CAPITOLO

7

Plague, Revolt and the Printing Press

"Everyman, I will go with thee, and be thy guide, / In thy most need to go by thy side." — Knowledge, in Everyman (c. 1500)

OBIETTIVI

1. I can describe the crises of late medieval England — war, plague, revolt and civil war — and the arrival of printing, with the key dates.
2. I can explain what mystery plays and morality plays were, and how an allegory works.
3. I can read and comment on passages from *Everyman* and from Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*, and on the rhyme of the Peasants' Revolt.
4. I can use mixed conditionals, *wish* and *if only*, *it's time* and *would rather* to talk about regrets, wishes and preferences.
5. I can discuss options and reach a decision with a partner, and write a balanced for-and-against essay.
6. I can compare Boccaccio's plague with the English sources, and the Italian *sacra rappresentazione* with the mystery play.

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The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were a hard time to be alive in England. A long war with France, the most terrible epidemic in European history, the first great popular revolt and thirty years of civil war followed one another. Yet the same years gave England plays performed in the streets for the whole town, the first Bible in English and, at the very end, a new machine that changed the way people read: the printing press.

In this chapter you read a scene from *Everyman*, in which Death comes for an ordinary man; the death of King Arthur as Thomas Malory told it and William Caxton printed it; and the two-line rhyme that the rebels of 1381 repeated. In the Language section you learn to imagine a different past or a different present: **mixed conditionals**, **wishes** and **preferences**.

7.1 History and Society: War, Plague and Revolt (1337–1485)

Figura 7.1 shows the period at a glance. Read it before you start: notice how the disasters of the 1340s come first, and how the two great wars, one abroad and one at home, almost touch.

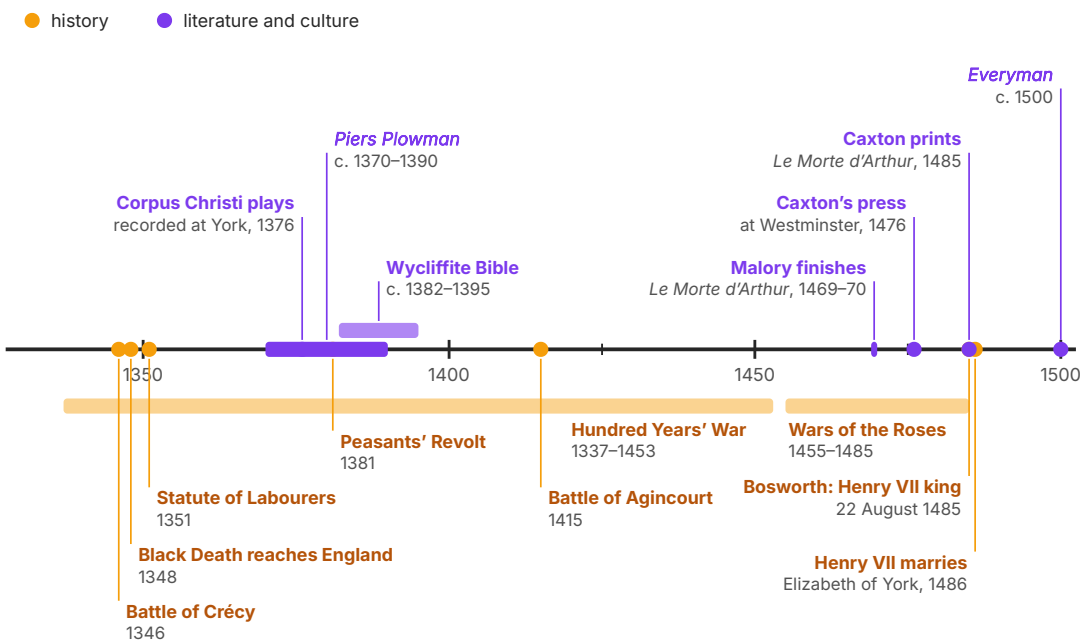


Figura 7.1 Timeline of England, 1337–1485 (and *Everyman*, c. 1500): history below the line, literature and culture above. Bars show events that lasted several years.

7.1.1 The Hundred Years' War

In 1337 King Edward III of England (reigned 1327–1377) claimed the crown of France: his mother was a French princess. The conflict that followed is called the **Hundred Years' War** (*guerra dei Cent'anni*), although it lasted even longer, from 1337 to 1453, and it was not one war but a series of campaigns separated by truces. The English won famous battles thanks to their archers and their longbows: **Crécy** (1346) under Edward III, and **Agincourt** (1415) under Henry V. But in the end France recovered almost all its territory, and by 1453 the English kept only the port of Calais.

The war also helped English: French was now the enemy's language, and it slowly lost its place among the ruling class (chapter 4). In 1362 a statute ordered that cases in the law courts should be pleaded in English, because few people in the kingdom still understood French. English was on its way back to the top.

7.1.2 The Black Death

In June 1348 a ship from Gascony arrived at Melcombe, today part of Weymouth, on the south coast of England. It brought the plague. The disease had travelled from Asia along the trade routes and had already struck Italy and France; by the autumn it was in London, and in two years it reached every part of the country. Later writers called it the **Black Death** (*peste nera*). Nobody knows exactly how many people died: estimates vary, from about a third to more than half of the population of England. It came back in 1361–62 and many times afterwards. Doctors had no cure, and some villages were abandoned for ever.

7.1.3 After the plague: work and wages

The plague created a new problem: a **shortage** of workers. There were fields to plough and harvests to bring in, but too few people to do the work, so labourers asked for higher pay and moved to wherever the pay was better. The landowners, who sat in Parliament, reacted with the **Statute of Labourers** (1351): wages had to stay at the level of the years before the plague, and workers could not leave their lords to look for better conditions. Many peasants were still serfs, bound to the land of their lord. The law was hard to enforce, but the anger it caused grew for thirty years.

7.1.4 The Peasants' Revolt (1381)

The war with France was expensive. To pay for it Parliament introduced a **poll tax** (*testatico*), a tax "per head": in 1377 everybody over fourteen paid four pence; the third poll tax, granted in 1380, was a flat rate of twelve pence for every person over fifteen, so it weighed most heavily on the poor. In May 1381 a royal official arrived in Essex to collect the unpaid tax, and the villages rose up. The revolt spread to Kent, where a man called **Wat Tyler** became its leader, and to East

Anglia. The rebels released the priest **John Ball** from prison: he preached that all people had been born equal (T3).

On 13 June the rebels entered London. They burned the Savoy, the palace of John of Gaunt, the king's uncle, and killed the Archbishop of Canterbury and other royal ministers. King **Richard II** was only fourteen. He met the rebels and promised to end **serfdom** (*servitù della gleba*), the system that tied peasants to the land of their lord. On 15 June, at a second meeting at Smithfield, Wat Tyler was killed by the king's men. The rebels went home, the promises were withdrawn, and many leaders, among them John Ball, were executed. The revolt failed; no new poll tax of this kind was attempted for centuries, and in the following century serfdom slowly disappeared.

7.1.5 Wycliffe and the Lollards

The Church was also criticised. **John Wycliffe** (c. 1328–1384), a theologian at the University of Oxford, attacked the wealth of the clergy and the power of the Pope, and argued that every Christian should be able to read the Bible. Between about 1382 and 1395 his followers produced the first complete translation of the Bible into English, the so-called **Wycliffite Bible**; how much Wycliffe himself translated is uncertain. More than 250 manuscripts of it survive. Wycliffe's followers were called **Lollards**, a name used by their enemies. They were persecuted: a law of 1401 allowed heretics to be burned, and in 1409 the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Arundel, forbade new translations of the Bible into English without a bishop's approval.

7.1.6 The Wars of the Roses

The last crisis was a fight for the crown. Edward III had many sons, and their descendants formed two branches of the royal family: the House of **Lancaster** and the House of **York** (see the family tree in Figura 7.2). The weak and often ill Henry VI of Lancaster lost the last lands in France, and in 1455 the Duke of York took up arms against his government. The civil war that followed lasted, on and off, for thirty years. We call it the **Wars of the Roses** (*guerra delle Due Rose*), but people at the time simply spoke of the "civil wars": the modern name became popular only in the 19th century, from the white rose badge of York and the red rose that was linked to Lancaster after 1485.

The crown passed from Lancaster to York (Edward IV, 1461), back to Lancaster (1470) and to York again (1471). When Edward IV died in 1483, his brother Richard took the throne as Richard III; Edward's young sons, Edward V and his brother, disappeared in the Tower of London. On 22 August 1485, at **Bosworth** in Leicestershire, Richard III was defeated and killed by Henry Tudor, a Lancastrian through his mother Margaret Beaufort. He became **Henry VII**, and in 1486 he married Elizabeth of York, Edward IV's daughter: the two houses were joined, and the Tudor age began (chapter 8).

