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THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN MEDIEVAL EUROPE

A Unit of Study for Grades 10–12

Rhoda Himmell



NATIONAL CENTER FOR HISTORY IN THE SCHOOLS
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES

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INTRODUCTION

APPROACH AND RATIONALE

The Role of Women in Medieval Europe is one of over sixty teaching units published by the National Center for History for the Schools that are the fruits of collaborations between history professors and experienced teachers of World History. They represent specific issues and “dramatic episodes” in history from which you and your students can pause to delve into the deeper meanings of these selected landmark events and explore their wider context in the great historical narrative. By studying a crucial turningpoint in history the student becomes aware that choices had to be made by real human beings, that those decisions were the result of specific factors, and that they set in motion a series of historical consequences. We have selected issues and dramatic episodes that bring alive that decision-making process. We hope that through this approach, your students will realize that history is an ongoing, open-ended process, and that the decisions they make today create the conditions of tomorrow’s history.

Our teaching units are based on primary sources, taken from government documents, artifacts, magazines, newspapers, films, private correspondence, literature, contemporary photographs, and paintings from the period under study. What we hope you achieve using primary source documents in these lessons is to have your students connect more intimately with the past. In this way we hope to recreate for your students a sense of “being there,” a sense of seeing history through the eyes of the very people who were making decisions. This will help your students develop historical empathy, to realize that history is not an impersonal process divorced from real people like themselves. At the same time, by analyzing primary sources, students will actually practice the historian’s craft, discovering for themselves how to analyze evidence, establish a valid interpretation and construct a coherent narrative in which all the relevant factors play a part.

CONTENT AND ORGANIZATION

Within this unit, you will find: 1) Unit Objectives, 2) Correlation to the National History Standards, 3) Teacher Background Materials, 4) Lesson Plans, and 5) Student Resources. This unit, as we have said above, focuses on certain key moments in time and should be used as a supplement to your customary course materials. Although these lessons are recommended for grades 10–12, they can be adapted for other grade levels. The teacher background section should provide you with a good overview of the entire unit and with the

historical information and context necessary to link the specific “dramatic moment” to the larger historical narrative. You may consult it for your own use, and you may choose to share it with students if they are of a sufficient grade level to understand the materials.

The Lesson Plans include a variety of ideas and approaches for the teacher which can be elaborated upon or cut as you see the need. These lesson plans contain student resources which accompany each lesson. The resources consist of primary source documents, any handouts or student background materials, and a bibliography.

In our series of teaching units, each collection can be taught in several ways. You can teach all of the lessons offered on any given topic, or you can select and adapt the ones that best support your particular course needs. We have not attempted to be comprehensive or prescriptive in our offerings, but rather to give you an array of enticing possibilities for in-depth study, at varying grade levels. We hope that you will find the lesson plans exciting and stimulating for your classes. We also hope that your students will never again see history as a boring sweep of facts and meaningless dates but rather as an endless treasure of real life stories and an exercise in analysis and reconstruction.

TEACHER BACKGROUND

I. UNIT OVERVIEW

This unit consists of lessons focused on selected topics in medieval history that define and describe the roles of women. Describing the roles of women during the long period called medieval is a broad and complex task. This subject encompasses variations among social classes, geographic areas, and time frames. In addition a thorough study would examine womens' activities with reference to legal, religious, home and family life, economic relationships, and cultural and intellectual pursuits. Since it is impossible to achieve the depth necessary for a complete study, the teacher of world history must select those topics that will best serve to present a balanced overview which will help illuminate the lives of women of that period. The lessons contained here examine the roles of women in the Early Middle Ages with particular emphasis on the culture of the Germanic tribes that penetrated the Roman Empire, property rights of women in the feudal framework, the participation of women in the expansion of cultural and intellectual pursuits in the eleventh through thirteenth centuries, and demographics and the occupational roles of women in the late Middle Ages. A role-playing project that applies to several important topics of the Middle Ages and which includes many female roles has also been included.

