

- Imagine you are a medieval real estate agent! As a class, research information about medieval castles in terms of where they were located, when they were built and what design elements they contained. (See www.castlewales.com/home.html and www.castles-of-britain.com/castle6.htm for good castle resources.) Using this information, students can write a real estate advertisement for selling a specific castle, which should include a picture and a detailed description of the castle for sale.
- Have students research the changes in castle architecture and building methods throughout the course of the Middle Ages. Students can create a time line, complete with words and images, that illustrates how medieval castles changed over time.
- The catapult was a medieval weapon that was often used during a castle siege for hurling objects like rocks at the castle walls. Effectively constructing and using a catapult requires scientific thinking. Help your students to create their own miniature catapults to launch marshmallows! (See dev.nsta.org/pubs/sciconnect/article3e.asp for detailed instructions.)
- Conduct a class research project on medieval royalty. Encourage each student to select a European king or queen from the Middle Ages and to research information about their reign (i.e. length, successes and failures). Students can compile their research into a single document — a “Who’s Who?” of the medieval ruling class.

Suggested Internet Resources

Periodically, Internet Resources are updated on our Web site at www.LibraryVideo.com

- kotn.ntu.ac.uk/castle/castl_fm.html
“Kids’ Castle” is an interactive Web site that provides a wealth of information about a medieval castle, its noble inhabitants and their daily activities. Students can access individual areas of the castle to find out more about the castle’s architecture, defense system and features of daily life.
- score.rims.k12.ca.us/activity/castle_builder
This lesson plan entitled “Castle Builder” guides students through the process of designing and building a castle in the year 1036 for a baron in Wales. Information about medieval daily life as well as castle layout and design are provided.
- www.chronique.com/Kids/nobles.htm
The “Chivalry Kidzone” sponsored by the Knighthood, Chivalry & Tournaments Resource Library offers an informative page about medieval nobles. Students can learn more about noble men, women and children, their duties and daily life.

- emuseum.mnsu.edu/history/middleages/nlife.html
Minnesota State University sponsors this “Noble Life” page, which features information about what nobles wore, where they lived, what they ate and what they did for entertainment.

Suggested Print Resources

- Cushman, Karen. *Catherine Called Birdy*. Clarion Books, New York, NY; 1994. This fictional account details the reflections of a 12th-century noble girl about life in the Middle Ages.
- De Angeli, Marguerite. *The Door in the Wall*. Doubleday, New York, NY; 1964. This story describes the adventures of a 14th-century nobleman’s son who has lost the use of his legs.
- Hinds, Kathryn. *Life in the Middle Ages: The Castle*. Benchmark Books, New York, NY; 2000.
- Pernoud, Régine. *A Day With a Noblewoman*. Runestone Press, Minneapolis, MN; 1997.
- Platt, Richard. *Castle Diary: The Journal of Tobias Burgess, Page*. Candlewick Press, Cambridge, MA; 1999. This fictional diary of a 13th-century page provides information about daily life in a medieval castle.

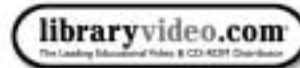
TEACHER'S GUIDE

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THE NOBLE

This guide is a supplement designed for teachers to use when presenting programs in the video series *Life in the Middle Ages*.

Before Viewing: Give students an introduction to the program by relaying aspects of the summary to them. Select pre-viewing discussion questions and vocabulary to provide a focus for students when they view the program.

After Viewing: Review the program and vocabulary, and use the follow-up questions and activities to inspire continued discussion. Encourage students to research the topic further with the Internet and print resources provided.



Program Summary

The nobility of the Middle Ages consisted of the wealthiest members of society, living a life of luxury and opulence — right? Well, not exactly! Medieval nobles were some of the richest people during this time, but their splendor might not seem so splendidous by today's standards! Many nobles lived in drafty, damp castles that served doubly as fortification and living space. Medieval nobles demonstrated their wealth through their furniture (actually owning a bed was a sign of wealth!), clothes made with rich and colorful fabrics, and food flavored with spices. Young noble boys often were sent to be pages in other castles to learn the skills necessary for becoming adult members of the nobility. Girls born into noble classes could become nuns or were often married to other rich members of the nobility. For entertainment, the nobility enjoyed traveling performers, feasts and tournaments. In some ways, the legacy of the rich, noble class exists today. However, much of the dominance of the medieval noble faded away as merchants gained power and money.

Vocabulary

nobles — Also referred to as the nobility, men or women during the Middle Ages who were the wealthiest members of society. Nobles controlled the labor of serfs and saw themselves as the natural advisors to kings.