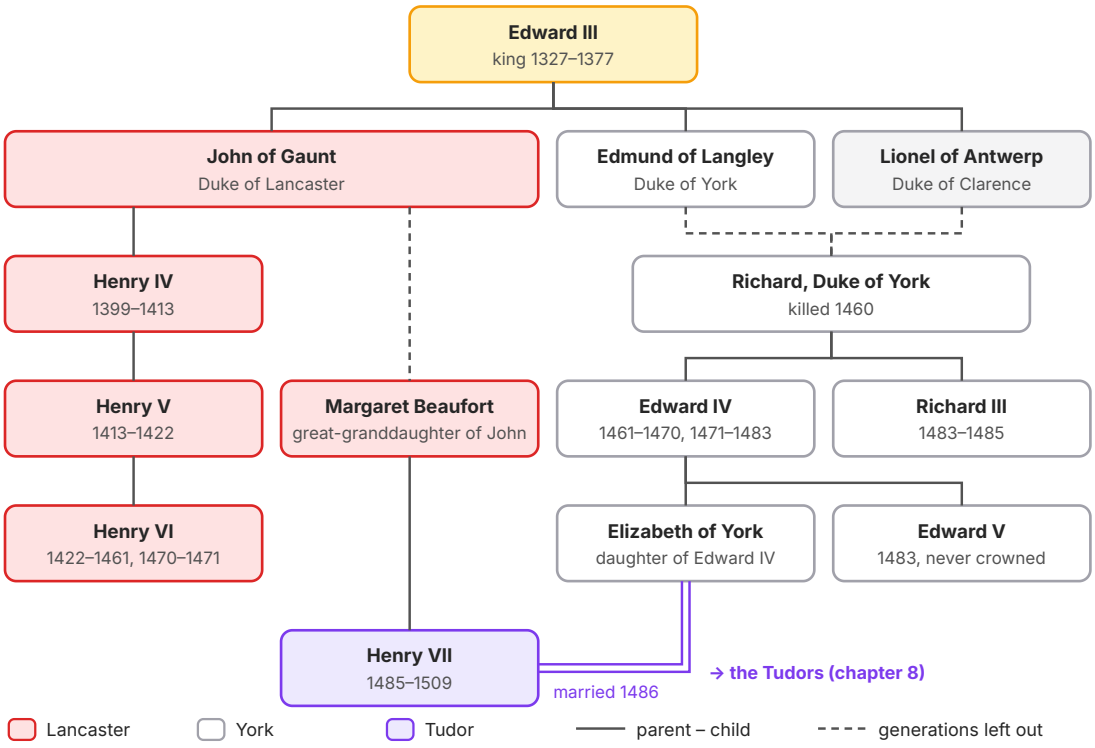


Figura 7.2 The houses of Lancaster and York: a simplified family tree. Dashed lines leave out one or more generations; Lionel of Antwerp is shown because Richard, Duke of York, descended from him through his mother, Anne Mortimer. Reign dates are for kings of England.

7.1.7 Caxton's press

In the middle of the civil wars an English merchant, **William Caxton** (c. 1422–1491/92), set up the first printing press in England, at Westminster, in 1476. In 1485, a few weeks before Bosworth, he printed Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*. His story is told in the Skills section.

DA RICORDARE

Six dates for late medieval England. 1337 the Hundred Years' War begins · 1348 the Black Death reaches England · 1381 the Peasants' Revolt · 1455 the Wars of the Roses begin · 1476 Caxton's press at Westminster · 1485 Bosworth: Henry VII, the first Tudor king.

7.2 Literature: Drama in the Streets, Arthur in Prose

Medieval England had no theatre buildings and no permanent professional companies. Yet drama was everywhere — in churches, streets and the halls of great houses — and most of it was religious.

7.2.1 From the church to the street

Medieval drama was born inside the Church. From about the 10th century, on great feasts such as Easter, priests acted short scenes in Latin during the service: for example, the women who come to the tomb of Christ and find it empty. This is called **liturgical drama** (*dramma liturgico*). Slowly the scenes became longer, the language changed from Latin to English, and the plays moved out of the church, first to the churchyard and then to the streets of the town.

7.2.2 The mystery plays

A **mystery play** (*sacra rappresentazione inglese, ciclo dei misteri*) is a play that tells a story from the Bible. In some English towns the mystery plays were organised in **cycles**: a long series of short plays that told the whole history of the world as the Bible tells it, from the Creation and the Fall of Adam and Eve to Noah's flood, the life and death of Christ and the Last Judgement. Cycles survive from **York** (48 plays in the manuscript), **Chester** and the area of **Wakefield**; in York they are recorded in 1376, and they were performed until 1569.

The plays were organised and paid for by the town's **guilds** (*corporazioni, arti*), the associations of people who practised the same craft or trade. Each guild took one play, and the choice was often practical: in York the shipwrights performed the building of Noah's ark and the bakers the Last Supper. The word *mystery* may come from two sources at once: a religious *mystery*, and an old word for a craft (from Latin *ministerium*, "service, job", compare Italian *mestiere*).

In York the plays were performed on the feast of Corpus Christi, in early summer. Each play had its own **pageant wagon** (*carro scenico*), a stage on wheels that was pulled through the streets, stopping at a series of fixed "stations" (twelve in York), where the audience waited. So the people at one station could watch the whole history of the world, play after play, from early morning until night. Figura 7.3 shows how a wagon may have looked.

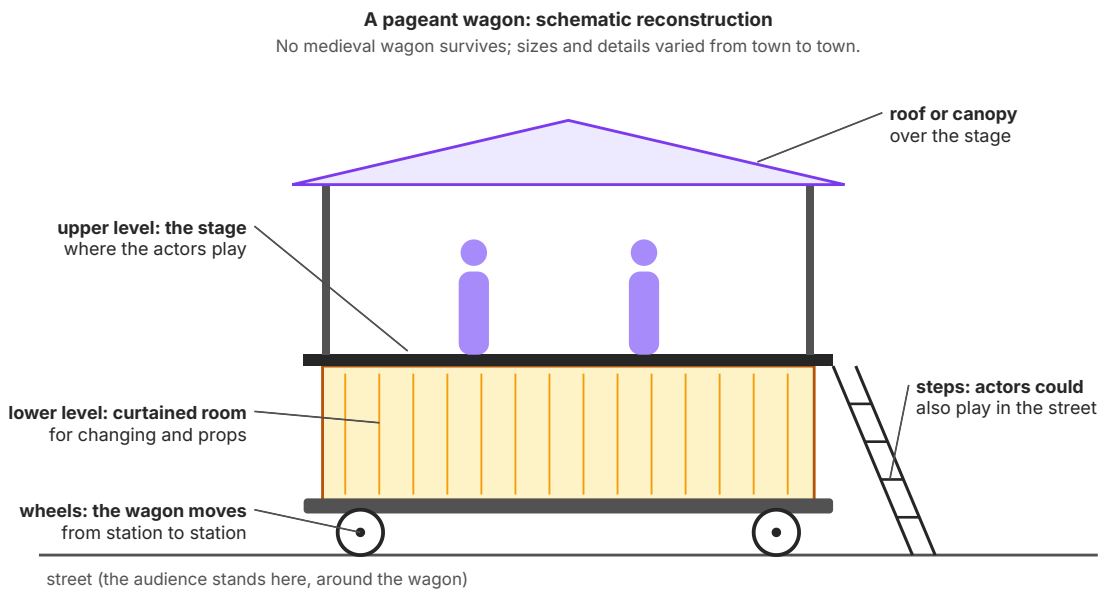


Figura 7.3 A pageant wagon, schematic reconstruction. A stage play could also spill into the street: a stage direction in the Coventry nativity play reads: "Here Herod rages in the pageant, and in the street also" (text as printed by Ernest Rhys, 1909).

The language of the mystery plays is simple, and the sacred is mixed with the comic: in the Wakefield *Second Shepherds' Play* a thief hides a stolen sheep in a cradle, dressed as a baby, before the shepherds visit the newborn Christ.

7.2.3 The morality plays and allegory

In the 15th century a different kind of religious play appeared: the **morality play** (*moralità*). It does not tell a story from the Bible; it shows the struggle for a human soul between good and evil. Its characters are not people from history but ideas with a human body: Mankind, Death, Good Deeds, Beauty, the Seven Deadly Sins. This technique is called **allegory** (*allegoria*): a story in which characters, places and events stand for abstract ideas, so that the story has a second meaning beneath the first.

The most famous morality play is ***Everyman***, written around 1500 by an unknown author and printed in the early 16th century. It is very close to a Dutch play, *Elckerlijc* (c. 1495); most scholars now think that the English play is an adaptation of the Dutch one. God sends Death to tell Everyman that he must go on a journey and give an account of his life. Everyman asks his friends to go with him: Fellowship, Kindred and Cousin, Goods (his possessions). One by one, they all refuse. Later Beauty, Strength and his other gifts leave him too. Knowledge guides him

on the way, but only Good Deeds, at first too weak to stand, goes with him into the grave. The moral is clear: when you die, you take with you only what you have done.

