

History knowledge organiser: What was the role of Medieval women? (significance)



In the medieval period, women were not **officially** allowed to be leaders or monarchs. However, they did have political power and became monarchs alongside their husbands. Empress Matilda almost went even further...

Women in the medieval world played a number of different roles.

Women were able to **run their own business, inherit property** and through devotion to the Church **pursue art, poetry, writing or medicine.**

AD stands for *anno domini* – year of our lord in Latin

Succession Crisis



1120 AD
The 'White Ship' sinks on the way to England. William Adelin, son of Henry I and heir to the throne, is killed. A **succession crisis** begins.

1127 AD
Henry I names his daughter, **Matilda**, as heir to the throne. Many English Barons were concerned about the idea of a Queen ruling England.

1135 AD
Henry I dies. Many nobles believe Stephen of Blois should be heir. Stephen sails to England and declares himself **King Stephen I**. A Civil War begins, known as **The Anarchy**.

The Anarchy: 1139 - 1153

1141 AD
Maud captures King Stephen at the Battle of Lincoln. Queen Matilda captures Maud's key ally, Robert of Gloucester in Winchester. Matilda and Maud negotiate a hostage swap.

1143 AD
Stephen begins to take castles off the English Barons to support the war effort

1148 AD:
Maud returns to Normandy. Her son, Henry II, has a large army and makes a claim for the throne.

1153 AD:
Eventually, The Treaty of Winchester names Henry II as Stephen's heir. Stephen's own heir had died.

Some Keywords

The Anarchy: a period of unsettled government in the 12th Century that lasted for 19 years



Succession: the process of inheriting the throne



Heir: Someone who inherits another person's property and titles after their death

Some Key people

Empress Matilda (Maud): Known as the 'She-Wolf'. Her first marriage was to Henry V (Holy Roman Emperor). Maud died in Normandy in 1167.



Stephen of Blois: Empress Matilda's first cousin, initially swore allegiance to Matilda before making his own claim to the throne.



Queen Matilda of Boulogne: Stephen's wife, led military efforts to support his claim to the throne.



a. Quiz Questions:

1. What could women inherit during the medieval period?
2. What is the period 1139 AD- 1153 in England known as?
3. What does the name of this period mean?
4. What does the Latin term **anno domini** mean?
5. What event causes the succession crisis?
6. Why did some Barons support Stephen over Empress Matilda?
7. Which two people negotiated the exchange of Stephen and Robert?
8. What did the Treaty of Winchester do?
9. Empress Matilda is known by two other names. What are they?
10. Why was Queen Matilda important during the anarchy?

b. Topic Focus: women in the medieval period

Are the following statements True or False?

1. Women were not officially allowed to rule
2. Some women were able to run their own business
3. Royal women had no influence over their royal husbands and sons
4. Women could use their devotion to the church to gain opportunities within the arts
5. Women only had roles within the home



c. Chronology practice:

Put the following events in the correct order, earliest first.

Henry II is proclaimed the heir to the throne
Stephen confiscates castles
The sinking of the White Ship
Empress Matilda's death
The Battle of Lincoln
King Stephen I announces himself King

d. Individual practice:

Who are these individuals:

1. Empress Matilda
2. Stephen of Blois
3. Queen Matilda
4. Who did Stephen swear allegiance to in 1127?
5. What was the name of Empress Matilda's son?

Challenge:

What is a regent? Can you give an example of a Queen who filled this role?