

LESSON PLAN: PEOPLE AND PLACES IN THE MIDDLE AGES

OBJECTIVES:

Geography

- Students will be able to understand the concept of location.

Social Studies

- Students will be able to understand the concept of chronology.
- Students will be able to understand the value of jobs.

Culture

- Students will be able to understand similarities and differences among people.

MATERIALS:

- Tablet or Computer

PROCEDURES:

1. On a map, have students locate where they live and then have them locate the Iberian Peninsula in Spain. Discuss the concept of the two locations.
2. Using a timeline, locate the Middle Ages time period. Discuss the amount of time between the Middle Ages and present day.
3. Conduct an internet search of people in the Middle Ages and discuss the differences between jobs/responsibilities during that time period. Discuss the value of jobs in the Middle Ages. Compare the similarities and differences among the people of the Middle Ages to modern day.

PEOPLE OF THE MIDDLE AGES - DAILY LIFE

Teacher Source - This information is for the teacher to use prior to beginning the lesson plans.

Overview: The Middle Ages

The medieval era, often called the Middle Ages or the Dark Ages, began around 476 A.D. following a great loss of power throughout Europe by the Roman Empire. The Middle Ages span roughly 1,000 years, ending between 1400 and 1450. Though, in Spain, 1492 is considered the end of their medieval period and the beginning of the modern era.

The Middle Ages changed the landscape of Europe through:

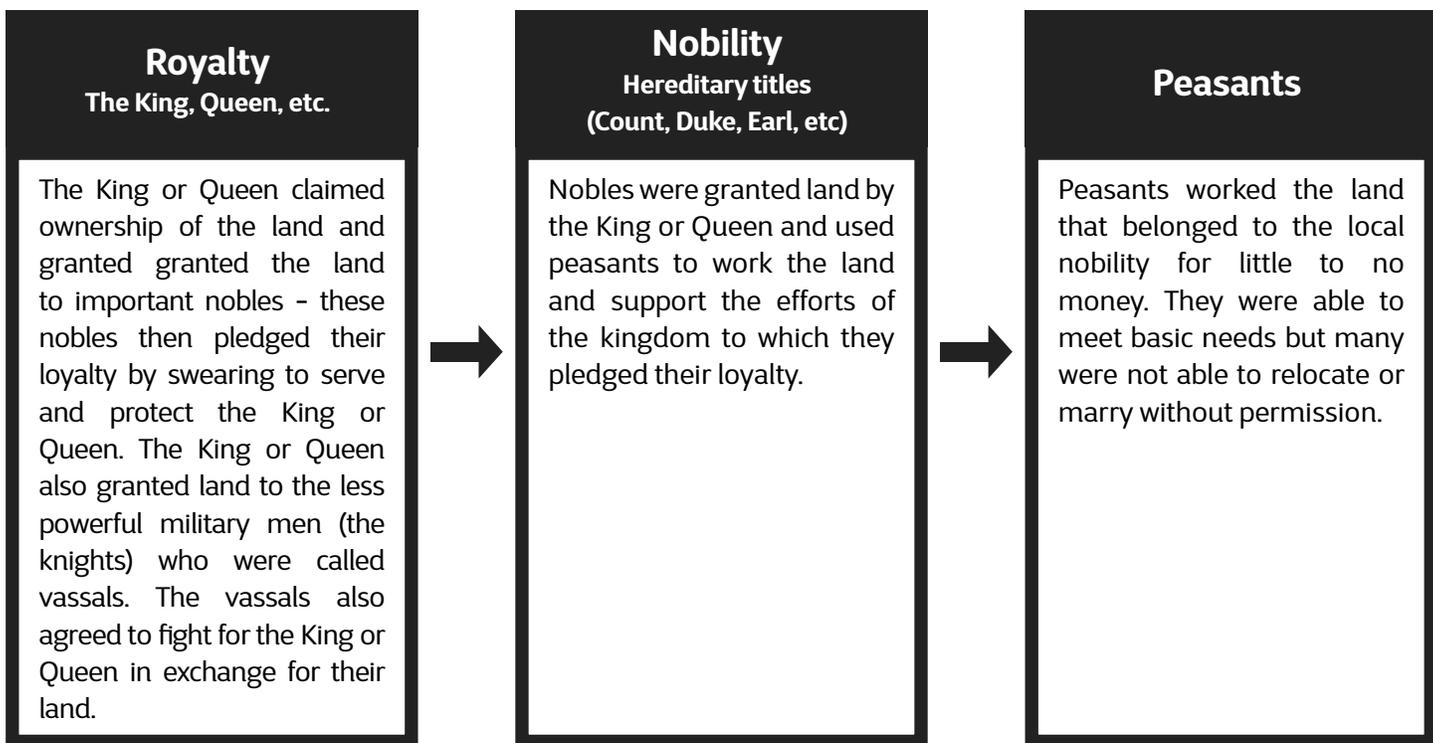
- A surge in Christianity leading to the building of great cathedrals
- Clearing of large tracts of land by peasants
- Settling of new towns and villages
- Building of great castles by local nobility