Allegory was everywhere in the Middle Ages, not only on the stage. In the alliterative poem ***Piers Plowman*** (c. 1370–1390), William Langland tells a series of dreams in which the narrator meets figures such as Holy Church, Lady Meed (reward, or bribery) and Piers, a ploughman who becomes a guide to the truth. You already know the greatest medieval allegory of all: Dante's *Commedia*, where the lost wood, the three beasts and the guide Virgil all have a second meaning.

7.2.4 Malory and the end of the Round Table

The Arthurian legend (chapter 5) found its most famous English form at the end of the Middle Ages. **Sir Thomas Malory** wrote a long prose work that retells the whole story of King Arthur, from his birth to the fall of the Round Table, using French and English sources. Malory calls himself a "knight prisoner", and he says that he finished the book in the ninth year of the reign of Edward IV, that is in 1469–70. Who he was is debated: the most likely candidate is Sir Thomas Malory of Newbold Revel, in Warwickshire, a knight with a long criminal record who spent years in prison.

Caxton printed the work in 1485 with the title *Le Morte d'Arthur* ("The Death of Arthur": the title is French, but the book is in English). Caxton divided it into 21 books and 506 chapters and added a summary at the head of each chapter; for more than four centuries this was the only text that readers knew. The story ends in tragedy: love, loyalty and revenge divide the knights, Arthur fights his own son Mordred, and Arthur's sword returns to the lake (T2).

APPROFONDIMENTO

A manuscript in a school library. In 1934 Walter Oakeshott, a teacher at Winchester College, was cataloguing the books in the school library when he found a 15th-century manuscript of Malory's work. It was not copied from Caxton's edition: its text is often different, and it has no division into Caxton's 21 books. Ink marks on its pages even show that it was once in Caxton's workshop. The discovery showed that Caxton had edited Malory heavily: he shortened and rewrote some parts, above all the story of Arthur's war against Rome. Scholars still debate how much of "Malory" we read in Caxton's book is really Caxton. The Winchester Manuscript is now in the British Library.

7.3 Texts: Everyman, Malory and John Ball

All three texts were meant for listeners as much as readers: read each one aloud before you analyse it.

7.3.1 T1 · Anonymous, *Everyman*: Death comes for Everyman

Context. At the beginning of the play God complains that people live only for pleasure and riches, and calls his "mighty messenger", Death. Death sees Everyman walking happily and stops him. The text is printed in the modern spelling of Ernest Rhys's edition (1909); the line numbers count the lines of that edition.

Tabella 7.1 T1 — *Everyman*, ll. 85–88 and 113–130 (text of the Everyman's Library edition, ed. E. Rhys, 1909)

DEATH Everyman, stand still; whither art thou going	85
Thus gaily? Hast thou thy Maker forget?	
EVERYMAN Why askst thou?	
Wouldest thou wete?	
[...]	
EVERYMAN Full unready I am such reckoning to give.	
I know thee not: what messenger art thou?	
DEATH I am Death, that no man dreadeth.	115
For every man I rest and no man spareth;	
For it is God's commandment	
That all to me should be obedient.	
EVERYMAN O Death, thou comest when I had thee least in mind;	
In thy power it lieth me to save,	120
Yet of my good will I give thee, if ye will be kind,	
Yea, a thousand pound shalt thou have,	
And defer this matter till another day.	
DEATH Everyman, it may not be by no way;	
I set not by gold, silver, nor riches,	125
Ne by pope, emperor, king, duke, ne princes.	
For and I would receive gifts great,	
All the world I might get;	
But my custom is clean contrary.	
I give thee no respite: come hence, and not tarry.	130

Glosses. *whither*: where (to); *gaily*: cheerfully, without a care; *forget*: forgotten; *wete*: know; *reckoning*: account (of your life, as in a merchant's book of accounts); *that no man dreadeth*: who is afraid of no man; *rest*: arrest; *it lieth me to save*: you have the power to save me; *set not by*: do not care for; *ne*: nor; *and* (l. 127): if; *clean*: completely; *respite*: delay; *tarry*: wait, delay.

Analysis

Allegory. Death is not a skeleton in a story: he is death itself, speaking. Everyman is not one man but every man and woman in the audience. The "journey" is death, and the "reckoning" is the Last Judgement, told in the language of money: Everyman must bring his *book of count*, the account book of his life.

Character and drama. Everyman's first reaction is surprise, then fear, then a bribe: a thousand pounds. Notice the pronouns. He calls Death *thou* (l. 119), but when he offers money he suddenly becomes polite: *if **ye** will be kind* (l. 121). Death's answer shows that money is useless: he does not care for gold, nor for pope, emperor or king. All estates of society (chapter 6) are equal before him, as in the *danse macabre* painted on church walls.

Form and language. The lines have different lengths and no regular metre. They rhyme mostly in couplets (*commandment / obedient, riches / princes, great / get, contrary / tarry*), with some alternate rhymes (*mind / kind, save / have*). Notice the emphatic double negative *it may not be by no way* (l. 124), normal at the time.

1. Why is Everyman "full unready" to give his reckoning?
2. What does Everyman offer Death, and why does Death refuse?
3. Find two words from the world of trade and accounts. Why are they effective for this audience?
4. Death lists "pope, emperor, king, duke" and "princes". What is the message of this list?

ESEMPIO SVOLTO

Reading an allegory in four steps (on *Everyman*).

1. **Name the characters and what they stand for.** Everyman = every human being; Death = death; Fellowship = friends; Goods = possessions; Good Deeds = the good actions of a life.
2. **Translate the action.** Everyman asks his friends and possessions to go with him on the journey, and they refuse = when we die, friends and money cannot help us.
3. **Look for the second level in the details.** Good Deeds is too weak to stand at first = Everyman has done few good actions; she grows stronger after he repents.
4. **State the moral in one sentence.** *Only what we have done for others goes with us at the end of our life.*

7.3.2 T2 · Thomas Malory, *Le Morte d'Arthur* XXI.5: the return of Excalibur

Context. In the last battle Arthur has killed his son Mordred, but he is mortally wounded. Of his knights only Sir Bedivere is still alive. Arthur orders him to throw his sword, Excalibur, into the lake. Bedivere goes, but the sword is so rich, with its pommel and handle covered in precious stones, that he hides it under a tree and tells the king that he saw "nothing but waves and winds". Arthur knows he is lying and sends him again. The text below follows Caxton's edition of 1485 in the modern spelling of A. W. Pollard (1903), without quotation marks, as Pollard prints it.

Tabella 7.2 T2 — Malory, *Le Morte d'Arthur* XXI.5 (Caxton's text, 1485, spelling modernised by A. W. Pollard, 1903)

> What saw thou there? said the king. Sir, he said, I saw nothing but the waters wap and waves wan. Ah, traitor untrue, said King Arthur, now hast thou betrayed me twice. Who would have weened that, thou that hast been to me so lief and dear? and thou art named a noble knight, and would betray me for the richness of the sword. But now go again lightly, for thy long tarrying putteth me in great jeopardy of my life, for I have taken cold. And but if thou do now as I bid thee, if ever I may see thee, I shall slay thee with mine own hands; for thou wouldst for my rich sword see me dead. Then Sir Bedivere departed, and went to the sword, and lightly took it up, and went to the water side; and there he bound the girdle about the hilts, and then he threw the sword as far into the water as he might; and there came an arm and an hand above the water and met it, and caught it, and so shook it thrice and brandished, and then vanished away the hand with the sword in the water.

Glosses. *saw thou*: did you see; *wap*: lap, beat against the shore; *wan*: dark, grey; *weened*: thought, imagined; *lief*: beloved; *lightly*: quickly; *jeopardy*: danger; *but if*: unless; *girdle*: belt; *hilts*: handle of a sword; *thrice*: three times; *brandished*: waved it in the air.

Analysis

Structure. The scene is built on the number three, as in a folk tale: three journeys to the water, two lies, and a third time when Bedivere finally obeys. The supernatural arrives only at the end, in one long sentence: an arm rises, catches the sword, shakes it three times and disappears. Malory does not explain it: readers remember that Arthur received Excalibur from the Lady of the Lake.

Style. Malory's sentences are joined by *and*, *and then*, *and so*: actions follow each other without comment. Speech is reported without quotation marks, which makes the dialogue fast and dramatic. In Bedivere's second lie, *I saw nothing but the waters wap and waves wan*, two alliterating pairs (*w… w…, w… w…*) recall the old alliterative poetry (chapters 3 and 5): the lie sounds beautiful, but it is empty.

Themes. Like Everyman with his goods, the loyal knight is tempted by a rich object: *thou wouldst for my rich sword see me dead*. The Round Table falls because loyalty breaks.

