

Entertainment in the Middle Ages



Entertainment in the Middle Ages

- Interesting Facts and information about Entertainment in the Middle Ages in the Middle Ages
- Entertainment in the Middle Ages - Holidays and Festivals
- Games and Entertainment in the Middle Ages
- Outdoor Entertainment in the Middle Ages
- Entertainment for Rich People in the Middle Ages

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Entertainment in the Middle Ages

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Interesting facts and information about life and the lives of men and women in the Medieval period of the Middle Ages

Entertainment in the Middle Ages

What did people do in the middle ages for entertainment? Types of Medieval Entertainment varied according to status but included feasts, banquets, jousts and tournaments, Mystery Plays, fairs, games and sports, hunting, hawking, animal entertainment using dogs, bears and monkeys.

Entertainment in the Middle Ages - Holidays and Festivals

The monotony of Medieval daily life during the Middle ages was alleviated by the various types of entertainment, festivals and holidays. The Medieval people of the Middle Ages shared a common life in the work of the fields, in the sports of the village green, and in the services of the parish church. They enjoyed many holidays; it has been estimated that, besides Sundays, about eight weeks in every year were free from work. Festivities at Christmas, Easter, and May Day, at the end of ploughing and the completion of harvest, relieved the monotony of the daily round of labor.

Entertainment in the Middle Ages - The Entertainers

Who were the people who provided the entertainment during the Middle Ages? The Medieval entertainers of the Middle Ages included Jesters (A fool or buffoon at medieval courts), Mummers (Masked or costumed merrymaker or dancers at festivals), Minstrels and Troubadours, acrobats and jugglers and conjurers.

[Troubadours](#)

Minstrels

Games and Entertainment in the Middle Ages

Medieval Games of the Middle Ages were popular in all walks of society. Games were played by the Upper classes and the Lower classes. By adults and children. Different types of Games and entertainment fell into a number of different categories including Card Games, Board Games, Dice Games, Sporting Games and Children's games. The following board games were played and enjoyed as entertainment during the Middle Ages:

- Chess
- Tables - Backgammon
- Nine Men's Morris
- Alquerque - A classic period strategy game, an ancestor of Checkers
- Fox & Geese - a game of strategy
- The Philosophers Game - a game of strategy and numbers
- Shovelboard - the ancestor of shuffleboard
- Knucklebones - Early game of dice
- Hazard - an ancestor of Craps

Outdoor Entertainment in the Middle Ages

Outdoor Entertainment during the Middle Ages centred around the Village Green and at local fairs and included a variety of Medieval Sports:

- Archery - Archery contests were especially popular
- Bowls
- Colf - the ancestor of Golf
- Gameball - a simple football game
- Hammer-throwing
- Hurling or Shinty - a similar game to hockey
- Horseshoes - throwing horseshoes at a target
- Quarter-staff contests
- Skittles - an ancestor of modern ten-pin bowling
- Stoolball - an ancestor of Cricket
- Wrestling

Outdoor entertainment also included the practises of certain festivals including May Day when people danced around a maypole and choose a May Queen. Religious plays were re-enacted by the Mummers.

Entertainment for Rich People in the Middle Ages

Entertainment for rich people centred around the spectacles of jousting and feasts or banquets. The Medieval Period of the Middle Ages was becoming more refined and elegant and the concept of courtly love was introduced and displayed at both tournaments and jousts. The sumptuous feasts and banquets also provided entertainment for rich people during the Middle Ages. During the feast musicians would play and provide musical entertainment. After feasting entertainment might be provided by minstrels, troubadours, jesters, acrobats, fire-eaters and conjurers. The dance was also important as part of 'courtly love' entertainment. Knights were expected not only to fight but also to dance.

Middle Ages Food for a King Jousting

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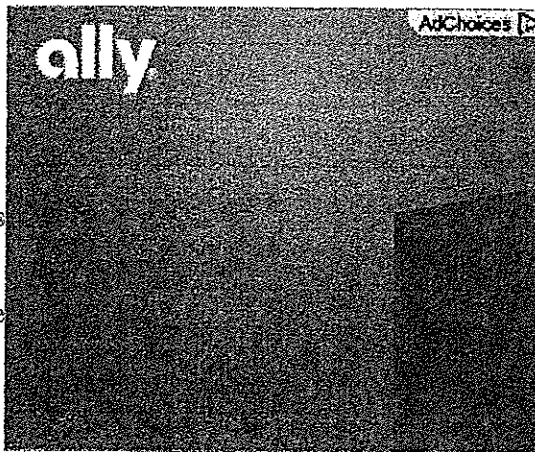
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Entertainment in the Middle Ages

Each section of this Middle Ages website addresses all topics and provides interesting facts and information about these great people and events in bygone Medieval times including Entertainment in the Middle Ages. The Sitemap provides full details of all of the information and facts provided about the fascinating subject of the Middle Ages!

Entertainment in the Middle Ages

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Entertainment in the Middle Ages

Entertainment in the Middle Ages - Life in the Middle Ages - History of Entertainment in the Middle Ages - Inform.