The period was one of human expansion, centralization and great political upheaval and violence, resulting in the foundation of many modern European countries.



Spain was not the united country that it is today. In the 11th century there were multiple Spanish Kingdoms that each claimed a different area of land. The map outlines each of the 11th century Spanish Kingdoms and their land. Medieval Times has knights that represent many of the areas in the Kingdoms of both Leon and Navarre.

Owning and Working the Land in the Feudal System



PEOPLE OF THE MIDDLE AGES - DAILY LIFE

Teacher Source

Peasants, Serfs and Farmers

Peasants were the poorest people in the medieval era and lived primarily in the country or small villages. Serfs were the poorest of the peasant class, and were a type of slave. Lords owned the serfs who lived on their lands. In exchange for a place to live, serfs worked the land to grow crops for themselves and their lord. In addition, serfs were expected to work the farms for the lord and pay rent.

Everyday peasants could be educated and marry if they could afford it. Serfs, however, could do neither and were not permitted to relocate without the lord's approval.

Farmers were a bit better off than peasants, as some owned their own farms. Most worked the farm lands themselves or with the aid of peasants and serfs.

Farmers and peasants lived in simple dwellings called cottages. They built their own homes from wood and the roofs were thatched (made of bundles of reeds that have to be replaced periodically). The interior walls were generally made of wattle and daub – an arrangement of twigs weaved into a wall shape and coated with mud and straw to make a hard, plaster-like surface to keep out drafts. Often farmers, peasants and serfs brought their animals into their homes to protect them.

Carpenters

Carpenters were highly skilled and considered to be elite tradesmen. To become a carpenter, it was usually necessary to join a guild as an apprentice and learn the craft. A knowledge of math, woodworking and the use of tools was required for all carpenters.

