torture-Head-Crusher>