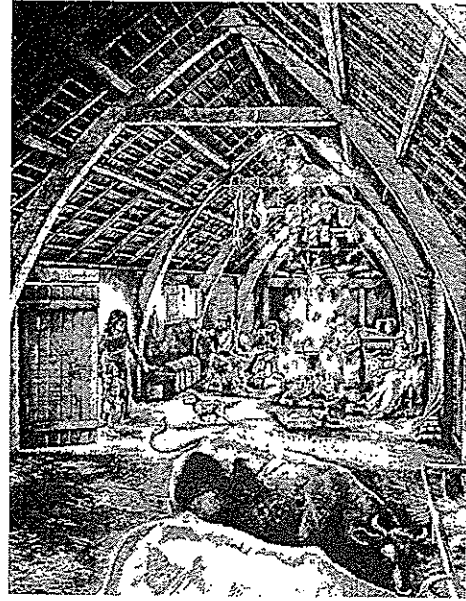
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A PEASANT'S DWELLING

The building was large for it was more than a dwelling. Beneath its sagging roof were a pigpen, a henhouse, cattle sheds, corncribs, straw and hay, and last and not least, the family's apartment, actually a single room whose walls and timbers were coated with soot. According to Erasmus, who examined such huts, "almost all the floors are of clay and rushes from the marshes, so carelessly renewed that the foundation sometime remains for twenty years, harboring, there below, spittle and vomit and wine of dogs and men, beer...remnants of fishes, and other filth unnamable. Hence, with the change of weather, a vapor exhales which in my judgment is far from wholesome."



The centerpiece of the room was a gigantic bedstead, piled high with straw pallets, all seething with vermin. Everyone slept there, regardless of age or gender—grandparents, parents, children, grandchildren, and hens and pigs—and if a couple chose to enjoy intimacy, the others were aware of every movement. In summer they could even watch. If a stranger was staying the night, hospitality required that he be invited to make "one more" on the familial mattress. This was true even if the head of the household was away, on say, a pilgrimage. If this led to goings-on, and the husband returned to discover his wife with child, her readiest reply was that during the night, while she was sleeping, she had been visited by an incubus. Theologians had confirmed that such monsters existed and that it was their demonic mission to impregnate lonely women lost in slumber. Of course, when unmarried girls found themselves with child and told the same tale, they met with more skepticism.

If this familial situation seems primitive, it should be borne in mind that these were prosperous peasants. Not all their neighbors were so lucky. Some lived in tiny cabins of crossed laths stuffed with grass and straw, inadequately shielded from rain, snow, and wind. They lacked even a chimney; smoke from the cabin's fire left through a small hole in the thatched roof—where, unsurprisingly, fires frequently broke out. These homes were without glass windows or shutters; in a storm, or in frigid weather, openings in the walls could only be stuffed with straw, rags—whatever was handy. Such families envied those enjoying greater comfort, and most of all they coveted their beds. They themselves slept on thin straw pallets covered by ragged blankets. Some were without blankets. Some didn't even have pallets.

PEASANT FOOD AND DRINK

To avoid eating in the dark, there were only two meals a day—"dinner" at 10 A.M. and "supper" at 5 P.M.—but bountiful harvests meant tables which were full. Although meat was rare in Europe there were often huge pork sausages, and always enormous rolls of black bread (white bread was the prerogative of the upper classes) and endless courses of soup or porridge: cabbage, watercress, and cheese soups; "dried peas and bacon water," "poor man's soup" from



odds and ends, and during Lent, of course, fish soup. Every meal was washed down with large amounts of beer or ale. "Small beer" was the traditional drink, though after crusaders return from the East many preferred "spiced beer." The per capita consumption of beer in medieval England was a gallon of beer a day—even for nuns and eight year-old children. Sir John Fortescue observed that the English "drink no water, unless at certain times upon religious score, or by way of doing penance."

FASHIONS



To be sure, certain fashions were shared by all. Styles had changed since Greece and Rome shimmered in their glory; then garments were *wrapped* on; now all classes *put* them on and fastened them. Most clothing—except the leather gauntlets and leggings of hunters, and the crude animal skins worn by the very poor—was now woven of wool. (Since few Europeans possessed a change of clothes, the same outfit was worn daily; as a consequence, skin diseases were astonishingly prevalent.) But there was no mistaking the distinctions between the priest in his vestments; the toiler in his dirty cloth tunic, loose trousers, and heavy boots; and the aristocrat with his jewelry, his hairdress, and his extravagant finery. Every knight wore a signet ring, and wearing fur was

as much a sign of knighthood as wearing a sword or carrying a falcon. Indeed, in some European states it was illegal for anyone not nobly born to adorn himself with fur.