With a few notable exceptions, traditional political histories of the medieval period have been devoted almost exclusively to the exploits and contributions of men. Two recent developments in the study and teaching of history – first, increasing emphasis on social history, and second, the feminist movements of the twentieth century – have resulted in a more balanced approach and the realization that womens' issues deserve attention within the context of each topic in order to achieve a complete description and analysis. Thus it is essential that teachers at all levels include lessons that describe and analyze the roles of women for each period of history.

II. UNIT CONTEXT

The study of the European Middle Ages directly follows the fall of Rome in most courses of world history. These lessons on the roles of women should then be inserted in the more general study of the topics for each subdivision of time, since the various lessons contained herein differ widely in the time periods they cover. That is, the first lesson ("Women in the Germanic Tribes of the Early Middle Ages") can be presented in the description of the culture of that time period and the second lesson ("The Property Rights of Women during the Feudal Period") can be used in the general study of medieval culture from the eleventh through thirteenth centuries (including the study of Magna Carta); the third

lesson ("The Status of Women in the Central Middle Ages"—that is in the eleventh through thirteenth centuries) overlaps with the time period of lesson two, but is designed for study of the expanding cultural and intellectual developments of this period.

III. UNIT OBJECTIVES

1. To identify and describe some important and prominent roles that women played in medieval social, economic, and political life.
2. To understand that women's roles varied according to time, place, and circumstance throughout the medieval period.
3. To recognize that male attitudes established more or less the place of women within the framework of medieval society.
4. To gain experience in the analysis of primary source documents as a fundamental aspect of history.
5. To practice the formulation of generalizations from specific descriptive materials.

IV. CORRELATION TO NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR HISTORY

The Role of Women in Medieval Europe" provides teaching materials to support *National Standards for History, Basic Edition* (National Center for History in the Schools, 1996), **Era 5** "Intensified Hemispheric Interaction, 1000–1500 CE." Lessons within this unit help students attain **Standards 2A and 2C** by examining patterns of social change in medieval Europe and analyzing the relations between men and women in political and family life.

This unit likewise integrates a number of historical thinking standards as outlined in **Part 2, Chapter 2** of the *National Standards for History* including: draw upon literary sources and reconstruct the literal meaning of a historical passage and obtain historical data from a variety of sources.

V. INTRODUCTION TO *The Role of Women in Medieval Europe*

by Joseph P. Huffman

It is very difficult to generalize the status of women in Europe during the thousand-year period known as the Middle Ages. The most commonly used sources often do not mention the activities of women, there are in addition significant regional differences to consider, and this millenium of history itself is an extremely complex and vast era, filled with the many profound changes which swept over Europe. The migrations of peoples and formation of new kingdoms, which infused new ideas as well as new cultural energy into the politically disintegrated Roman Empire, the calamitous economic decline and subsequent vigorous revival, cultural and technological innovations with their far-reaching effects, and social upheavals which created new class relationships, all changed the lives of both men and women.

