



# Medieval Towns Grew Through Trade and Markets

KS2 HISTORY

Ages 10-12 ⌚ 3 min read

## Why Towns Started to Grow

During the **Middle Ages** (roughly **500 to 1500 AD**), most people lived in small villages and worked as farmers. But slowly, towns began to grow into busy, crowded places. The main reason? **Trade**. When merchants and craftspeople realised they could make better lives by selling things to each other, they moved to central locations where lots of people gathered. These became **market towns**.

Towns grew at crossroads, near rivers, or around castles and churches—anywhere that was easy to reach. People from the countryside would travel to town to buy things they couldn't make at home, like salt, metal tools, or cloth. Traders from different regions would meet there to swap goods.

Think of it like a school playground where everyone brings their lunch to trade snacks. Soon, the playground becomes the most popular spot because that's where all the trading happens!

## What Did People Trade?

Medieval people traded **all sorts of goods**. Farmers brought grain, vegetables, and cheese. Fishermen sold fresh and dried fish. **Craftspeople** like blacksmiths made metal tools and weapons, while weavers created cloth from wool. From farther away, merchants traded in luxury items: silk and spices from **Asia**, furs from the north, and wine from warmer countries.

Salt was incredibly valuable because it preserved meat through winter. Wool was so important to the **English economy** that it became a symbol of wealth and power. **Spices** like pepper, cinnamon, and cloves were worth more than gold—they made food taste better and helped preserve it.

Think of it like trading cards at school. Everyone wants different cards, so you gather at a special place to swap. The rarer the card, the more valuable it is!

## How Towns Became Centres of Power

As towns grew richer from trade, they became more important. **Town councils** formed to make rules about markets and streets. Banks and money-changers opened to help merchants. **Guilds**—groups of craftspeople in the same job—controlled quality and set prices. Within a few centuries, towns had grown from tiny settlements into the foundations of modern cities we know today.