Daily Life for Peasant Women in the Middle Ages



Daily Life for Peasant Women in the Middle Ages

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- People and events in the Middle Ages
- Daily Life for Peasant Women in the Middle Ages

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Daily Life for Peasant Women in the Middle Ages

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Interesting facts and information about life and the lives of men and women in the Medieval period of the Middle Ages

Daily Life for Peasant Women in the Middle Ages

The daily life of lower class women in the Middle ages was hard. Women were expected to help their peasant husbands with their daily chores as well as attending to provisions and the cooking of daily meals and other duties customarily undertaken by women. The daily life for peasant women in the Middle Ages can be described as follows:

- The daily life of a peasant woman started at started in the summer as early as 3am
- She first had to prepare a breakfast, usually of pottage
- Work in the fields or on the land started by dawn and the daily life of a peasant woman during the Middle Ages would include this type of hard work during busy times especially harvest
- Preparations had to be started in order to provide the daily meals
- Peasant women were expected to look after small animals - geese, chickens etc
- Weaving, spinning and making and mending clothes were also part of a woman's work
- Preparing rushes for lighting
- Making preserves

- Tending the vegetable plot and collecting berries and herbs
- Women were also responsible for the children and need an understanding of medicines and herbs for basic nursing requirements
- Outside work finished at dusk, working hours were therefore longer during the summer months
- Women generally ate when her husband and children had finished and had little leisure time

So ended the daily life of Medieval Peasant women during the Middle Ages.

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- Middle Ages Manors
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- Medieval Work and Occupations
- Medieval Life in the Middle Ages
- Medieval History of the Middle Ages



Daily Life for Peasant Women in the Middle Ages

Daily Life for Peasant Women in the Middle Ages - Life in the Middle Ages - History of Daily Life for Peasant Women

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Middle Ages Daily Meals



Middle Ages Daily Meals

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- Foods, Cooking and recipes
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- Cooking and Foods during the Medieval era

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Middle Ages Daily Meals

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Interesting Facts and Information about Medieval Foods

Middle Ages Daily Meals

The quantity, quality and type of food consumed by Royalty and Nobility differed considerably from the diet of the Lower Classes. The number of courses and variety of Middle Ages foods consumed by the Upper Classes included ingredients which were far too expensive for the majority of English people. The nobility had acquired a taste for spicy and also sweet foods and they could afford the expensive spices and sugar required to create these exotic recipes. Both the Upper and Lower classes generally had three meals a day but the commoners obviously far less elaborate than the Upper Classes. Menus for the wealthy were extensive, but only small portions were taken. A change in culture emerged during the Middle Ages when the travel prompted by the Crusades led to a new and unprecedented interest in beautiful objects and elegant manners. This change extended to food preparation and presentation resulting in fabulous food arrangements and exotic colors and flavorings.

Middle Ages Daily Meals

Royalty and the nobility would eat their food from silverware, and even gold dishes. Lower classes would eat their food from wooden or horn dishes. Every person had their own knife. Spoons were rarely used as any liquid food, such as soups, were drunk from a cup. Forks were introduced in the late 14th century. The kitchens in large houses or castles were usually situated some distance from the Great Hall and therefore food was often served cold. The number of daily meals eaten during the day by the Upper Classes were as follows:

- Breakfast - Food and drink generally served between 6 - 7
- Dinner - Food and drink generally served at mid-morning between 12 - 2

- Supper - Was a substantial meal and food and drink was generally served between 6 -7 and accompanied by various forms of entertainment

Middle Ages Daily Meals for the Upper Classes

The daily meals for the Upper Classes during the Middle Ages provided a huge variety of different types of food. Vegetables were limited for the Upper Classes. Only Lords and Nobles were allowed to hunt deer, boar, hares and rabbits and these foods were therefore used in the daily meals of the nobility. Food items which came from the ground were only are considered fit for the poor. Only vegetables such as rape, onions, garlic and leeks graced a Noble's table. A type of bread called Manchet, which was a bread loaf made of wheat flour, was consumed by the Upper classes. Food was highly spiced. These expensive spices consumed by the wealthy included Pepper, Cinnamon, Cloves, Nutmeg, Ginger, Saffron, Cardamon (aka Cardamom), Coriander, Cumin, Garlic, Turmeric, Mace, Anise, Caraway and Mustard.

Middle Ages Daily Meals for the Lower Classes

The staple diet of the lower classes were bread, pottage (a type of stew), dairy products such as milk and cheese products and meats such as beef, pork or lamb. The punishment for poaching could result in death or having hands cut off, so the Lower Classes would only poach if they were desperate. The Lower Classes ate rye and barley bread. The poor could not afford to buy the spices so enjoyed by the wealthy. Biscuits were invented by the Crusaders and these were eaten as a convenience food by the workers of the Middle Ages. The 'Ploughman's Lunch' of bread and cheese was also a staple diet of Lower Class workers. Communal ovens were available in villages for baking.

Fasting during the Middle Ages

People of the Middle Ages were highly religious and at certain times the eating of meat was banned. This was not an occasional ban. Certain religious observances banned the eating of meat on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Meat was also banned during the religious seasons of Lent and Advent. Meat was also declined on the eves of many religious holidays. Fasting and abstaining from eating meat was practised for over half the days of the Medieval year.

