

## **Study Guide for The Heretic's Tomb**

The story of *The Heretic's Tomb* takes place in England in the year 1349, at the height of the Black Death, which is estimated to have killed between thirty and forty percent of the population, or approximately two million people. In Europe as a whole, it is estimated that over twenty five million perished as a result of the devastating plague between 1347 and 1351.

### **The Black Death**

The great plague of the mid fourteenth century offers a wealth of opportunities for student projects, from research into the disease, its causes and effects, medieval medicine and doctors, and the effects of the Black Death on society at the time, in addition to later developments, such as the decline of feudalism and the Peasant's Revolt of 1381. The historical background page on the novel ([http://www.simon-rose.com/history\\_heretic.htm](http://www.simon-rose.com/history_heretic.htm)) has some great links to sites about the Black Death, as well as other events of the time.

### **Ancient Artifacts**

Annie's means of time travel involves an artifact from the Middle Ages, which could lend itself to a variety of exercises. Students could imagine what kind of long forgotten object they might uncover themselves that would give them the power to travel in time or it could simply serve as the starting point for a story.

### **Uncovering the Past**

In the chapters set in the present day, Annie explores an archaeological site in London.

Students could study the types of excavations, along with the techniques and equipments used, at sites located in European cities, particularly in places such as Rome or in various countries bordering the Mediterranean.

### **The Middle Ages**

*The Heretic's Tomb* takes place in the mid-fourteenth century and the medieval period encompasses a rich tapestry of historical events. Students could engage themselves in projects on the Hundred Years War, the reigns of Edward II and Edward III, the Peasant's Revolt, medieval warfare, knights and chivalry, feudalism, medieval society and living conditions, government systems and kingship, and so much more. The historical background page on the novel ([http://www.simon-rose.com/history\\_heretic.htm](http://www.simon-rose.com/history_heretic.htm)) has links to websites with information on many of these topics.

### **The Medieval Church**

The church was a powerful presence in medieval society, and its influence over the daily life of the people is evident throughout *The Heretic's Tomb*. Students could study the role of the church in the Middle Ages, how monasteries and convents operated, the construction of Europe's majestic cathedrals, plus the medieval heretical movements and the seeds of the reformation, which took place some two centuries later.

### Girl Power

The history of the Middle Ages is often seen as being dominated by the daring and heroic exploits of men, and yet many women played an important role in this time period. One of the leading characters in *The Heretic's Tomb* is Lady Isabella Devereaux and students could learn about prominent medieval women, such as Eleanor of Aquitaine, Isabella of France, Margaret of Anjou, Joan of Arc, and so many others.

### The History of Books

Two books from antiquity play an important role in the plot of *The Heretic's Tomb*. This could be developed into a project regarding the development of the written word from cave paintings, the scrolls used in the ancient world, the parchments illustrated and embellished by monks in medieval monasteries, the beginnings of bound copies of books, the invention of printing and even continuing right up to the present day.