

Medieval pilgrims

So, why did people go on pilgrimage? As you read about each of the characters you will notice the name St Thomas. Remember what these characters say about him.



Knight

I am a knight. I have fought all over the world. I am a noble man. I am going on the pilgrimage to thank God for safe return from war.

I am a squire. This means I am learning how to be a knight. I have already fought in wars in France. I am on the pilgrimage with my father.



Squire



Wife of Bath

I am a cloth-maker from Bath. I enjoy pilgrimages. In fact, I have been to Jerusalem twice, Rome, Compostella and Cologne. I think that going on pilgrimages to places abroad helps me get closer to God.

I am a monk. I enjoy the food and company on this trip. At supper last night, I ate a whole roast swan! I want to visit the holy shrines but I also like pilgrimages because they are good fun.



Monk



Friar

I am a Friar called Hubert. I make money from begging. Pilgrimages are like nice holidays!

I am a nun and try to live close to God by setting an example to others. I want to visit the tomb of St Thomas to pray there.



Nun



Miller

There are lots of us young millers on pilgrimage. I like cracking jokes and having fun. St Thomas – why is he important?

The struggle between the Church and the king

The Church was very important to people in the Middle Ages. Most people believed that God controlled everything. The church was central to village life and everyone would go there every Sunday. The Pope was the head of the Church, not the king. However, many kings tried to control the Church.

Thomas Becket was a close friend of Henry II. Henry made Becket Archbishop of Canterbury in 1162. As archbishop, Becket would have to listen to the Pope not Henry. This led to a bitter quarrel between Henry and Becket, because Henry was angry that Becket now took the side of the Pope instead of the king.

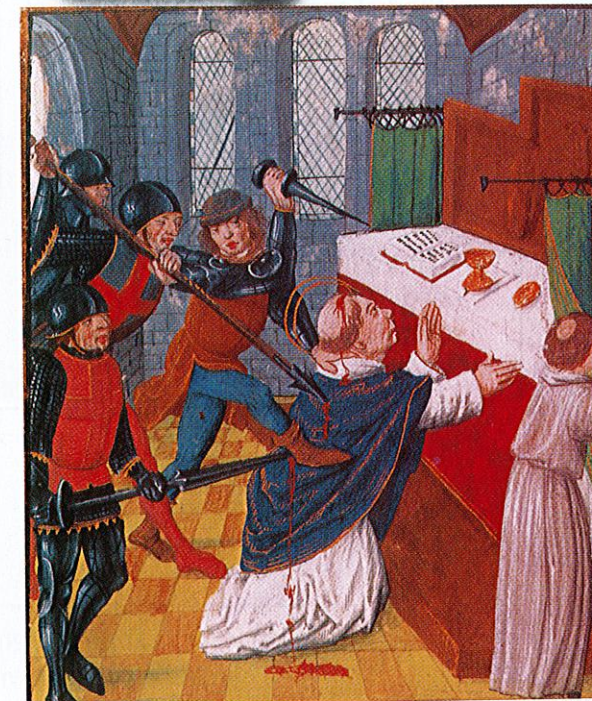
The death of Thomas Becket

SOURCE **B**



A picture of 1190 showing Thomas Becket's death.

SOURCE **C**



The murder of Thomas Becket, from a fifteenth-century manuscript.

TASKS...

- 1 Read statements (a) to (i) which describe a quarrel between King Henry II and Thomas Becket. These statements give clues about why Becket was killed. The only problem is, the statements are not in the right order. With a partner, work out the right chronological (time) order of the statements. **WS**

(a) The Church was rich and had great power.

(b) As part of his attempt to control the Church, Henry II made his friend Thomas Becket Archbishop of Canterbury in 1162.

(c) Becket returned to England in 1170, but still refused to do what Henry told him.

(d) In 1164 Becket was forced to go into hiding in France.

(e) Four of Henry's knights rode to Canterbury. They burst into the cathedral and killed Becket.

(f) Pope Alexander III was upset by Becket's murder. In 1173, Becket was made a saint and 29 December was made St Thomas' Day.

(g) Henry's temper snapped. He cried: 'Will no one rid me of this difficult priest?'

(h) Pilgrims began to visit the shrine of Becket. In 1174, Henry II visited the cathedral. He was beaten by the monks as punishment for the murder of Becket.

(i) Henry's appointment of Becket as archbishop went wrong. In 1163, he refused to hand priests over to Henry's courts for trial.

TASKS...

- 2 Look at Sources B and C on page 117, which will give more evidence about Becket. Think about which person in each source is Becket. List the clues that tell you what happened to Becket.

The importance of Becket's tomb

People were angry about Becket's death and soon began flocking to his tomb. They believed that the place where Becket had been killed was a holy place.

TASKS...

- 1 Why do you think Becket's tomb at Canterbury was such an important shrine? In pairs, come up with as many reasons as you can.
- 2 Write a catchy newspaper headline telling of Becket's murder.

Plenary

Write a one minute newsflash on the death of Thomas Becket, to present to the class. **WS**