WOMEN OF THE MIDDLE AGES

Women in Religion

Hildegarde of Bingen (1098-1179)

At the age of seven, Hildegarde became the student of a German anchoress named Jutta. (Anchorites of both sexes received the last rites and confined themselves in small cells. They had no access to the outside world except through a small hole used to pass food in and waste out.) Through Jutta, Hildegarde learned to read the Psalter in Latin. After Jutta's death, Hildegarde succeeded her as abbess, even though she, too, had become an anchoress. Hildegarde suffered from terrible migraines, which caused her to see visions. She confided the visions only in Jutta and in a monk named Volmar, who became her life-long secretary and biographer. Pestered constantly by feelings of inadequacy, aware of the numerous 12th Century religious frauds, Hildegarde wrote to several Church officials to have her visions supported. Pope Eugenius responded, and encouraged her to keep writing. Hildegarde was an author and a composer, as well.



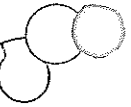
Julian of Norwich (1342?-after 1416)

Few personal details are known about Julian of Norwich. She was a well-known anchoress attached to the Church of St. Julian at Conisford in Norwich, England. Julian viewed herself as ignorant, but she had a great knowledge of spiritual literature. Her own works were written in English, which was a language of vague disrepute and dangerous when used in religion. Falling ill at about age 30, Julian experienced a series of visions called "The Showings", which revealed to her Christ, and the Devil. These visions haunted her for the rest of her life.

Women in Politics

Empress Matilda (Maud) (12th Century)

Matilda, also known as Maud, was the granddaughter of William the Conqueror. She retained the title Empress from her marriage to the German Emperor Henry V, who subsequently died. She decided to stake a claim for the English throne and wage war with her cousin Stephen of Blois. She personally commanded her army and accomplished a number of daring and wily escapes from besieged castles. At one point, she was under siege in London from troops commanded by Stephen's wife, who was also named Matilda.



Eleanor of Aquitaine (?-1204)



An heiress, Eleanor was married at 15 to Louis VII, King of France. He took her on Crusade with him, where it is said she led an army of ladies all dressed in armour, expecting to pick a fight with infidels. Their marriage was terminated when it was alleged she had had an affair with (her uncle) Raymond of Antioch while in the Holy Land. This didn't stop her from making a profitable second marriage to Henry, a prince of England who would shortly be crowned Henry II. She had four sons by him, but when he took a mistress known as Fair Rosamund, she turned against him. She used sons Henry, Geoffrey, Richard, and John against their father, who was already troubled deeply by the murder of Thomas A Becket. Though she was imprisoned for her treason, she was later released and continued to be active in politics.

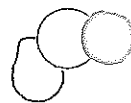
Women in Science and Medicine

Trotula of Salerno (11th?-13th? Century)

Salerno, in Italy, was famous for its medical school. Trotula headed a group called the "Ladies of Salerno", who studied medicine. Because male physicians, though they dominated the medical scene, knew little about women's health issues, her two written works were important in educating them. Her major work, actually referred to as Trotula Major, is *Passionibus Mulierum Curandorum* (The Diseases of Women); it contains information on many subjects, including some daring inferences and prescriptions about impotence and childbirth.

Felicie de Almanica (1292?-?)

The Parisian medical faculty prosecuted Felicie de Almanica, along with many other women, for practicing medicine without a license -- a cardinal sin in a university town. Felicie is notable for her excellent defence, during which she called several witnesses to testify to her skills. She explained her view of the law against illegal medical practice: the law existed, she believed, to prevent quacks from harming people and not to prevent a knowledgeable woman from helping them. She spoke of the need of women doctors to treat women patients. The faculty banned her from practice, but it is likely that she ignored this injunction.



Student Handout #11A: The Life of a Lord

The lord had three basic duties:

- to give military protection to his land and its inhabitants
- to organize agriculture, industry and trade on his lands
- to serve the lord or lords above him (the highest lord being the king) in war.

The lord lived in a well protected dwelling. It was usually constructed on a hill or other high place, and was often surrounded by a moat (a ditch of water). Frequently, it was a wooden castle with separate rooms for servants, toilets, kitchen and storage. However, living quarters were usually not large compared to modern standards. For example, one large room usually served as a dining room, living room and bedroom. Windows were small and often covered to keep out the rain. However, lords could more easily afford candles or torches to provide some light.

The lord rose at dawn to attend to his work. This involved supervising the various operations of the manor. The main role of the manor was to produce food for the lord and his subjects. Because the lords needed food as much as the serfs, the lords were usually quite active in managing the agricultural output of the manor. If the manor produced a surplus of food, it was the lord's responsibility to find a market for it. Other tasks included organizing the construction and maintenance of bridges, roads, canals, etc. The entire burden of planning and organizing this work was the lord's, unless he could find a very able serf to whom he could entrust some of his authority.

The lord also served as judge of the village. Although often the serfs were allowed to stage their own trials, the lord remained the ultimate authority in these issues. He also profited from fines paid by offenders.