1. How many times does Bedivere go to the water? What does he do each time?
2. Why does Arthur know that Bedivere is lying the second time?

3. Why is Arthur in a hurry? Find two reasons in the text.
4. What happens to the sword? Why do you think the arm “shook it thrice”?

7.3.3 T3 · John Ball’s rhyme (1381)

Context. The most famous words of the Peasants’ Revolt were reported by an enemy of the rebels: Thomas Walsingham, a monk at St Albans Abbey, who wrote his chronicle in Latin. He says that John Ball preached to the rebels at Blackheath, south-east of London, and began his sermon with a rhyme in English. Walsingham copies the rhyme in English inside his Latin text. According to him, Ball went on to argue that at the beginning all people had been created equal by nature, and that servitude had been introduced by the unjust oppression of wicked men.

Tabella 7.3 T3 — John Ball’s rhyme, as reported by Thomas Walsingham, *Historia Anglicana* (ed. H. T. Riley, 1864, vol. II, p. 32), with a modern English version by the editors

Middle English	Modern English
Whan Adam dalf, and Eve span, *Wo was thanne a gentilman?*	When Adam delved and Eve span, who was then the gentleman?

Glosses. *dalf* (*delved*): dug the soil; *span*: spun (wool into thread; *span* is the old past tense of *spin*); *gentilman*: a man of noble birth, who does not work with his hands.

Analysis

The rhyme is a rhetorical question: it does not need an answer. In the Bible, after they leave the Garden of Eden, Adam must work the land, and medieval pictures often show Eve spinning beside him. So the first man and woman were workers: in the beginning there were no lords and no serfs. If inequality did not exist at the start of the world, it is not natural or willed by God, and it can end. Two short lines, four stresses each, a strong rhyme (*span / gentilman*): the rhyme was easy to remember and to repeat in a crowd, like a modern slogan. (Walsingham numbers Ball’s listeners at two hundred thousand, a figure historians do not take literally.)

1. Why did Walsingham, an enemy of the rebels, write down Ball’s rhyme? Suggest two reasons.
2. Explain the argument of the rhyme in your own words, in two or three sentences.
3. Think of a modern slogan that works like this rhyme. Why is it effective?

ERRORE FREQUENTE

✗ *Everyman* è una *mystery play*. → ✓ È una **morality play**: i personaggi sono idee personificate (Morte, Amicizia, Beni), non figure della Bibbia. Le *mystery plays* mettono in scena storie bibliche.

✗ Malory scrisse *Le Morte d'Arthur* in francese. → ✓ Il titolo è francese, ma l'opera è in prosa **inglese**; il titolo lo scelse Caxton.

✗ *John Ball wrote a poem about Adam and Eve.* → ✓ La rima ci è giunta solo attraverso un cronista ostile, Thomas Walsingham, che la riporta citando la predica di Ball.

LEARNING TO LEARN

Preparing for a literature oral. An oral exam on literature is not a race to say everything you know. Prepare a card for each author or text:

- **Key words:** five or six terms you must use (for *Everyman*: *morality play, allegory, personification, reckoning, Good Deeds*).
- **Dates:** no more than two or three per author, the ones that explain something (Malory finishes his book in 1469–70; Caxton prints it in 1485).
- **One quotation per author,** short and exact, which you can explain (*Everyman, I will go with thee, and be thy guide*).
- **A link:** one connection with another text or another subject (*Everyman* and the *danse macabre*; Malory and Dante's Paolo and Francesca, who read about Lancelot).

Practise aloud for two minutes per card. The method works for your Italian and Latin orals too.

7.4 Language: Mixed Conditionals, Wishes and Preferences

History is full of "what ifs". In English 2 (Units 4 and 11) you learnt the four basic conditionals and *wish* + past simple. This section mixes the times, completes *wish*, and adds two structures that use a past form to talk about the present.

7.4.1 Mixed conditionals

In a **mixed conditional** (*periodo ipotetico misto*) the condition and the result refer to different times. There are two common types (Figura 7.4).

Tabella 7.4 Mixed conditionals: form and use

Type	*if*-clause	Main clause	Examples
past → present an unreal past event with a result now	*if* + past perfect	*would / could / might* + base form	*If Caxton hadn't printed Malory, we wouldn't know the story so well today.* *If I had gone to bed earlier, I wouldn't be so tired now.*
present → past an unreal present situation (often a permanent quality) with a past result	*if* + past simple / continuous	*would / could / might have* + past participle	*If Everyman weren't so attached to his goods, he wouldn't have tried to bribe Death.* *If I spoke French, I could have understood the guide yesterday.*

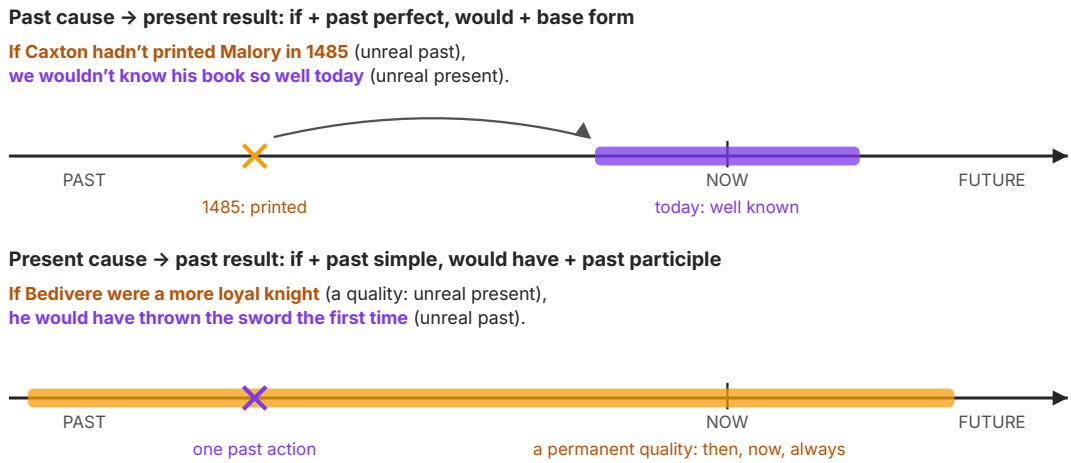


Figura 7.4 Mixed conditionals on a time line: a past cause with a present result, and a present (permanent) cause with a past result. Violet = the result, amber = the condition.

Remember the rules of all conditionals: no *would* in the *if*-clause; *were* is preferred to *was* in formal English (*if he were*); the *if*-clause can come first (with a comma) or second (usually without). Mixed conditionals often use time words that show the change: *now, today, still* in the result; *yesterday, last year, in 1485* in the condition.

Compare: *If the plague hadn't killed so many people, there wouldn't have been a shortage of workers* (third conditional: past → past) and *If the Wycliffite Bible hadn't been copied so often, we wouldn't have more than 250 manuscripts today* (mixed: past → present).

GRAMMAR IN ITALIANO

Il periodo ipotetico misto. Ipotesi e conseguenza appartengono a tempi diversi. (1) Passato → presente: *if* + *past perfect*, *would* + forma base: *If I had studied, I would know the answer = Se avessi studiato, saprei la risposta.* (2) Presente → passato: *if* + *past simple*, *would have* + participio: *If I were braver, I would have spoken = Se fossi più coraggioso, avrei parlato.*

Confronto con l'italiano. L'italiano mescola i tempi nello stesso modo (congiuntivo trapassato + condizionale presente; congiuntivo imperfetto + condizionale passato), quindi il ragionamento è identico. La differenza è nella forma: l'inglese non ha congiuntivo, usa i tempi del passato (*had studied, were*), e non mette mai *would* nella frase con *if*.

ERRORE FREQUENTE

✗ *If I would have read the chapter, I would know the dates.* → ✓ *If I* ***had read*** *the chapter, I would know the dates.*

✗ *If I had listened in class, I would have understood it now.* → ✓ *If I had listened in class, I* ***would understand*** *it now.* (Il risultato è presente: *now*.)

7.4.2 *Wish* and *if only*

You already know *wish* + past simple for the present (English 2, Unit 4) and met *wish* + past perfect for past regrets (English 2, Unit 11). Here is the complete picture. *If only* has the same structures, but it is stronger and more emotional; it often ends with an exclamation mark.

Tabella 7.5 *Wish* and *if only*: the complete picture

Structure	Use	Examples
wish / if only + past simple or continuous	a present situation that you would like to be different	*I wish I knew more Latin. If only it weren't raining!*
wish / if only + *could*	an ability you would like to have, now	*I wish I could read the Winchester Manuscript.*
wish / if only + past perfect	a regret about the past	*Bedivere must have wished he had obeyed the first time. If only I hadn't left my notes on the bus!*
wish / if only + *would* + base form	annoyance at somebody's behaviour, or a change you want but cannot control	*I wish you would stop interrupting. I wish the bus would come.*

Two limits of *wish* + *would*: it is not used about yourself (✗ *I wish I would…*; say *I wish I could…* or *I wish I were…*), and it is not used for states (✗ *I wish it would be sunny* → ✓ *I wish it were sunny*).