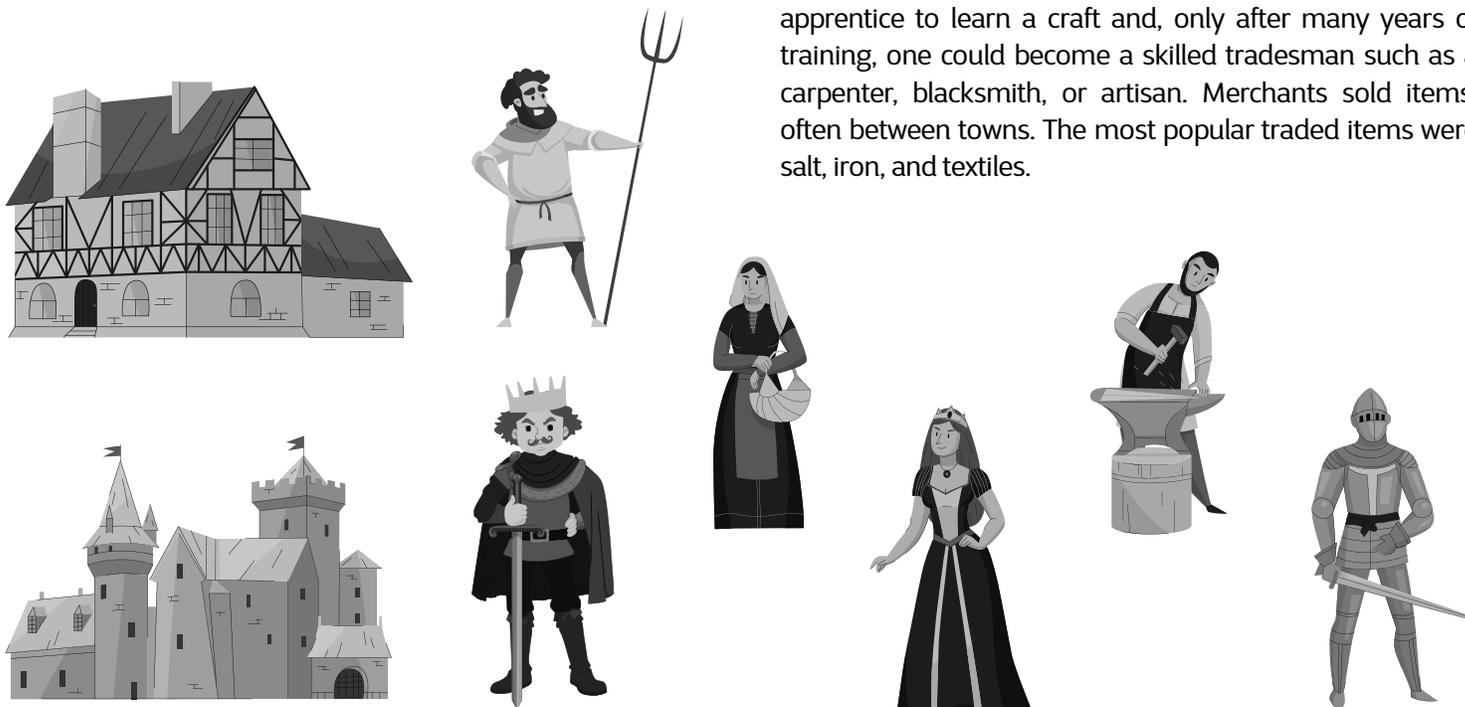
Kings or Queens and nobles often sought the finest carpenters and kept them retained on their staffs as specialists. Furnishing castles and estates was not only done for decorative purposes, but also to demonstrate prestige and status to visitors. Thus, a master carpenter was always in demand and could earn high wages.

Metalsmith

The metalsmith, sometimes called blacksmith, had to first make his tools before he could make metal parts such as horseshoes, nails and door hinges. The blacksmith would also work as an armorer for the King or Queen or count – making swords, shields and armor.

Tradesmen and Merchants

Tradesmen and merchants played an important role in the medieval era. To learn a skill, one would begin as an apprentice to learn a craft and, only after many years of training, one could become a skilled tradesman such as a carpenter, blacksmith, or artisan. Merchants sold items, often between towns. The most popular traded items were salt, iron, and textiles.



PEOPLE OF THE MIDDLE AGES - DAILY LIFE

Teacher & Student Source

Names in the Middle Ages

In the medieval era, most people had only a given name, such as John. To differentiate, some were also known by the manor in which they resided – John became John of Cornwall Manor. This would be added to things, such as trade – Edward the Metalsmith or Jacob the Miller.

Over the centuries these turned into the last names of today (just drop “the”). In this vein, if John had a son Charles, he might be known as Charles, John’s son (later known as Charles Johnson).

Entertainment: Drama, Dance & Tournaments

Songs and stories were very popular during The Middle Ages. People would entertain themselves with song, dance, music and stories. Wandering entertainers, called minstrels or troubadours, would travel from village to village providing such entertainment—particularly music—for the local people. They were paid in food and sometimes coins.

Other entertainers would come through as well, including jugglers, acrobats and those with trained animals. These were the early origins of traveling circuses. Traveling puppet shows were common as well.

Cards, dice and guessing games were popular. The noble classes began to play new games like chess and backgammon that were brought back from the Orient during this period.

Communication

Methods of communication during the medieval period were very limited. Without the use of television, telephone, radio, internet or the postal service, correspondence took place in the form of letters delivered by private messenger. Letters were written on parchment (pieces of dried animal skin) with the use of ink and quill pen.

Books were very expensive in the Middle Ages, as each was written and illustrated by hand. A book consisted of a series of bound parchment leaves. Before the invention of the printing press, it took a team of scribes, illuminators and bookbinders a very long time to make a single book.

PEOPLE OF THE MIDDLE AGES

Teacher Source

Food and Drink

Everyday food for the poor in the Middle Ages consisted of cabbage, beans, eggs, oats and brown bread. Sometimes, as a specialty, they would have cheese, bacon or poultry.

