Crime and punishment

Key Vocabulary

bobbies/ peelers	Police officers, named after Sir Robert Peel, who introduced the first police force in London in 1829.
deterrent	To discourage someone from doing something.
execution	A sentence of death.
highwaymen	Criminals who would rob people while they were travelling. This was very common during the Stuart and Georgian periods.
humiliation	To make someone feel ashamed and foolish.
judge	Someone who is in charge of a trial in court.
jury	A group of people who would listen to the facts in a trial and decide if the person is guilty or not guilty.
ordeal	A long and painful experience.
treason	A crime against the King, Queen or the government.
victim	A person who has suffered.
trial	A judge and jury listen to evidence in a court to decide whether a person is guilty of a crime.

The Romans	The Vikings	The Plantagenets	The Stuarts	The Victorians

43	450	793	1066	1154	1485	1603	1704	1837

The Anglo-Saxons	The Normans	The Tudors	The Georgians

Anglo-Saxon Justice System

Anglo-Saxon people accused of a crime had a trial. If a decision as to whether the person was guilty or not guilty could not be made, a trial by ordeal would take place. It is thought that God would decide if they were guilty or not by the outcome of the ordeal. There were no prisons to send criminals to so punishments acted as huge deterrents and were often very brutal including stoning, whipping and hanging.

mutilation (body parts cut off)

exile (being sent away)

Anglo Saxon Trial of Ordeal Punishments

cold water ordeal	A person's hands and feet were tied together and they were thrown into an ice-cold lake.	If the person drowned, they were innocent. If they floated, they were guilty.
iron bar ordeal	Criminals would have to carry a glowing hot iron bar in their hands.	The person would have their hand bandaged for three days. After three days, if their hand healed without infection, they were innocent. If their hand was infected, they were guilty.
Hot water ordeal	A criminal's hand would be plunged into a pot of boiling water.	

Victorians Villains

The Victorians looked for alternative ways to hanging people for committing crimes. Many prisons were built in order to prevent people committing further crimes. Life in prison was very tough. Prisoners had to do very physically demanding tasks. These included:

- the treadwheel - using the steps on a huge wooden and iron wheel to move it
- shot drill - lifting a heavy iron cannonball
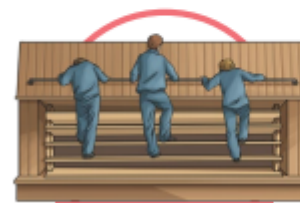- the crank – machinery that victims turned 10,000 times a day

scold's bridle

branding

the rack

the crank

treadwheel

shot drill

Anglo Saxons – Britain was not ruled by one person and the Anglo-Saxons were not united. They invaded as many different tribes and each took over different parts of Britain. The Anglo-Saxons didn't have prisons. People found guilty or crimes were either executed or punished with fines. If they ran away, they became 'outlaws' and anyone could hunt them down – unless they hid in a church. The fine for breaking into someone's home was five shillings (25p), paid to the home-owner. For minor crimes like stealing, a nose or a hand might be cut off.

Tudors – Large gaps between rich and poor meant crime was very common. Public executions were huge events with families, food stalls and people queuing for hours to get a good spot. These included beheadings, hangings, burning, pressings and boiling alive. Begging without a license would mean you would be whipped out of the town and theft resulted in having a limb chopped off.

Victorians – Anyone accused of a crime would be put in a 'lock-up' until they could see a magistrate who would decide whether they could be released or if they needed to be sentenced by a judge. Court rooms were created where victim and the accused could defend themselves and the death penalty became less common with a limited number of hangings. A police force was introduced in 1829. Public executions ended in 1868 and jails were built to try to prevent people re-offending, although many were sent out to the Empire to serve sentences abroad.

New Millennium / Modern Times – Crime ranges from physical (theft, assault, drink and drugs etc) to digital crime (fraud). Prisons now work hard to help rehabilitate people so that they do not re-offend and technological advances have meant catching criminals can be used by identifying finger prints and DNA.