For a future hope that may come true, use *hope*, not *wish*: *I hope you pass the exam.*

7.4.3 *It's (high) time* and *would rather*

Two more structures use a **past form with a present or future meaning**, like *wish*:

- *it's time / it's high time* + subject + past simple: something should happen now, and it is already late. *It's time we went home. It's high time the council repaired this road.* (*high* makes it stronger.) Without a different subject, use the *to*-infinitive: *It's time to go.*
- *would rather / would sooner* + base form, when the subject is the same: *I'd rather walk than take the bus. I'd sooner stay at home tonight.* (*would sooner* is less common and a little informal.) Negative: *I'd rather not.*
- *would rather* + another person + past simple, for the present or future: *I'd rather you didn't tell anyone. Would you rather I came tomorrow?* + past perfect for the past: *I'd rather you hadn't told him.*

GRAMMAR IN ITALIANO

***Wish, if only, it's time, would rather*.** Tutte queste strutture esprimono qualcosa di non reale, e per questo usano un tempo «arretrato»: *past simple* per il presente, *past perfect* per il passato. *I wish I knew* = *vorrei sapere / magari sapessi*; *if only I had known* = *se solo l'avessi saputo*; *I wish you would stop* = *vorrei che la smettessi*.

Confronto con l'italiano. Dove l'italiano usa il congiuntivo, l'inglese usa un tempo passato: *è ora che ce ne andiamo* (congiuntivo presente) = *it's time we* ***went***; *preferirei che tu non lo dicessi* = *I'd rather you* ***didn't*** *say it*. Il significato resta presente o futuro: è la forma a essere al passato.

ERRORE FREQUENTE

✗ *I wish I would have more free time.* → ✓ *I wish I* ***had*** *more free time.* · ✗ *I wish I didn't go to that party.* → ✓ *I wish I* ***hadn't gone*** *to that party.* (rimpianto sul passato)

✗ *It's time we go.* → ✓ *It's time we* ***went***. · ✗ *I'd rather you don't come.* → ✓ *I'd rather you* ***didn't*** *come.* · ✗ *I'd rather to walk.* → ✓ *I'd rather* ***walk***.

7.5 Skills: The First Bestsellers · Reaching a Decision · A For-and-Against Essay

7.5.1 Vocabulary: illness and society

Tabella 7.6 collects the key words of disease — words that were back in the news during the COVID-19 pandemic of the early 2020s.

Tabella 7.6 Illness and society: key words

Word	Meaning	Example
epidemic (n.)	a disease that spreads quickly among many people in one area; *pandemic*: across many countries	*an epidemic of plague*
outbreak (n.), *break out* (v.)	the sudden start of a disease or a war	*A new outbreak came in 1361. The war broke out in 1337.*
spread (v., n.; *spread – spread – spread*)	move to more people or places	*The disease spread along the trade routes.*
symptom (n.)	a sign that you have an illness	*Fever and swellings were the first symptoms.*
quarantine (n., v.)	a period in which people who may be ill are kept apart	*Ships were kept in quarantine for forty days.*
recover (from) (v.), *recovery* (n.)	become healthy again	*Very few people recovered from the plague.*
shortage (of) (n.)	a situation in which there is not enough of something	*a shortage of workers, of food, of priests*
wages (n. pl.), *rise / fall*	money paid for work, usually by the week or the day	*After the plague, wages rose.*

Word formation: *-hood, -dom, -ship*. Three old English suffixes make abstract nouns, usually from other nouns. You already know *childhood* and *friendship* (English 2).

Tabella 7.7 Nouns with *-hood*, *-dom* and *-ship*

Suffix	Meaning	Examples
-hood	a state or period of life; a group	*childhood, adulthood, neighbourhood, brotherhood, priesthood*
-dom	a state or condition; the land ruled by somebody	*freedom, boredom, wisdom (wise), kingdom, martyrdom*
-ship	a relationship, a position, a skill	*friendship, relationship, leadership, membership, hardship, citizenship*

Note the spelling: *wise* → *wisdom* (no *e*), *free* → *freedom*.

7.5.2 Reading: The First Bestsellers

Before you read. How were books made before printing? How long do you think it took to copy a Bible by hand? Sam has written an article for the Literature Trail blog, after an A-level lesson on Caxton. (testo della redazione)

The Link Blog · Literature Trail · The First Bestsellers — by Sam Taylor, Bristol

Imagine a world in which every book is unique. Before the 1450s, every copy of a book in Europe was written out by hand. A long book could take a scribe many months, so books were rare and expensive.

Then, in the German city of Mainz, a goldsmith called Johannes Gutenberg put together the pieces of a new machine: small metal letters that could be moved and used again, a press similar to the screw presses used to make wine, and an oil-based ink. His Latin Bible, finished around 1454–55, was printed in about 160 to 180 copies (the sources disagree), and 49 of them still survive, at least in part.

The idea spread fast. In Italy the first press was set up at Subiaco, near Rome, in 1465, and Venice soon became one of the great printing centres of Europe. England's printer was a businessman, not a scholar. William Caxton was a mercer — a cloth merchant — who lived for many years in Bruges. On his travels he watched printers at work in Cologne, and around 1473, in Bruges, he printed the first book ever printed in English: his own translation of a French collection of stories about Troy.

In 1476 he came home and opened a shop at Westminster, next to the Abbey, close to the king's court and its rich readers. He knew what would sell: Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, stories of chivalry, history and, in 1485, Malory's tales of King Arthur. His press produced about a hundred editions. If he hadn't chosen English books, the history of English literature would look very different today.

Printing also forced Caxton to make decisions about the language itself. English was spoken differently in every county, and in a famous preface of 1490 he tells the story of some merchants who stopped on the coast of Kent and asked a woman for *egges*. She replied that she could not speak French! Another man asked for *eyren*, the southern word, and she understood at once. "What sholde a man in thyse dayes now wryte, egges or eyren?" Caxton asks. He usually chose the English of London and the court, and the printed page slowly helped to make one written standard for the whole country.

After Caxton's death, his assistant Wynkyn de Worde took over the business, and in 1500 he moved it to Fleet Street, in the City of London, which for centuries remained the street of printers and newspapers. The first bestsellers did what bestsellers still do: they put the same story, in the same words, in front of thousands of readers.

1. Why were books rare and expensive before the 1450s?
2. What were the three parts of Gutenberg's invention?
3. What does the story of the eggs show about English in Caxton's time?

4. Why did Caxton open his shop at Westminster? Find two reasons.
5. Explain the last sentence of the article in your own words.

7.5.3 Speaking: discussing and reaching a decision

In a collaborative task you and a partner discuss several options and agree on one. The aim is not to win but to discuss well: give reasons, react, involve your partner, and decide in time.

Tabella 7.8 Useful language — discussing options and reaching a decision

Function	Phrases
Starting	*Shall we start with…? · Let's begin by looking at… · Where shall we start?*
Giving an opinion with a reason	*For me, the most important one is… because… · I'd say that… · The way I see it,…*
Involving your partner	*What do you think? · Would you agree? · How do you feel about…?*
Agreeing	*That's a good point. · I couldn't agree more. · Exactly, and what's more…*
Disagreeing politely	*I see what you mean, but… · I'm not so sure about that. · That's true, but on the other hand…*
Moving on	*Shall we move on to…? · What about…? · Let's look at the next one.*
Reaching a decision	*So, have we decided? · I think we both agree that… · Shall we go for…? · If we had to choose one, I'd rather we chose…*

1. **Which invention changed the world most?** Work in pairs. Discuss these medieval inventions for two minutes: the printing press, the mechanical clock, eyeglasses, the compass, paper mills. Then decide in one minute which one changed people's lives most, and explain your choice to the class.
2. **A Literature Trail evening.** The two Link classes will perform one short medieval text, live on a video call, for parents and friends: a scene from *Everyman*, Malory's death of Arthur read by two voices, a ballad sung with a refrain (chapter 5), or the opening of the General Prologue (chapter 6). Discuss the advantages and problems of each option and agree on one.

7.5.4 Writing: a for-and-against essay

You wrote your first for-and-against essay in English 2 (Unit 11): introduction, arguments for, arguments against, conclusion. At B2 each argument has an example, and the writer uses **concession**: admitting that the other side has a point before answering it. Read Elena's essay for the Literature Trail blog.

Tabella 7.9 Model text — a for-and-against essay

Should paper textbooks be replaced by digital ones?

More than five hundred years after Caxton, printed books are still on every school desk. Many schools, however, are now asking whether it is time they replaced paper textbooks with tablets. Is this a step forward or a mistake?