The wealthier you were, the better you ate. More meat and game such as venison was available to those who could afford it, along with white bread, spices and rich sauces.

If you lived near a body of water, fish was prominent in your diet. Inland lakes and streams provided freshwater fish and turtles, while coastal regions near oceans and seas had ample access to saltwater fish like herring, cod, whale and eel. When possible, fish was eaten fresh. Fish was also dried, smoked or salted for long-term storage to be eaten during winter.

Honey straight from bee hives called apiaries was the common sweetener during the period; while herbs, nuts, roots and flowers were eaten and used in medicinal tonics and teas.



Clothing: Men and Women

As in the previous centuries, two styles of dress existed side-by-side for men: a short (knee-length) costume deriving from a melding of the everyday dress of the later Roman Empire and the short tunics worn by the invading barbarians, and a long (ankle-length) costume descended from the clothing of the Roman upper classes and influenced by Byzantine dress.

Women's clothing consisted of an undertunic called a chemise or smock. This was usually made of linen. Over the chemise, women wore one or more ankle-to-floor length tunics (also called gowns or kirtles). Working class women wore ankle-length tunics belted at the waist.



LIFE AT THE CASTLE

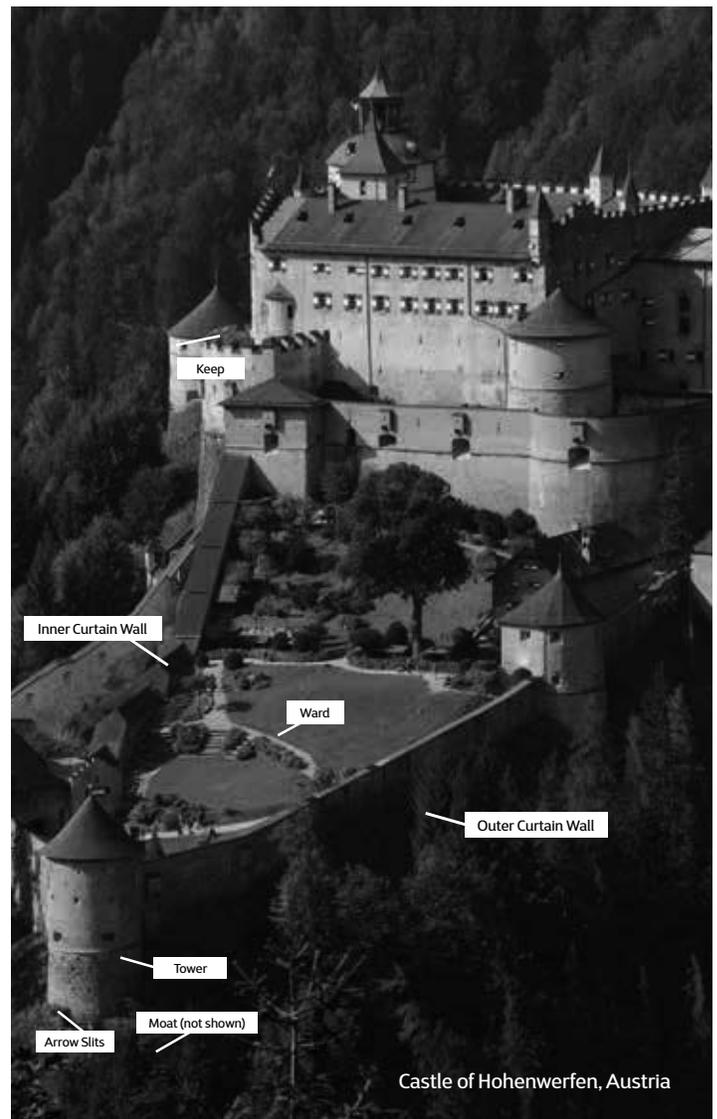
Teacher Source

Castles belonged to the wealthy, important, and powerful people of the land – kings, nobles, and knights. Castles were designed to be difficult to attack and easy to defend. Castles protected owners from rivals and invaders; however, castles were also used to protect the local citizens.

Early castles were built in the 9th and 10th centuries and were constructed of earth and wood; usually constructed on higher ground. Castles from the 11th century and later were always built of rocks and stones on high ground and often surrounded by water such as a lake of wide, deep water called a moat. Stone castles had massive walls that were between 15 and 20 feet thick.

