

Your Personal History: Where does your name come from?

A person's surname in English tells us a lot about their ancestors' job, personality or where they lived. In this lesson we will do some research on surnames and decide how much they tell us about life in the Middle Ages.

Stage 1. Research

- Get a list of surnames of students in your class (and / or of teachers!).
- EITHER - Divide the names between the class. Each student needs to research the origin and meaning of each of the names in their list first (although they can move on to others if they wish).
- OR – For a more competitive edge, the class can be put into teams. Each time a team finds the origin of a name they should come up to the board and write its meaning under the name. For each correct name identification, you get a point. The winning team is the one with the most correctly identified names.

TIP: start with the names of the people in your team!

Examples:

Smith: Blacksmith | Cooper: barrel maker | Tarr: Someone who coated ship ropes with tar

Stage 2. Feedback

a. The class will now exchange its findings so that everyone has a full list of names and their meanings.

Stage 3. Production (main task, completed for homework)

EITHER 1. In the case of surnames based on PLACES, plot them on a map. Provide a brief explanation for each one so it is clear why you have plotted it in that spot (*Double Merit available*)

OR 2. In the case of surnames based on PROFESSIONS, organise a selection of these in the form of a **pyramid**, which the most “high status” names towards the top, and the “low status” jobs towards the bottom. Use illustrations and icons as appropriate. Alternatively, you can arrange these in a “**Diamond 9**” diagram using www.classtools.net. The most impressive should be placed at the top (e.g. "King", "Strong", "Baron") and the more humble towards the bottom ("Smith", "Baker"). (*Merit available*)

IMPORTANT: Whichever option you choose, make sure that you take the time to EXPLAIN the meaning and origin of each of the surnames you include in your project.

Origin of Surnames (Diamond9 Approach)