On the one hand, digital textbooks have clear advantages. A tablet weighs far less than a bag full of books, which matters to students who carry their books every day. Digital texts can also be updated quickly, whereas a printed book stays the same for years. In addition, they can include videos, sound and interactive exercises that paper cannot offer.

On the other hand, there are serious problems. While a book never needs charging, a tablet can break or run out of battery in the middle of a lesson. Screens may also make it harder to concentrate, since notifications are always one tap away. Admittedly, these problems can be reduced with good rules; nevertheless, not every family can afford a reliable device, and a school must not leave anyone behind.

In conclusion, both formats have strengths. Digital textbooks are lighter and more flexible; nonetheless, paper is cheaper to use and easier to concentrate on. In my view, the best solution is a mix: printed books for careful reading, and digital tools for practice and research.

Elena Conti, Turin

ESEMPIO SVOLTO

Analysing the model.

1. **Introduction:** a hook that links the topic to the reader's world (Caxton, school desks) and the question, with no answer yet.
2. **For:** three arguments, each with a reason or an example; *whereas* contrasts two facts in one sentence.
3. **Against:** three arguments; *while* opens a contrast; *admittedly … nevertheless* is a **concession**: the writer accepts part of the other view, then answers it.
4. **Conclusion:** a summary of both sides (*nonetheless*) and, only now, the writer's opinion, with a practical proposal.

Concession linkers. *while / whereas* + clause, inside one sentence (*While a book never needs charging, a tablet…*). *Nevertheless / nonetheless* start a new sentence or follow a semicolon, with a comma after them (*…good rules; nevertheless, not every family…*). *Admittedly* (= it is true that) introduces the point you are conceding. *Although / even though* + clause, *despite / in spite of* + noun or *-ing* (English 2, Unit 9).

Checklist. ✓ a title that asks the question · ✓ four paragraphs: introduction, for, against, conclusion · ✓ at least two arguments on each side, each with a reason or an example · ✓ at least one concession (*admittedly … nevertheless*) · ✓ *while, whereas, nevertheless, nonetheless* used correctly ·

✓ your opinion only in the conclusion · ✓ neutral or formal register: no contractions · ✓ 200–250 words.

Task. Write a for-and-against essay (200–250 words) on one of these questions: *Should students study literature in the original language rather than in translation?* · *Should cities limit the number of tourists who visit their historic centres?* · *Is it right to close schools during an epidemic?*

7.6 Connections: The Plague in Florence, Drama in Italy

7.6.1 Boccaccio and the plague of 1348

The Black Death reached Florence a few months before it reached England. Giovanni Boccaccio, who lived through it, opened the *Decameron* with a famous description of the epidemic: the ten young storytellers of the book leave the city to escape from it (chapter 6). The *Introduzione alla prima giornata* begins with the date and the place:

«Dico adunque che già erano gli anni della fruttifera incarnazione del Figliuolo di Dio al numero pervenuti di milletrecentoquarantotto, quando nella egregia città di Fiorenza, oltre a ogn'altra italica bellissima, pervenne la mortifera pestilenza» — Boccaccio, *Decameron*, I, Introduzione

("I say, then, that the years of the fruitful Incarnation of the Son of God had already reached the number one thousand three hundred and forty-eight, when the deadly plague came to the noble city of Florence, more beautiful than any other in Italy." Translation by the editors.)

Boccaccio describes the measures taken by the city — the streets cleaned, the sick forbidden to enter — and their failure; then the symptoms: swellings that grew as big as an apple or an egg, which people called *gavoccioli*, and black or purple spots. Above all, he was struck by how the disease passed from one person to another:

«E fu questa pestilenza di maggior forza per ciò che essa dagli infermi di quella per lo comunicare insieme s'avventava a' sani, non altramenti che faccia il fuoco alle cose secche o unte quando molto gli sono avvicinate.»

("And this plague was all the stronger because, when people were together, it leapt from the sick to the healthy, just as fire does to dry or oily things when they are brought very close to it." Translation by the editors.)

No English writer of 1348 left a description like this: the English sources are mostly Latin chronicles and records that count the dead and the empty farms. Boccaccio looks at society — friends and even parents abandoning one another, every rule collapsing — and helps us imagine the England of the Statute of Labourers and of 1381. (Italian text from Vittore Branca's edition, as given by the Decameron Web of Brown University.)

7.6.2 The *sacra rappresentazione* and the mystery play

Italy, too, had religious drama for the whole town. In 13th-century Umbria the *lauda*, a religious song, became a dialogue (Jacopone da Todi's *Donna de Paradiso*). In 15th-century Florence the *sacra rappresentazione* developed: plays on Bible stories and lives of saints, written in *ottava rima* and performed by the confraternities, sometimes with spectacular stage machines. Unlike the English plays, many have a known author: Feo Belcari, and even Lorenzo de' Medici, who wrote *La rappresentazione dei Santi Giovanni e Paolo*.

Tabella 7.10 English mystery plays and Italian *sacre rappresentazioni*

	Mystery plays (England)	*Sacra rappresentazione* (Florence)
When	from the 14th century (York, 1376) to the 16th	mainly the 15th century
Who performed	the craft guilds of the town	religious confraternities, often of young people
Where	pageant wagons moving through the streets	churches, squares, fixed stages
Subjects	the whole Bible history, in cycles	single Bible stories and lives of saints
Authors	anonymous	often known (Feo Belcari, Lorenzo de' Medici)
Verse	many stanza forms, often alliterative	*ottava rima*

COLLEGAMENTI

Biology: what caused the Black Death? The plague is caused by a bacterium, *Yersinia pestis*, identified in 1894 by Alexandre Yersin during an epidemic in Hong Kong. It lives in rodents such as rats and passes to humans mainly through the bite of their fleas. In its **bubonic** form it causes painful swellings of the lymph nodes, the *buboes* — the *gavoccioli* of Boccaccio; in its **pneumonic** form it attacks the lungs and spreads from person to person through droplets in the air. In 2011 scientists confirmed the cause by reading the bacterium's DNA in the teeth of victims buried in a London plague cemetery at East Smithfield. Today plague is rare and can be treated with antibiotics.

History of medicine: the word *quarantine*. In 1377 the city of Ragusa (today Dubrovnik, in Croatia) ordered that people arriving from infected places should wait thirty days before entering the city. Later the period became forty days: in Venetian, *quarantena*, from *quaranta giorni*. English borrowed the word as *quarantine*. Venice also opened the first *lazzaretto*, a hospital for the plague on an island in the lagoon, in 1423.

Discuss. (1) Boccaccio compares the plague to fire. Is it a good comparison? What does it suggest about how the disease spreads? (2) Would you rather watch a play on a wagon in the street or in a theatre? Why? (3) Which is more effective for teaching a moral: an allegory like *Everyman* or a realistic story? Give an example.

SINTESI

- The Hundred Years' War (1337–1453) began when Edward III claimed the French crown; the English won at Crécy (1346) and Agincourt (1415) but lost almost everything in France by 1453. English slowly replaced French among the ruling class.
- The Black Death reached England in June 1348; estimates of the dead vary from about a third to more than half of the population. It caused a shortage of workers.
- The Statute of Labourers (1351) tried to keep wages at the level before the plague; the poll taxes of 1377–1381 added to the anger of the poor.
- The Peasants' Revolt (1381), led by Wat Tyler and inspired by John Ball, reached London; Richard II, aged fourteen, made promises that were withdrawn. Serfdom slowly disappeared in the following century.
- John Wycliffe criticised the Church; his followers, the Lollards, produced the Wycliffite Bible (c. 1382–1395), the first complete Bible in English, and were persecuted.
- The Wars of the Roses (1455–1485) set the houses of Lancaster and York against each other; at Bosworth (22 August 1485) Henry Tudor defeated Richard III and became Henry VII.
- William Caxton printed the first book in English in Bruges (c. 1473) and set up the first press in England at Westminster in 1476.
- Medieval drama moved from the church (liturgical drama) to the street: mystery plays, organised in cycles by the guilds and performed on pageant wagons, told the whole Bible story.
- Morality plays such as *Everyman* (c. 1500) use allegory: abstract ideas become characters. Everyman is abandoned by Fellowship and Goods; only Good Deeds goes with him.
- Malory finished *Le Morte d'Arthur* in 1469–70; Caxton printed it in 1485. The Winchester Manuscript, found in 1934, shows how much Caxton edited the text.
- Mixed conditionals: *if* + past perfect, *would* + base form (past → present); *if* + past simple, *would have* + past participle (present → past). *Wish / if only* + past simple, past perfect, *could*, *would*; *it's time* + past simple; *would rather* + base form or + somebody + past simple.
- Boccaccio's *Decameron* opens with the plague in Florence in 1348; the Italian *sacra rappresentazione* was the Florentine counterpart of the English mystery play. The word *quarantine* comes from Venetian *quarantena*, "forty days".

