OUTLAWRY

- The most common way to become an outlaw was breaking the Forest Laws and avoiding trial
- Despite the Robin Hood legend, most outlaws stole from the poor because they were easy targets
- Outlaws did not share their money and they were often violent in their methods!
- Churches were favoured targets because they possessed valuable ornaments etc.
- About 10% of all murders were committed by outlaws
- Juries had little sympathy for outlaws and were glad to see them hang
- Cruel sheriffs could exist, especially in times of weak kings

HENRY II

- He needed to bring the country back under control after the civil war between Stephen and Maud
- His Constitutions of Clarendon (1164) were the basis of common law and brought about a law for all England
- Trial by Jury became more common
- Royal writs were issued to sheriffs to ensure they obeyed the king's instructions
- Travelling judges roamed six circuits to hear cases; criminals were held in prison until their case was heard
- He failed to reduce the independence of the Church courts and had to forget the idea following the murder of Archbishop Thomas Becket

OTHER MEDIEVAL CHANGES

- Verges on roads were cleared up to 200 yards so that ambushes could not occur and thieves could not escape into cover
- Under Richard I the office of coroner was introduced to investigate suspicious deaths
- After 1361 Quarter Sessions, run by Justices of the Peace, replaced the hundred and shire courts
- Torture was used to find out information from victims and to gain confession from criminals
- It is no longer used because the 'information' it gains is suspect – people in pain will often admit to anything to stop the suffering

THE MIDDLE AGES

CONTINUITY

- Beliefs and attitudes about crime and punishment reflected those of the people in power
- Their interests were given special protection through the laws that they passed
- Individuals were held to be responsible for their criminal activities rather than the environment, poverty etc.
- Women were seen as unequal to men, and were treated more harshly than men by the law
- Punishment was mainly about revenge & deterrence
- Punishment had to be effective, easy to administer and cheap
- Most crimes were non-violent; the most common crime remained theft

MEDIEVAL LAW AND ORDER

- Harsh punishment was used in order to deter others from committing crime
- Benefit of Clergy meant men were tried in Church Courts
- Church Courts could only sentence people to death once heresy became a capital offence
- Judges were careful in their application of the law
- Law and order depended on the strength of the king a weak king cold cause problems
- Civil War (such as the Wars of the Roses) led to a breakdown in law and order
- Juries were reluctant to convict friends and family of offences that carried the death penalty
- Crime increased when unemployment rose but this was ignored
- By 1450 the main way of determining guilt or innocence was trial by jury, though if enough people swore to the good behaviour of the accused, he/she could get off the charge...
- By 1400 local landowners were appointed as Justices of the Peace (JPs) to hold local courts at least four times a year to deal with less serious offences

CHANGE

- The Anglo-Saxon concept of wergild fell out of favour during Norman times
- The influence of the Christian Church meant punishment was slightly less brutal after the Anglo-Saxons
- The Normans developed the Anglo-Saxon concept of trial by ordeal by introducing trial by combat
- The influence of the Church meant attempts at reforming criminals were tried rather than just revenge and retribution

MEDIEVAL PUNISHMENT

- Men could avoid punishment by joining the army
- People with money could buy their way out of punishment as kings always needed money for wars
- Pregnant women could not be executed