The lord's wife was equally busy organizing the household. She bore and raised many children, and made sure they developed proper manners. She also supervised the many tasks of the servants, such as making butter and cheese, doing laundry, preserving meat, preparing meals, making clothes, etc. If her husband went to war she took over the financial and military management of the manor, and was expected to supply his financial needs during the war. If her husband died and they had no son, she inherited the estate, but was expected to remarry within a short time in order to provide her estate with military protection.

| | | | on the Manor |
|---------------|--|--|--|
| Nobles | <p>The resources of the nobles were not much different from those of the kings; i.e. they had barely enough to look after themselves, let alone trying to supply the king. The nobles felt that if they supplied the king with what he was demanding, they would become too weak to feed and protect themselves; they needed everything they could produce. Moreover, the king was often some distance away and roads were extremely poor and hazardous.</p> <p>The nobles were more concerned about meeting their obligations to the church. Part of a Christian's duty was to give ten percent of his produce to the church. If this 10% donation, known as a tithe, was not given, the noble could be excommunicated from the church. This meant that the noble became a social outcast while alive and was damned to hell after death.</p> | <p>The power of the nobles was great within the areas they controlled, but minimal in other areas.</p> <p>On their own property, nobles had power over:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • numbers • resources • organization. <p>This power was expressed through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • force • authority. | <p>Although the nobles were privileged compared to the serfs, their standard of living was still very low according to modern standards. Regarding the quality and quantity of food, nobles had only a little more than the serfs; i.e. during a famine, the nobles would be the last to starve, but they would still starve.</p> <p>The nobles enjoyed houses that were somewhat larger and better constructed than those of the serfs. Nevertheless, nobles still had to suffer with drafty, uninsulated walls and leaky roofs.</p> <p>Hence, despite their status and wealth, nobles lived a pretty miserable life.</p> |

Student Handout #11C: The Life of a Knight

Knights were part of the nobility class. Most knights were children of lords. The knight was a professional fighter. His duty was to protect the weak, the poor and the church.

As the children of lords, knights had a fairly comfortable childhood. The children of lords, unlike peasant children, were not required to work until the age of seven or eight. At that time, they were usually sent to the house of a friend or relative. There the boy would act as a servant to the lord and would receive his training as a fighter. This was his period of education, and it was designed to teach him to be unquestioningly loyal to his lord, devoted to service to his lord, and to be courageous and fierce in battle, yet still be a gentleman. This was the code of chivalry. Knighthood was based on the ideas of chivalry, which included the belief that war is romantic and noble. Values such as loyalty, devotion, courage, and respect for the enemy were all part of chivalry.

When he reached the age of 18 or 19, a knight was sent out to travel with other young knights. Because their main object was to fight, these bands of knights would rove around in search of a conflict. When they found one, they would join the battle on whatever side seemed most appropriate to them. When they weren't involved in local wars, knights travelled to tournaments in which they could test their fighting skills. The tournaments lasted for days, if not weeks, and were marked by loud parties, gambling, drinking and prostitution.

As a fighter, the knight was equivalent to the tank of today. His armour was almost impenetrable, such that relatively few knights actually died in combat, even if the fighting was brutal. A small but very significant invention increased the fighting power of the knight considerably. That invention, which came from China, was the stirrup. The rider could brace himself by using the stirrups, and thus use his full strength as well as that of the horse for maximum advantage in battle. The stirrup made jousting with long lances possible. A good knight could gallop at full speed and use his lance to send other knights flying off their horses.

Although knights were to be the protectors of the poor, the weak and the church, they often terrorized as much as they protected. In the midst of drunkenness or battle, the code of chivalry was not always followed.

After travelling for two or three years, young knights returned home, still fully dependent on their father. Until his father died, a young knight could neither marry nor inherit property. This was a period of frustration for knights, because they could not get on with the business of marrying and setting up their own estate.



- Washing and cooking for the monastery
- Raising the necessary supplies of vegetables and grain
- Producing wine, ale and honey
- Providing medical care for the community
- Providing education for novices
- Spinning, weaving and embroidery
- Illuminating manuscripts

Not all nuns were given hard, manual work. Women who came from wealthy backgrounds were invariably given lighter work and spent time on such tasks as spinning and embroidery. There were also lay sisters who were female members of the convent or nunnery who were not bound to the recitation of the divine office and spent their time occupied in manual work.

The Daily Life of Medieval Nuns - Jobs and Occupations in the convent or nunnery

The daily life of Medieval nuns included many different jobs and occupations. The names and descriptions of many of these positions are detailed below:

- Abbess - the head of an abbey who was elected by the nuns for life.
- Almoner - an almoner was a nun who dispensed alms to the poor and sick
- Cellarer - the cellarer was the nun who supervised the general provisioning of the monastery
- Infirmarian - the nun in charge of the infirmary
- Sacrist - the sacrist was the nun responsible for the safekeeping of books, vestments and vessels, and for the maintenance of the convent's buildings
- Prioress - in an abbey the deputy of the abbess or the superior of a priory that did not have the status of an abbey

