KQ: How were rebels and protesters treated?

## Case-Study: The Peasants’ Revolt of 1381.

## Or *Life Ain’t Pleasant for a Peasant!*

**Source A**

Written by Sir John Froissart, who was not present at the event he describes (15th June 1381).

‘Wat Tyler spurred his horse and came close to the King. Then he said, “Do you think, King, that these people will go away from you without having your signed guarantees?” “No,” said the King, “you shall have them. They are ordered for you and shall be given to everyone. So, good fellows, go back to your people and get them to leave London.”

Wat Tyler cast his eyes on a squire who was there carrying the King’s sword. Wat Tyler hated that squire for he had annoyed him before. “Give me that sword” said Tyler. “No,” said the squire. “It is the King’s sword. You are not fit to have it, for you are only a knave.” “By my faith,” said Tyler, “I shall never eat meat until I have your head.”

At that moment the Mayor of London arrived with twelve knights, all well armed, and broke through the crowd. He said to Tyler, “Ha! Would you dare to speak like that in front of the King?” The King began to get angry and told the Mayor, “Set hands on him.” Tyler said to the Mayor, “What have I said to annoy you?” “You lying, stinking crook,” said the Mayor, “would you speak like that in front of the King? By my life, you’ll pay dearly for it.”

And the Mayor drew out his sword and struck Tyler such a blow on the head that he fell down at the feet of his horse. The knights clustered around him so he could not be seen by the rebels. Then a squire called John Standish drew out his sword and put it into Tyler’s belly and so he died.

Seeing their leader killed, the people began to murmur and said, “Let us go and kill them all.” And they got themselves ready for battle.”

The King rode alone to these people and said, “Sirs, what is the matter? You shall have no leader except me. I am your King. Be peaceful.”

Most of the people were ashamed and began to leave.’

**Source B**

An account from the City of London Record Book

*‘In front of the King, with the lords and knights on one side and the angry mob on the other, Sir William Walworthe bravely rushed upon Walter Tyler while he was arguing with the King and the nobles. He first wounded him in the neck with his sword, then threw him from his horse, fatally wounding him in the chest.*

*Then he rode on with the King. Meanwhile, the whole of the angry mob was getting ready against the King and refusing to make peace unless they first had the head of the Mayor.*

*The Mayor himself went into the City at the request of the King. In half an hour, he led a great force of Londoners to help the King. The whole crowd of madmen was surrounded. Not one of them would have escaped if the King had not advised them to go away.*

*So the King returned to the City with the greatest of glory, and all the wicked crowd fled at once to hide.*

*The King himself knighted the Mayor for what he had done.’*

**TASK**

1. **Having read Source A, what new evidence do you get from Source B?**

**2 a. Make a list of differences between the two pieces of evidence.**

**b. Can you explain why these differences occur?**

**3. Do you think the writer of Source B supports the peasants or not? Write down words or phrases that show whether he does or doesn’t support them.**