• Trial by combat was introduced by the Normans. This was used to settle disputes over money or land. The two people involved would fight using swords, or large sticks. The two combatants fought to the death or until someone gave in. Anyone who gave in was put to death.

The Later Middle Ages
Let’s now look at crime in the period known as the later Middle Ages – from 1150 to 1350.

How did the Law change in the Later Middle Ages?
There were two new laws introduced:

The Statue of Labourers
The Plague, or Black Death, killed about one third of the population in 1348. This meant there were fewer people available for work. This shortage of workers meant the workers who had survived could now demand higher wages. If the landlord refused to pay, then the peasants would then move on and work elsewhere. The ruling class were worried about the peasants becoming wealthier and more powerful, and they did not want to pay higher wages. They therefore decided to pass a new law – The Statue of Labourers in 1351. This law was introduced in Parliament and it set a maximum wage that workers could earn and made it a crime to ask for more. It also made it illegal for workers to move to a new area to look for work. This new law was an example of both continuity and change:

Continuity
Because in the Norman period the ruling class also introduced laws to protect their own interests at the expense of the peasants such as the Forest Laws.

Change
The Forest Laws were passed by the king. The Statue of Labourers was passed by Parliament, not the king. Now we see parliament becoming important in introducing new laws.

The Crime of Heresy
on how people should behave. He wanted them to become more ‘moral’ and live a more religious life. He therefore passed a number of laws to achieve this. For example:

- Feasting and games at Christmas were banned. The Puritans believed that Christmas was the most holy day of the year and people should spend the day quietly reading the Bible.
- Alcohol was banned. The Puritans believed that drinking led to bad behaviour.
- Sports on Sunday were banned. The Puritans believed that Sunday was holy day.

How did Law Enforcement Change from 1500-1700?

Law enforcement in the period 1500-1700, followed broadly the same pattern as it did in the middle ages. Village and town communities were still expected to take a leading role in apprehending and chasing down suspected criminals. However the growth of towns led to some changes.

Law Enforcement in the Towns

A dramatic increase in population in the towns brought new opportunities for criminals. Crimes like theft and fraud were more common, as life was more anonymous than in villages, and there were more goods to steal. The authorities tried to deal with this increase in crime by creating new officials:

- **Town Constable**
  
  These were appointed by local people. They would have a good reputation in their local community. They were expected to stop suspected criminals, break up fights and round up beggars. They were also expected to turn in serious criminals into the courts. They also helped with local administration for example, collecting payments for road cleaning.

- **Night Watchman**
  
  They reported to the Town Constable. All householders were expected to serve as night watchman, as part of the duties of all male citizens. Night Watchmen would patrol their local area at night. They carried a lamp to help them patrol and would ring a bell at night to warn people to go home or risk being viewed as possible criminals.
Thief Takers
The thief taker was paid a reward for catching criminals and delivering them to the law.

**How did Punishments Change from 1500-1700?**
There was considerable continuity in punishments from the middle ages to the early modern period. The emphasis was still on deterrence and retribution as it had been for 700 years. However some new punishments did emerge.

**Early Prisons**
In the early 16th century, prisons just held suspected criminals while they awaited trial or, in the case of convicted criminals, awaited punishments. Prisons were not a punishment but a place to hold people.

In 1566, a new, more purposeful type of prison, a house of correction, was opened, called Bridewell Prison. This was used to punish poor people who had broken the law and to house poor children who were homeless and, often, orphaned. All inmates were made to do ‘hard labour’ to pay for their keep. During the 17th century further such prisons were opened around the country.

**Capital Punishment – the Bloody Code**
During the 17th century, the number of crimes that carried the death penalty (capital punishment) increased – there were 50 capital crimes by 1688. The crimes punishable by death included poaching and stealing. These punishments have become known as the ‘bloody code.’ However, the death penalty was not always effective in reducing crime because:

- Many crimes were committed out of desperation – someone with a starving child did not think about the consequences of stealing a loaf of bread.
- As the penalty was so severe, executions were not always carried out. Criminals could receive a pardon if they could show they were previously of good character.

