

THE STRUGGLE FOR POWER 1745-1845

The Swing Riots

Source A From a diary of a Swing Rioter, Simon Rose, in 1830

'I have been speaking to the local merchant and he brings me tales of similar woe from all over the south of England. Our standard of living has never been great, but now it is worse than ever. There are so few jobs, and the money they pay is terrible. We must unite and do something about it.'

Source B From a letter sent by a rich landowner in Southampton, in 1830

'I hope that this letter finds you healthy, dear Mary. I write with great news: we have invested in new machinery on our estate and now one machine can do the work of 10 men. Imagine how much money I can save by not having to pay my men their wages! Since sacking the men I've received a nasty letter threatening harm from a 'Captain Swing' – have you ever heard of such a person?'

TASKS

1. What reasons are giving in these sources to explain why people supported Captain Swing?
2. Do you think ordinary people had any alternative action to protest about the new machines?