Daily Life of a Nun in the Middle Ages - the Daily Routine

The daily life of a Medieval nun during the Middle Ages centred around the hours. The Book of Hours was the main prayer book and was divided into eight sections, or hours, that were meant to be read at specific times of the day in the convent. Each section contained prayers, psalms, hymns, and other readings intended to help the nuns secure salvation for herself. Each day was divided into these eight sacred offices, beginning and ending with prayer services in the convent or nunnery church. These were the times specified for the recitation of divine office which was the term used to describe the cycle of daily devotions. The times of these prayers were called by the following names - Matins, Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, Nones, Vespers and Compline:

- Lauds : the early morning service of divine office approx 5am
- Matins : the night office; the service recited at 2 am in the divine office
- Prime : The 6am service
- Sext : the third of the Little Hours of divine office, recited at the sixth hour (noon)
- Nones : the fourth of the Little Hours of the divine office, recited at the ninth hour (3 pm)

- Terce : the second of the Little Hours of divine office, recited at the third hour (9 am)
- Vespers : the evening service of divine office, recited before dark (4 - 5pm)
- Compline : the last of the day services of divine office, recited before retiring (6pm)

Any work was immediately ceased at these times of daily prayer. The nuns were required to stop what they were doing and attend the services. The food of the monks was generally basic and the mainstay of which was bread and meat. The beds they slept on were pallets filled with straw.

[Do you want to be a nun?](#) Becoming a Catholic nun is a journey. Let us walk with you. www.sistersofmercy.org

[Church Worship](#) Resources for clergy and church For pastors, reporters, and leaders ReligionInsights.org

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- Worship, reading, and daily chores
- The Book of Hours - prayers

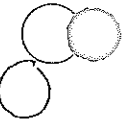


Daily Life of a Nun in the Middle Ages

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Daily Life of a Monk in the Middle Ages



Daily Life of a Monk in the Middle Ages

- Middle Ages era, period, life, age and times
- The Daily Life of Medieval Monks
- The Daily Life of Medieval Monks - Monastic Jobs and Occupations
- The Daily Routine of Monks
- Worship, reading, and manual labor
- The Book of Hours - prayers

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Interesting facts and information about life and the lives of men and women in the Medieval period of the Middle Ages

The Daily Life of Medieval Monks

The daily life of Medieval monks in the Middle Ages were based on the three main vows:

- The Vow of Poverty
- The Vow of Chastity
- The Vow of Obedience

Medieval Monks chose to renounce all worldly life and goods and spend their lives working under the strict routine and discipline of life in a [Medieval Monastery](#). The reasons for becoming a monk, their clothes and the different orders are detailed in [Medieval Monks](#). This section specifically applies to the daily life of the monks.

The Daily Life of Medieval Monks

The daily life of Medieval monks was dedicated to worship, reading, and manual labor. In addition to their attendance at church, the monks spent several hours in reading from the Bible, private prayer, and meditation. During the day the Medieval monks worked hard in the Monastery and on its lands. The life of medieval monks were filled with the following work and chores:

- Washing and cooking for the monastery

- Raising the necessary supplies of vegetables and grain
- Reaping, Sowing, Ploughing, Binding and Thatching, Haymaking and Threshing
- Producing wine, ale and honey
- Providing medical care for the community
- Providing education for boys and novices
- Copying the manuscripts of classical authors
- Providing hospitality for pilgrims

The Daily Life of Medieval Monks - Monastic Jobs and Occupations

The daily life of Medieval monks included many different jobs and occupations. The names and descriptions of many of these positions are detailed below:

- Abbot - the head of an abbey
- Almoner - an almoner was an officer of a monastery who dispensed alms to the poor and sick
- Barber Surgeon - the monk who shaved the faces and tonsures of the monks and performed light surgery
- Cantor - the cantor was the monk whose liturgical function is to lead the choir
- Cellarer - the cellarer was the monk who supervised the general provisioning of the monastery
- Infirmarian - the monk in charge of the infirmary
- Lector - a lector was a monk entrusted with reading the lessons in church or in the refectory.
- Sacrist - the sacrist was the monk responsible for the safekeeping of books, vestments and vessels, and for the maintenance of the monastery's buildings
- Prior - in an abbey the deputy of the abbot or the superior of a monastery that did not have the status of an abbey

Daily Life of a Monk in the Middle Ages - the Daily Routine

The daily life of a Medieval monk during the Middle Ages centred around the hours. The Book of Hours was the main prayer book and was divided into eight sections, or hours, that were meant to be read at specific times of the day. Each section contained prayers, psalms, hymns, and other readings intended to help the monks secure salvation for himself. Each day was divided into these eight sacred offices, beginning and ending with prayer services in the monastery church. These were the times specified for the recitation of divine office which was the term used to describe the cycle of daily devotions. The times of these prayers were called by the following names - Matins, Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, Nones, Vespers and Compline:

- Lauds : the early morning service of divine office approx 5am
- Matins : the night office; the service recited at 2 am in the divine office
- Prime : The 6am service
- Sext : the third of the Little Hours of divine office, recited at the sixth hour (noon)

- **Nones** : the fourth of the Little Hours of the divine office, recited at the ninth hour (3 pm)
- **Terce** : the second of the Little Hours of divine office, recited at the third hour (9 am)
- **Vespers** : the evening service of divine office, recited before dark (4 - 5pm)
- **Compline** : the last of the day services of divine office, recited before retiring (6pm)

Any work was immediately ceased at these times of daily prayer. The monks were required to stop what they were doing and attend the services. The food of the monks was generally basic and the mainstay of which was bread and meat. The beds they slept on were pallets filled with straw.