**Transportation to North America**
price in the shops, now there was little difference. As a result, smuggling dropped dramatically.

Highway Robbery

What stayed the same?
Highway robbery had been a problem since the Middle Ages. It involved threatening or attacking travellers and forcing them to hand over their valuables. Highway robbery first increased, then decreased, during this period.

What Changed?
Highway robbery increased in this period because:

- As trade increased there was more need to move both goods and money around. This gave greater opportunity for highway robbery.
- While towns were growing, the countryside was much less populated than today. There were many isolated roads where robberies could take place.
- Many roads were improved, leading to more people travelling. Again this gave the robbers greater opportunity.

Why was Highway Robbery treated as a Serious Crime?
1. It disputed travel between towns.
2. The crime was committed on the king’s highway.
3. It could involve theft of mail bags and so disrupted the postal service.

Why did the Crime finally decrease in this period?
One reason was the use mounted patrols on the major roads in the 19th century. Another was the growth of the banking system, as it meant there was less need for people to carry large sums of cash.

Poaching

What stayed the same?
Poaching continued to be a widespread crime after 1700. It was still also seen as a ‘social crime’ and many people had sympathy with, or supported, the poachers.

What Changed?
Section Four
1900-The Present

We have seen that attitudes to crime, laws, methods of enforcement and punishments sometimes remained the same, but can also change during the three periods we have looked at. However, it has been during the last 100 years that the biggest changes have taken place.

How have Definitions of Crime Change?

Homophobic crime
Up until 1967, homosexuality was illegal in the UK. In that year the Sexual Offences Act decriminalised homosexuality for men aged over 21. The Criminal Justice Act 2005 gave courts powers to issue more severe sentences for hate crime, including for homophobic crimes.

Race crime
The Race Relations Act 1968 made it illegal to refuse jobs, housing or public services to anyone on the basis of their race, ethnic background or country of origin. In this case increasing immigration led to the need for a definition of a new crime. In 2006, the law was extended to define spreading racial or religious hatred as a crime.

Domestic violence
During the 20th century, significant new laws were created to tackle violence and intimidation between people who were, or had been, in a relationship. Previously, the common view was that the authorities had no right ‘interfering’ in what went on in a relationship. However, campaigns by women’s groups slowly changed most people’s views. Since then the law has changed in a number of ways:

- The Domestic Violence Act 1976 gave victims the right to ask for an injunction against a violent partner.
- In 1991, the law was changed to recognise rape within marriage. This has allowed a woman to prosecute a husband for rape.
- In 2014, the law changed to make controlling and coercive behaviour (using force and threats) towards a partner a crime. This can involve:
drugs should be illegal, while others believe that taking drugs should be a personal choice (and made legal) as long as it does not harm others. Others believe that all drugs should be made legal to help tackle crimes associated with drug-dealing, including sex trafficking and gang violence.

New Opportunities for Old Crimes

Terrorism
Terrorism is the use of violence, fear and intimidation to publicise a political cause. An older example of terrorists would be Guy Fawkes and those involved in the Gunpowder Plot. Modern day terrorists, such as Isis can still use the older tactics – the planting of bombs. However, they can also use different, more modern methods to promote their cause, such as the internet to spread their message and trucks to run down innocent people. Whereas animal rights groups have been known to destroy labs used for testing animals or intimidate scientists who experiment on animals.

People trafficking
This involves people from poorer countries being brought to the UK and being forced to work for very low wages, or no wages at all. Some women and children are forced into prostitution. People trafficking is not a new crime. In the 19th century poor girls were forced into prostitution. However, modern transport has meant that these people can be brought in from all over the world.

Cybercrime
Cybercrime is any crime that is carried out on the internet or other digital technology. Many of these crimes were previously carried out using different methods. Such as:

Fraud
Fraud means impersonating other people, or businesses, to make money illegally. For example, posing as a bank or a charity to get hold of an individual’s bank account and steal their money. In the past this would have been done by approaching an individual and tricking them into revealing their details. Today, it can be done sending emails to a large number of people and hoping they will reply with their bank details.