ESERCIZI

History and Literature

1. ● When did the Black Death reach England?
   - **A.** 1337
   - **B.** 1348
   - **C.** 1381
   - **D.** 1415

2. ● *Everyman* is…
   - **A.** a mystery play from the York cycle
   - **B.** a prose romance
   - **C.** a morality play
   - **D.** a popular ballad

3. ● True (T) or false (F)? Correct the false sentences. a The Hundred Years' War lasted exactly one hundred years. b The Statute of Labourers tried to keep wages at the level of the years before the plague. c The rebels of 1381 entered London. d Richard II was an adult when he met the rebels in 1381. e We know for certain that Wycliffe translated the whole Bible himself. f Henry VII married Elizabeth of York and joined the two rival houses.

4. ● Complete the timeline with the events. 1337 _____ · 1348 _____ · 1381 _____ · 1415 _____ · 1455 _____ · 1476 _____ · 1485 _____ (two events)

5. ●● Match the authors (1–5) with the works (a–e), then add a date to each. 1 Thomas Malory · 2 William Langland · 3 William Caxton · 4 an unknown author · 5 Thomas Walsingham — a *Historia Anglicana*, a chronicle in Latin · b *Piers Plowman* · c *Everyman* · d *Le Morte d'Arthur* · e the first book printed in English, stories about Troy

6. ●● Explain each term in one or two sentences, with an example. a mystery play · b pageant wagon · c allegory · d poll tax · e Lollards

7. ●●● Short answer (40–60 words). How did the Black Death help to cause the Peasants' Revolt?

8. ●●● Short answer (40–60 words). Why is 1485 an important year both for the history and for the literature of England?

Text Analysis

9. ● In T1, why does Death refuse Everyman's offer?
   - **A.** The sum is too small.
   - **B.** Death does not care for riches.
   - **C.** Death has already been paid by God.
   - **D.** Everyman has no money with him.

10. ●● T1. Answer the questions. a What does God want Everyman to bring on his journey? b What does Everyman ask Death to do in l. 123? c In which line does Death say that his habits are completely different from those of people who take gifts? d Which pronoun does Everyman use to Death when he offers him money, and why?

11. ●● T1. Rewrite in modern English. a *Hast thou thy Maker forget?* b *I set not by gold, silver, nor riches* c *For and I would receive gifts great, / All the world I might get* d *come hence, and not tarry*

12. ●● T2. Put the events in the right order. a An arm comes out of the water. b Bedivere says he saw only the waters and the waves. c Arthur threatens to kill Bedivere. d Bedivere ties the belt around the handle. e Arthur accuses Bedivere of betraying him twice. f The hand disappears with the sword.

13. ●● T2. Find in the text: a the alliteration in Bedivere's second lie; b two adjectives with which Arthur reminds Bedivere of their bond; c the reason Arthur gives for his hurry; d three things that the arm does with the sword.

14. ●●● Compare T1 and T2 (80–100 words). In both texts a man is tempted by riches at the moment of death — his own or his lord's. What does each text say about wealth?

15. ●●● Write a PEE paragraph (80–100 words) on one of these points, with one short quotation: *Bedivere is a loyal knight who fails · Everyman thinks like a merchant*.

16. ●● T3. a Write the rhyme in modern English. b Explain its argument in one sentence. c Why could the lords and the Church find it dangerous?

Language

17. ● Past → present. Complete the mixed conditionals with the verbs in brackets. a If I _____ (not / stay) up so late, I _____ (not / be) so tired now. b If Caxton _____ (not / print) Malory, fewer people _____ (know) the story today. c If you _____ (take) the medicine yesterday, you _____ (feel) better now. d If the rebels of 1381 _____ (win), England _____ (might / be) a different country today.

18. ●● Present → past. Rewrite each pair of sentences as one mixed conditional. a I don't speak German, so I didn't understand the guide in Mainz. b Sam isn't a patient person, so he didn't wait for the bus. c Marta is disorganised, so she forgot her presentation yesterday. d I'm not brave, so I didn't speak at the meeting.

19. ● Match the halves (1–4 and a–d). Then say which sentences are mixed conditionals and which is a third conditional. 1 If I had brought my glasses, · 2 If Marta weren't so good at maths, · 3 If the plague hadn't returned so many times, · 4 If Callum were less organised, — a she wouldn't have won the competition last year. · b I could read the board now. · c the population would have grown faster. · d he would have forgotten the tickets.

20. ●● Rewrite with *wish* or *if only*. a I don't have a bike. (I wish…) b I didn't revise for the test. (If only…) c My brother always leaves his socks on the floor. (I wish… would…) d Aoife can't speak Irish fluently yet. (Aoife wishes… could…) e Bedivere lied to the king. (Bedivere wished…)

21. ●● It's high time you _____ your room: it's a disaster!

    A. tidy
    B. will tidy
    C. have tidied
    D. tidied

22. ●● I'd rather you _____ my diary. It's private.

    A. didn't read
    B. don't read
    C. not read
    D. wouldn't read

23. ●● Complete with the correct form of the verbs. a It's late: it's time we _____ (go). b I'd rather _____ (stay) at home than go out tonight. c My parents would rather I _____ (not / take) the night bus. d It's time _____ (start) the test: books away, please. e Would you rather I _____ (call) you tomorrow?

24. ●● Find and correct the mistakes (✗). a If I would have known, I would have helped you. b I wish I would be taller. c It's time we go home. d I'd rather you don't tell Sam. e If I had studied Latin, I would have understood this word now. f I wish I didn't eat so much last night.

25. ●●● Translate into English. a Se avessi letto il capitolo, adesso sapresti le date. b Magari potessi venire a Canterbury con voi! c È ora che tu cominci a studiare per l'interrogazione. d Preferirei che non lo dicessi a nessuno.

Vocabulary

26. ● Complete with the words in the box: *outbreak · spread · symptoms · quarantine · recovered · shortage · wages · epidemic*. a The plague _____ quickly along the trade routes. b The first _____ were fever and painful swellings. c Few people _____ from the disease. d After 1348 there was a _____ of workers, so _____ rose. e Travellers from infected ports had to stay in _____ for forty days. f A new _____ of plague came in 1361. g A disease that spreads among many people in one area is an _____ .

27. ●● Make nouns with *-hood*, *-dom* or *-ship*. a free · b king · c leader · d neighbour · e member · f bored · g adult · h hard. Then use three of them in sentences about this chapter.

28. ●● Choose the correct word. a The war *broke out / broke up* in 1337. b Doctors could not find a *cure / care*. c The disease *spread / spreaded* to London in the autumn. d Landowners wanted to keep *wages / salaries* low. e She has *recovered / covered* from the flu.

Writing and Speaking

29. ●●● Write a for-and-against essay (200–250 words) on one of the questions in the Writing section. Follow the structure of Elena's model and use at least one concession (*admittedly … nevertheless*).

30. ●● Speaking. With a partner, discuss which of these should be the subject of a new museum exhibition in your town: medieval medicine, the first printed books, medieval theatre, or knights and castles. Use the phrases in the Useful language table and reach a decision in three minutes.

Towards B2

31. ●● Open cloze. Write ONE word in each gap. *William Caxton was born in Kent, but he spent (1) _____ of his working life in Bruges. It was there (2) _____ he printed the first book in English. When he returned to England (3) _____ 1476, he set up his press at Westminster. If he had (4) _____ chosen popular books, his business might have failed. Many of the books he printed (5) _____ still read today, (6) _____ as The Canterbury Tales. Caxton often had to decide which words to use, because English was spoken differently in (7) _____ county. No wonder he wrote that it was hard to please (8) _____ man.*

32. ●● Word formation. Use the word in capitals to form a word that fits the gap. *The Black Death was the most (1) _____ (DISASTER) epidemic in European history. Its (2) _____ (ARRIVE) in England in 1348 caused panic, because doctors were (3) _____ (ABLE) to find a cure. After the first (4) _____ (BREAK), the countryside suffered a serious (5) _____ (SHORT) of workers. Peasants wanted more (6) _____ (FREE) to move and to earn, and they grew angry at the (7) _____ (EQUAL) of medieval society. In 1381 their anger led to open (8) _____ (REBEL).*

33. ●●● Key-word transformation. Complete the second sentence so that it means the same as the first. Use the word in capitals and 2–5 words (a contraction counts as two words). a I regret not visiting York when I was in England. ONLY — If _____ York when I was in England! b You should go to bed now: it's late. TIME — It's _____ to bed. c I'd prefer you not to use my laptop. RATHER — I _____ use my laptop. d I didn't eat breakfast, so I'm hungry now. HAD — If _____ breakfast, I wouldn't be hungry now. e My brother keeps playing loud music, and it annoys me. WOULD — I wish _____ playing loud music. f Bedivere is too attached to the rich sword, so he didn't obey at once. WERE — If Bedivere _____ to the sword, he would have obeyed at once.