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Student Handout #11E: The Life of a Serf

Serfs rose with the first morning light to begin their long day. A typical breakfast may have included bread, an onion, a piece of cheese and some beer. Bread was the main ingredient of the medieval diet. The bread was hard, coarse and black. It was usually made with barley, millet and oats. Beer was the main beverage and all female serfs had to know the proper proportions of barley, water, yeast and hops in making beer. During a hard day of work in the field, the average serf may have drunk fifteen litres of beer, or even more.

Both male and female serfs worked in the fields, but females took care of most of the household chores. These included raising the children, milking the sheep (or cows), taking care of the chickens, shearing sheep, spinning wool, making clothing for the family, tending the garden, baking, preparing meals and preserving food. Women also managed the household economy. The family depended on the mother's wise management of food supplies to keep them fed from month to month and year to year.

The average peasant family lived in a windowless, one room house with a dirt floor. Furnishings usually included a fireplace for cooking, one or two beds, a table, several stools and a chest for storing clothes. Not suprisingly, these houses were dark, drafty, sooty and had leaky roofs. A shed was sometimes attached to the house. This served as a storage place for tools and a shelter for animals. Sometimes animals had the run of the house.

A typical noon meal consisted of stew made with cabbage, onions, peas and turnips, seasoned with a bone or perhaps a bit of meat.

Male serfs worked in the fields most of the time. However, they were obligated to work part of the time for the lord of the manor. The lord would have other work for the serfs besides field work. This might include taking care of the lord's animals, cutting down trees for firewood, digging a well, and constructing or maintaining the lord's buildings and roads.

The male peasant would return home at sundown, after putting in ten or twelve hours of hard physical labour. The evening meal, which would usually be leftovers from lunch, would then be eaten. Following that, the family would retire for the evening.

Although the life of a serf was mostly one of hard work, there was some time for entertainment. Loud and boisterous dances were held with the aid of much liquor.

| Social Class | Resources/Needs | Power | Standard of Living on the Manor |
|--------------|--|---|--|
| Serfs | <p>Serfs had no resources and their needs were great. They lived with inadequate food, shelter and clothing. Serfs were peasants who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • did all the labour on the manor • raised food for the entire manor, some of which was given to the king by the lord of the manor • farmed a small piece of land of their own in return for their services to the lord, however, they were required to give the lord a percentage of their harvest. | <p>Serfs were virtually powerless. They belonged to the land, and in turn to the nobles and the king. They were considered to be part of the land, and were included when land was sold or bought. They had to have the permission of the noble in order to marry or leave the manor.</p> | <p>Most serfs had a very miserable life. Finding enough food to survive was a constant struggle. Of the food that was available, there was very little variety, such that most people did not get enough of the many important vitamins and nutrients they needed. As a result of this poor diet, illness and death were common.</p> <p>Not only was food inadequate, but so were clothing and shelter. Most serfs suffered from inadequate clothing, both in quality and quantity. Serfs lived in crude shacks along with their livestock. In winter, the livestock were a blessing because they contributed some body heat to the drafty, uninsulated shacks. However,</p> |

Medieval Sports

Medieval Sports



- Interesting Facts and information about Medieval Sports in the Middle Ages
- Sporting Contests
- Tournaments and Jousting
- Medieval Sports in the Middle Ages - Archery
- Different Types of Medieval Sports in the Middle Ages

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Medieval Sports in the Middle Ages

What kind of sports were practised by the people of the Middle Ages? The people of the Middle Ages enjoyed many holidays; it has been estimated that, besides Sundays, about eight weeks in every year were free from work. There was time for sports. But most of the sports played during the Middle Ages were targeted towards increasing the fighting skills of men. Middle Ages Feudalism was based on the exchange of land for military service. Lords were expected to provide trained soldiers to fight for the King. It was imperative for Knights to acquire excellent fighting skills. The Medieval Sports in the Middle Ages were therefore designed to provide weapon practice and to increase a man's fitness.

Medieval Sports in the Middle Ages - Sporting Contests

Feudalism can be well described as a Pyramid of Power. It was possible for everyone to move higher up the ranks of the pyramid and this is what everyone aspired to do. A Knight who proved valiant in battle or was successful at jousting in tournaments would become wealthy. His wealth could pay for a castle. His importance in the land would increase and he would join the nobility. A peasant who excelled in Medieval sports of the Middle Ages could win a purse at a Sporting contest, gain an important reputation and increased value by his lord and his position in life would improve.