Middle Ages — Also known as the medieval period, the time period that stretched roughly from the 5th to the 15th century. The term was coined to describe the era in between the time of ancient Rome and the Renaissance.

fief — Something of value that was held, but not owned, by a person during the Middle Ages. People receiving a fief were usually required to offer something to the lord, the giver of the fief. A fief could be anything of value — land, public offices or church positions.

lord — The granter of a fief.

vassal — The sworn follower of a lord. A vassal was often the recipient of a fief from his lord.

castles — Structures that served as fortification for an area and as residences for nobles.

motte — A hill or high mound that served as the site for a medieval castle.

bailey — A wooden or earthen wall that surrounded a medieval castle.

keep — The building inside the walls of a medieval castle. The keep was the most secure part of the castle, where the nobility would have lived.

siege — A blockade of a city or a fortified building, like a castle, that compels the inhabitants to surrender. Often during a medieval siege, attacking armies would surround a castle and wait for the people inside to surrender or starve.

mantle — A cloak, or a loose, sleeveless garment that was worn over other clothing during the Middle Ages.

page — A child of nobility who worked in a castle, learning skills like dancing, food service and good manners. Medieval noble boys usually were sent to another castle to become pages after about eight years of age.

serfs — Men or women who were the poorest members of medieval society. Serfs were peasants who were bound to a lord's lands and required to work those lands.

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rushes — Dried plant stems that were used to cover the floors of medieval castles to catch trash and table scraps and to prevent the residents from walking on cold stone.

garderobe — The bathroom in a medieval castle.

troubadours — Traveling medieval musicians.

squires — Knights-in-training. Squires learned the skills of knighthood by serving knights in their castles. Boys usually became squires by the age of 12.

tournament — A simulated battle that trained knights for warfare and enabled them to practice their skills.

chivalry — The code of conduct followed by medieval knights. Chivalry described the qualities that a knight should have such as respecting the Church, being brave, acting with courtesy and keeping his word.

court — An assembly held by kings that medieval nobility was expected to attend. Primarily designed for political dealings, the court also served a social function for medieval nobles (i.e. parties were held, marriages arranged).

merchants — People during the Middle Ages who bought and sold goods.

Pre-viewing Discussion

- The nobility consisted of the richest members of medieval society. Encourage students to reflect on the role of money in today's society. Do they feel that money might have played a similar role during the Middle Ages? Why or why not?
- Castles are a common symbol of the Middle Ages. Discuss with students what they know about castles and why they believe that castles were built. Students can brainstorm about what life in a castle might have been like.
- Discuss with students the multiple meanings of the word "noble." Do they feel that this is an appropriate term to describe the wealthiest members of medieval society? Why or why not?
- Encourage students to speculate about what it would have been like to be a medieval noble.

Focus Questions

1. Who were the nobles of the Middle Ages?
2. Describe how nobles obtained their wealth and status during the Middle Ages.
3. What were some of the medieval nobles' work responsibilities?
4. Describe some of the defenses of medieval castles.
5. What did it mean to put a castle under siege? What was the goal of a siege?
6. What were some of the signs of power that nobles displayed during this time?
7. How were medieval noble children educated?
8. Name some of the employment options that noble children had when they grew up.
9. Who were serfs, and what was their connection to medieval nobles?
10. What did medieval nobles do for entertainment?

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11. Why were spices so important during this time?
12. What role did the tournament play in the life of the medieval noble?
13. What took place at the medieval king's court?
14. Describe the responsibilities of the noblewoman during the Middle Ages.
15. How did the growth of the merchant class alter life for medieval nobles?

Follow-up Discussion

- Encourage students to discuss the relationships that developed among knights, lords and serfs during the Middle Ages. Describe the benefits and drawbacks of these relationships to all the participants.
- Students can brainstorm some of the signs of power today and compare these signs with those of the Middle Ages.
- Students can compare the childhood of medieval noble children with children of today. Which group learns more? Has more fun? Is better prepared for the future? Encourage students to justify their answers.
- Based on the information they have gained about life in a medieval castle, discuss with students whether or not they would like to live in one. Generate a list of pros and cons about the quality of daily life in a castle.

Follow-up Activities

- Share selections from Jennifer Ward's *Women of the English Nobility and Gentry, 1066-1500* (Manchester University Press, 1995), which is a collection of documents from the Middle Ages that addresses the lives and affairs of noblewomen. Compare the opportunities of medieval women with women today. Students can also research famous noblewomen of the Middle Ages, like Eleanor of Aquitaine and Anna Comnena.
- Students can design their own medieval castle. Encourage students to draw a detailed floor plan for a castle, including the major design elements, making sure to incorporate a defense system, and to label the key parts of the castle. After students have shared their floor plans with the class, discuss with them the difficulty of balancing the need for defense with need for comfort in living arrangements in medieval castles.
- In the style of the nobility of the Middle Ages, host a medieval feast! Help students to plan a medieval menu, prepare the food, plan entertainment (any troubadours in the class?) and create appropriate clothing. Students can use *The Medieval Cookbook* by Maggie Black (Thames & Hudson, 1996) as a resource for this feast.
- Share the picture book *A Medieval Feast* by Alike (HarperCollins, 1987) with your class, and discuss what can be learned about the life of medieval nobles from this informative and entertaining book. Encourage students to write their own picture books for younger students about aspects of daily life of the nobility in the Middle Ages.