Here are the five key castle structures and how they help castle defense:

1. **Buttresses** are the extra thick part of the outer walls that assist in strengthening the structure.
2. **Towers and keeps** were tall and square and enabled long distance surveillance. Originally the corners were square, but later designs were rounded or cylindrical. Squared corners were more vulnerable to damage by projectiles like boulders from catapults.
3. **Spiral staircases** inside castles were specifically designed to inhibit right-handed invaders by forcing the attacker's balance to the left side while stonework defeated his ability to swing his sword properly.
4. **Narrow slit windows** were slim on the inside, but flared wider on the outside. This made it difficult for the enemy to hit the defenders, but enabled those inside with a wider range of motion for attacking the enemy.
5. The fore building was the **gateway** into the castle. It was usually positioned forward from the castle, on higher ground or upstairs from ground level making it more difficult to gain entry. Gateways were protected with a massive iron gate, a heavy wooden door or both.



Castle of Hohenwerfen, Austria

LIFE AT THE CASTLE

Teacher Source

Tapestries

A tapestry is a heavy cloth with rich, colored designs or scenes usually hung on walls for decoration and sometimes used to cover furniture.

At a time when most people could not read, the images in the tapestries ensured that history and momentous events were recorded. By the 1400s, craftsmen were employed to weave elaborate designs for a growing market. It has been estimated that 15,000 people were employed in the craft by this time. Medieval weavers extracted dyes from plants and insects in a range of less than 20 colors.



Coat of Arms

During the Middle Ages, knights used a coat of arms to identify themselves, which was especially useful in battle. In a society where few people could read and write, pictures were very important. Traditional colors include: Black, Royal Purple, Emerald Green, Royal Blue or Sky Blue, Bright Red. Animals were frequently used as a main charge. They were not drawn to look three dimensional, but were shown as if they were flat. The pictures were to represent the animal as a symbol: Lion, Bear, Boar, Eagle, Horse, Dragon, Griffin.

Crest: On the top of the helm. Stood on a two-coloured wreath, a cap (like here) or a crown. Knights wore these when jousting.

Helm: Different forms of helmet show how important people are. This gold & silver one is for a nobleman.

Coat of Arms: The main heraldic design. Used by knights on their shields to identify them in battle.

Motto: A saying which a knight & his family live by. Often in Latin or French.



Mantling: Two-coloured drapery worn by knights below the crest when jousting. Protects the neck from the sun.

Coronet: Only for noblemen. Most people weren't allowed them. Not shown here.

Supporters: Only given to very few important people. They hold up the shield. May be two the same or different.

Compartment: Supporters often stand on a grassy mound. Not shown here.

LIFE AT THE CASTLE

Teacher Source

Originally knights were attendants or specialized foot-soldiers, but the status of knights was elevated around 800 A.D.

Kings or lords would raise a soldier to a knight by lightly striking (dubbing) the knight's shoulder with the flat of his sword. The knight was given a sword, a pay raise and, frequently, a plot of land. Most knights were required to be at least 21 years old.

Knights were considered elite soldiers in battles, wars and crusades, but when not in such situations, they usually acted as law enforcement officers of the local lord's court or that of the king.

Knights began fighting while riding large and powerful horses called warhorses. This radically changed how conflicts were waged at that time. Since these horses were expensive, only wealthier men could afford to become knights.

Knights required attendants to handle the knight's several horses, maintain and hand him his heavy

weapons and shield, assist him in mounting and dismounting the horse and guard his prisoners. Squires assisted the knight in battle training and exercises, and often became knights themselves.

Knights typically wore better than average clothing, but wore chain mail, helmets and partial suits of armor only in battle. Swords, daggers and sometimes lances were the weapons of choice. Full suits of armor made of plate steel came into use around 1400.

Each knight had his own flag or banner that identified him on and off the battlefield, called a coat of arms. The pattern and colors on the flag were often repeated on his shield and on other items belonging to the knight.

The principles and customs of the medieval knight were categorized as chivalry. Knights were known for their masterful skills with horses. A knight's code of conduct included: mercy, humility, honor, sacrifice, faithfulness, courage, utmost graciousness and courtesy toward women.