Medieval Sports in the Middle Ages - The Tournaments and Jousting

The really big sporting events were the Tournaments and the Jousts. These sports were dangerous, men were killed at tournaments. Quintain and Pell Training were essential for the Knights who participated in

Medieval Sports in the Middle Ages

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these sports. Feudal Lords and Knights used such weapons as swords, lances, daggers and battle axes and many Medieval sports were designed to provide practise of such skills.

Medieval Sports in the Middle Ages - Archery

Archery was not just one of the Medieval sports of the Middle Ages. Lower Class men were required to practise archery by law! The first Medieval Archery Law was passed in 1252 when all Englishmen between the age of 15 to 60 years old were ordered, by Law, to equip themselves with a bow and arrows. The areas designated for archery training during the Medieval period of the Middle Ages were called the Butts. The power of the longbow was so great that at the Battle of Crecy, in 1346, the French army was decimated. It is estimated that nearly 2000 French knights and soldiers were killed by the longbow arrows. The English lost just 50 men. This explains why Archery Laws were passed and why training at the Butts was so important and included as one of the most important Medieval sports in the Middle Ages!

Different Types of Medieval Sports in the Middle Ages

There were many different types of Medieval Sports in the Middle Ages. The majority of which were designed to increase skills and fitness of fighting men. The sports included the following:

- Archery - Archery contests were especially popular
- Bowls
- Colf - the ancestor of Golf (a sport for the nobles)
- Gameball - a simple football game
- Hammer-throwing
- Hurling or Shinty - a similar game to hockey
- Horseshoes - throwing horseshoes at a target
- Jousting at Tournaments
- Quarter-staff contests
- Skittles - an ancestor of modern ten-pin bowling
- Stoolball - an ancestor of Cricket
- Wrestling

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Student Handout #11B: The Life of A Priest

Priests played an important role in village life. Many of the activities of the manor centred on the church. For example, within hours of being born, babies were taken to the priest to be baptized. If the child survived, the priest would later confirm him or her as a Christian. People confessed their sins to the priest and received from him the Eucharist (eating of bread and drinking of wine to recall Jesus' death) at Easter and Christmas. The priest also conducted marriages. Finally, the priest gave funerals and buried the dead in the church cemetery.

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The church was also the centre of social life, as the religious events of baptisms, weddings and funerals were cause for great feasts and parties. These and other celebrations were held in the church yard.

The priest held mass every Sunday and on Holy days. During the mass he taught Christian values and beliefs. A popular theme was the awful suffering that sinners would experience in hell.

Other duties of priests included such things as: blessing fields in the spring before seed time by sprinkling water on them; and reading orders and messages from the king and church authorities.



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The resources of the church were great:

- It had a very strong organization, with strong central leadership.
- Large numbers of people worked for the church, including most of the educated people.
- Most people were loyal to the church.

The power of the church was great:

- It had control of numbers, as almost everyone in European society at this time belonged to the church.
- It had a tremendous organization, with strong leadership and many levels of authority

The standard of living for the church was good compared to other classes of people because of the great power it held over kings, nobles and serfs. The church accumulated land by taking it from lords in exchange for clerical services such as funerals and marriages. The



The needs of the church were just as great. The Pope declared that it was the Christian duty that all people should pay a tithe of 10% of their earnings or produce to the church. The church:

- had a small land base, so depended on the supply of produce and money brought in by tithing.
- needed a constant supply of people to serve as priests and in the monasteries.

reaching out into all aspects of society.

- It had control of information, as almost all of the educated people capable of reading and writing worked for the church.
- It advised the king on political matters and took on many jobs of governing (e.g., made laws and set up courts to enforce the laws; collected taxes).

monks and nuns, who dedicated their lives to serving the church, farmed this land. On this land, the monks and nuns tended livestock and developed better methods of growing crops. Therefore, they had their own food and produce in addition to that given to them as tithes.



King

The king was really just an important lord. His resources included large landholdings, a small army, livestock, horses, etc., but he usually did not have any more of these resources than some other lords.

In order to administer and defend the territory over which he was king, he required more of the following resources:

- horses
- gold
- grain
- cattle
- sheep
- scribes (men who could read and write)
- iron
- iron craftsmen to make armour
- blacksmiths
- warriors.

In order to run the government, the king would attempt to order his nobles to contribute warriors, horses, gold, grain, meat, wool, (plus the necessary carts to transport the goods) and educated people.

Very few people at this time were able to read and write; almost all of those who could were monks or high ranking church officials. The scarcity of educated men made them very valuable.

Good warriors may have been even more valuable than scribes. The invention of the stirrup signified a major advance in war technology. It forced the development of more sophisticated and more expensive armour, which turned

The king's power was very limited. He controlled:

- limited resources (whatever other nobles would give him)
- limited numbers (the serfs on his land, his warriors, and any warriors the nobles would provide him with)
- a limited organization. The king expressed his power through:
- limited influence and charisma
- limited authority
- limited force.

Although the king was at the top of the feudal pyramid, his standard of living depended upon the size of the land area that he owned and controlled. Generally, however, the king and his family enjoyed a better standard of living of than other nobles did because, in order to remain in the king's court, it was the duty of the lords to protect and provide for the king's needs.

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