PER APPROFONDIRE

- [MOR] K. O. Morgan (ed.), *The Oxford History of Britain*: the chapter on the later Middle Ages (the Black Death, 1381, the Wars of the Roses).
- [NOR] S. Greenblatt (ed.), *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, vol. A: the introduction to the later Middle Ages, *Everyman* and the mystery plays, Malory.
- [SAN] A. Sanders, *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*: the pages on medieval drama and on Malory and Caxton.
- [CRY] D. Crystal, *The Stories of English*: the chapters on the spread of English after the Black Death and on Caxton and the standard.
- [HEW] M. Hewings, *Advanced Grammar in Use*: the units on mixed conditionals, *wish* and *if only*, *it's time* and *would rather*.

Glossario del capitolo

Allegory
allegoria — A story in which characters, places and events stand for abstract ideas, so that it has a second meaning.

Black Death
peste nera — The plague epidemic that struck Europe from 1347 and reached England in 1348.

Epidemic
epidemia — A disease that spreads quickly among many people in one area.

Guild
corporazione, arte — An association of the people who practised the same craft or trade in a medieval town.

Hundred Years' War
guerra dei Cent'anni — The series of wars between England and France from 1337 to 1453.

Liturgical drama
dramma liturgico — Short scenes in Latin acted by the clergy inside the church, during the service.

Lollards
lollardi — The followers of John Wycliffe, who wanted the Bible in English and criticised the Church.

Mixed conditional
periodo ipotetico misto — A conditional in which the condition and the result refer to different times.

Morality play
moralità — A late-medieval allegorical play on the struggle for a human soul, such as *Everyman*.

Mystery play
sacra rappresentazione (ciclo dei misteri) — A medieval play on a story from the Bible, often part of a cycle performed by the guilds of a town.

Outbreak
scoppio, focolaio — The sudden start of a disease or of a war.

Pageant wagon
carro scenico — A stage on wheels on which a guild performed its play at a series of stations in the streets.

Poll tax
testatico — A tax of a fixed sum on every person, "per head", rich or poor.

Quarantine
quarantena — A period in which people who may carry a disease are kept apart from others.

Serfdom
servitù della gleba — The system that bound peasants to the land and to the service of their lord.

Shortage
carenza, scarsità — A situation in which there is not enough of something.

Symptom
sintomo — A sign that somebody has an illness.

Wars of the Roses
guerra delle Due Rose — The civil wars between the houses of Lancaster and York, 1455–1485.

Soluzioni

1. B (June 1348).

2. C — a morality play: its characters are personified ideas.

3. a F: it lasted from 1337 to 1453, more than a century, with long truces. b T. c T (13 June 1381). d F: he was fourteen. e F: the translation was made by his followers; how much Wycliffe himself translated is uncertain. f T (1486).

4. 1337 the Hundred Years' War begins · 1348 the Black Death reaches England · 1381 the Peasants' Revolt · 1415 the battle of Agincourt · 1455 the Wars of the Roses begin · 1476 Caxton sets up his press at Westminster · 1485 the battle of Bosworth (Henry VII king) and Caxton prints *Le Morte d'Arthur*.

5. 1 d (finished 1469–70, printed 1485) · 2 b (c. 1370–1390) · 3 e (Bruges, c. 1473) · 4 c (c. 1500) · 5 a (written at St Albans; reports the events of 1381).

6. Model answers. a A play on a story from the Bible, often part of a cycle performed by the guilds of a town (the York cycle). b A stage on wheels on which a guild performed its play, moving from station to station. c A story in which characters and events stand for abstract ideas (Death and Good Deeds in *Everyman*). d A tax of the same amount "per head", like the poll taxes of 1377–1381. e The followers of Wycliffe, who wanted the Bible in English and criticised the wealth of the Church.

7. Traccia: the plague killed a large part of the population, so there was a shortage of workers and wages rose. Landowners answered with the Statute of Labourers (1351), which fixed wages and stopped workers from moving. This, and the unfair poll taxes, made peasants angry for thirty years, until the revolt of 1381.

8. Traccia: in history, Henry Tudor defeated Richard III at Bosworth (22 August 1485): the Wars of the Roses ended and the Tudor age began. In literature, a few weeks before, Caxton printed Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*, the most famous English version of the Arthurian legend, and one of the first great printed books in English.

9. B.

10. a A reckoning: an account of his life (his "book of count"). b To put off ("defer") the matter until another day. c l. 129 ("But my custom is clean contrary"). d *ye* (l. 121): the polite form, because he wants to persuade Death; before, he used *thou*.

11. a Have you forgotten your Creator? b I don't care about gold, silver or riches. c Because if I accepted great gifts, I could get the whole world. d come away from here, and don't delay.

12. b, e, c, d, a, f.

13. a *the waters wap and waves wan* (w... w...). b *lief and dear*. c "thy long tarrying putteth me in great jeopardy of my life, for I have taken cold". d it met the sword, caught it, shook it three times and brandished it (then vanished).

14. Model answer: In T1 Everyman tries to buy time from Death with a thousand pounds, but Death answers that he does not care for gold or for kings: in front of death, wealth is useless. In T2 Bedivere hides Excalibur because it is too rich to throw away, and so he betrays his dying king twice. In both texts wealth is a temptation that makes a man forget his true duty — to God in *Everyman*, to his lord in Malory. Both texts end by rejecting riches: Everyman must leave his Goods, and the sword goes back to the lake.

15. Model answer (Bedivere): Bedivere is a loyal knight, but the beauty of the sword makes him fail. Arthur reminds him that he has been "so lief and dear", so the bond between them is personal, not only feudal. Yet twice Bedivere hides Excalibur and lies, and Arthur must say "now hast thou betrayed me twice". His failure is human: he is not greedy for himself, but he cannot accept the end of Arthur's

world. Only Arthur's threat makes him obey. (Everyman: he offers Death "a thousand pound", and calls his life a "book of count" — a merchant's idea of judgement.)

16. a When Adam dug the land and Eve spun wool, who was a gentleman then? b At the beginning of the world everybody worked and there were no lords, so inequality is not natural. c Because it said that the difference between lords and peasants was not willed by God, so it could be ended — and the rebels could use it as a slogan.

17. a hadn't stayed … wouldn't be · b hadn't printed … would know · c had taken … would feel · d had won … might be.

18. a If I spoke German, I would have understood the guide in Mainz. b If Sam were (was) a more patient person, he would have waited for the bus. c If Marta weren't (wasn't) so disorganised, she wouldn't have forgotten her presentation yesterday. d If I were (was) braver, I would have spoken at the meeting.

19. 1 b (mixed: past → present) · 2 a (mixed: present → past) · 3 c (third conditional: past → past) · 4 d (mixed: present → past).

20. a I wish I had a bike. b If only I had revised for the test! c I wish my brother would stop leaving his socks on the floor. d Aoife wishes she could speak Irish fluently. e Bedivere wished he hadn't lied to the king.

21. D (tidied).

22. A (didn't read).

23. a went · b stay · c didn't take · d to start · e called.

24. a If I had known, I would have helped you. b I wish I were (was) taller. c It's time we went home. d I'd rather you didn't tell Sam. e If I had studied Latin, I would understand this word now. f I wish I hadn't eaten so much last night.

25. a If you had read the chapter, you would know the dates now. b If only I could come to Canterbury with you! (I wish I could come…) c It's time you started studying (to study) for your oral test. d I'd rather you didn't tell anyone.

26. a spread · b symptoms · c recovered · d shortage, wages · e quarantine · f outbreak · g epidemic.

27. a freedom · b kingdom (kingship) · c leadership · d neighbourhood · e membership · f boredom · g adulthood · h hardship. Example: *After the plague, peasants wanted more freedom.*

28. a broke out · b cure · c spread · d wages · e recovered.

29. Use the checklist in the Writing section. Marking guide: content and balance (two arguments on each side, an opinion only in the conclusion); organisation (four paragraphs, linkers, a concession); language (range and accuracy, register without contractions); word count 200–250.

30. Model: *A: Shall we start with medieval medicine? It's interesting, but I'm not sure younger children would enjoy it. B: I see what you mean, but the plague is something everybody has heard of. What about the first printed books? A: That's a good point, and we could show how a press works. B: True, but books in a glass case can be a bit boring. Theatre would be more lively — visitors could watch scenes on a wagon. A: Exactly, and what's more, local actors could take part. So, shall we go for medieval theatre? B: Yes, I think we both agree on that.*

31. 1 most (much) · 2 that · 3 in · 4 not · 5 are · 6 such · 7 every (each) · 8 every.

32. 1 disastrous · 2 arrival · 3 unable · 4 outbreak · 5 shortage · 6 freedom · 7 inequality · 8 rebellion.

33. a only I had visited · b time you went · c would rather you didn't ('d rather you didn't) · d I had eaten · e my brother would stop · f weren't so attached (were less attached).