Name\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Period\_\_\_\_\_

# Read the following article and do 15 annotations (1 of each and then 5 extra of your choice). Annotate looking for evidence the author uses to show how food defined social classes. Answer the questions at the end.

# **Segments from “Tudor dining: a guide to food and status in the 16th century”**

*Historyextra.com* by Emma Mason 8 December 2014

What, how and where people ate in Tudor times depended greatly on who they were: the rich nobility enjoyed lavish feasts of meat, seafood and sugary treats, while yeomen and labourers were restricted to a diet of bread, pottages and vegetables. Everything from the number of dishes eaten to the ways in which food was served was dictated by status: in 16th-century England, you truly were what you ate.

In Tudor England, maintaining the difference between ranks was so important to the concept of a well-ordered society that efforts were made to enshrine the distinctions between the classes in ‘sumptuary’ laws. These laws tried to control what you ate and wore, according to your position in the God-given hierarchy, which stretched from the king at the top, down through the numerous grades of nobility and clergy, to the gentry, yeomen and finally the labourers at the bottom of the heap.

Of course, for the poorest, sumptuary laws were not terribly relevant. Labourers would not often be able to afford more than pottage – the staple dish – and you could eat as much of that as your budget would allow. The rich ate pottage too, but instead of what was basically cabbage soup with some barley or oats – and a sniff of bacon if you were lucky – a nobleman’s pottage might contain almonds, ginger and saffron, as well as wine.

**A numbers game**

The Sumptuary Law of 31 May 1517 dictated the number of dishes per meal: a cardinal could serve nine dishes, while dukes, marquises, bishops and earls could serve seven. Lower-ranking lords were permitted to serve only six, and the gentry class, with an income of £40–100 per annum, could serve three.

A dish contained a set amount of a particular item – for example, one swan, bustard or peacock (all reserved for the higher ranks of nobility), but four smaller fowl, or 12 very small birds, such as larks. To prevent the higher ranks feeling deprived if they went out to dinner, the host could serve the number of dishes and food appropriate to the highest-ranking guest. Additionally, weddings were exempt from the rules.

Both courses would offer a pottage plus a selection of meats, custards, tarts, fritters and fruit. The first course tended to offer boiled meats, and the second, roasted or baked meats. For formal feasts, each course was heralded by the entrance of the ‘subtlety’. This was an extraordinary decorative art form, the creation of wonderful representations of castles, cathedrals, hunting scenes or similar, made of marzipan and spun sugar for the most important feasts, and of wax for lesser occasions.

### **Social customs**

In the medieval period, dining, like everything else, was a communal affair. Henry VII and Elizabeth of York frequently dined in public in the Great Hall, surrounded by the court. However, Henry VIII preferred to dine in his Presence Chamber – a half public, half private space – and frequently took supper in his private rooms with a few friends and his current wife. Elizabeth I followed this example, and, unless she was entertaining foreign dignitaries or was on progress, usually dined alone.

Answer the following questions:

1. Which quote BEST supports the purpose of the author writing this article?
   1. “The Sumptuary Law of 31 May 1517 dictated the number of dishes per meal: a cardinal could serve nine dishes, while dukes, marquises, bishops and earls could serve seven.”
   2. “The first course tended to offer boiled meats, and the second, roasted or baked meats.”
   3. “Everything from the number of dishes eaten to the ways in which food was served was dictated by status: in 16th-century England, you truly were what you ate.”
   4. “Elizabeth I followed this example, and, unless she was entertaining foreign dignitaries or was on progress, usually dined alone.”
2. What is the BEST answer for why the author included the different types of food the different social status groups would eat?
   1. He wanted to make the reader hungry by reading about all the food
   2. To illustrate the differences in social status by what each group ate
   3. To show that they ate a lot of food
   4. To show that the British eat “weird” foods