We know relatively little about the Germanic tribes before they entered the Roman Empire. They left no records of this period and it is only through references to these people in the works of Roman and Byzantine authors that we discover information about them. We owe much of what we know to the Roman historian Tacitus, however we must always remember that he wrote about only some of the Germanic tribes, and he did so as a means to rebuke the Roman upper class for their "soft and corrupt" lifestyles. Presenting the Germanic peoples as noble savages in contrast to the effete, pleasure-loving Roman aristocrats, Tacitus describes the women as sharing in their husband's spartan existence. Girls were raised in the same way as boys: "they are equals in age and strength when they are mated." Wives nursed their husband's wounds and even accompanied them in battle—this was done of course to remind the men what they were fighting for. Some women also hunted alongside the men. By the custom of Morgengabe, a donation was given by the groom to his bride, "not jewels or trinkets, but oxen, a horse and bridle, a shield and spear or sword. . . . The wife . . . is thus warned by the very rites with which her marriage begins that she comes to share hard work and peril; that her fate will be the same as his in peace and in battle, her risks the same." The married woman's life was "one of fenced-in chastity." Flirtation, adultery, contraception and abortion were considered abominations. Germanic mothers suckled their own children, and because women were credited with an "uncanny and prophetic sense," the Germanic tribesmen "neither scorn to consult them nor slight their answers." In all this we must see Tacitus' implicit condemnation of the Roman aristocratic class, who had in his opinion lost such qualities of discipline and moral strictness which had made Rome great—indeed the characteristics mentioned as belonging to the Germanic tribes are exactly the opposite of those then held by the Roman aristocrats. Thus we cannot be certain what elements in this romanticized presentation of Tacitus are accurate in

particulars, but it does seem in general that women exercised an active role in daily tribal life.

We discover more reliable information about the status of women in early Germanic tribal societies as these peoples migrated throughout western Europe and established their own rule in the former Roman territories. Influenced in varying degrees by Roman culture, many tribes eventually had their tribal customs written down in the form of law codes. These valuable and more accurate sources reveal a less lofty status for women than in Tacitus' writings. Although the codes extended special protection to women, and often provided for a higher **wergeld** (a compensatory payment for death or injury to an individual) in cases of pregnancy or of a woman of child-bearing years, the codes in general reflect a male-dominated society. This is especially seen among those tribes whose initial integration into the Romano-Christian culture was slight (for example the Franks, Saxons and Lombards). Among these tribes women were not allowed to represent themselves. The Lombard code regarded women as perpetual minors, always under the guardianship of a male relative whose permission was needed for any transaction involving property. Saxon law contained similar provisions: a widow became the ward of her deceased husband's nearest male relative; if she married, her children were placed under similar guardianship.

Polygamy was common among most of the Germanic tribes. Wives were bought and sold, rape was treated as theft of property, and husbands could repudiate their wives with little ceremony. Long after the conversion of the Frankish King Clovis to Christianity (A.. D. 496) he and his successors continued the traditional practice of polygamy and concubinage, divorcing their wives despite the Church's injunctions against this practice. In these matters Germanic tribes followed the traditional practices seen in many similar tribal societies.

However, other tribes, reflecting the influences of the Romano-Christian culture with which they were in contact, had more generous views. The Burgundian law code (codified in 516) states that "If a mother should want to be guardian over her children, no other relative shall precede her in this," and "If anyone does not leave a son, let a daughter succeed." Visigothic law (codified c. 654) allowed husband and wife to jointly administer the land either possessed before their marriage. Land acquired after marriage was considered joint property, and the wife could claim her share. When the husband died, the widow retained control of the family property and the inheritance of her minor children. Girls inherited equally with their brothers, even when their parents died intestate. Again we see the difficulty in generalizing about the status of women even among the Germanic barbarian tribes, whose contact with Romano-Christian culture varied.

As this cultural interaction continued to develop over the centuries of the Early Middle Ages, especially under the increasing influence of the Christian Church, Germanic law was modified with regard to women. This is best seen in the two most important barbarian successor kingdoms of western Europe, those of the Franks and the Anglo-Saxons, whose contact with Romano-Christian culture, although initially weak, eventually became integral in its further development. The concept of women as chattels was softened and the stability and dignity of marriage was strengthened. The law of the Salian Franks which prohibited women from inheriting was amended in the sixth century by an edict of King Chilperic. This provided that daughters could inherit property, but only in the absence of sons. The Church also continued to work against polygamy, declaring in 796 that a marriage could not be dissolved, even for adultery, without clerical dispensation. In 802 Charlemagne enforced this declaration throughout his empire. Such efforts by the Church to raise and enforce the dignity of marriage worked to the benefit of women, who thereby gained more security.

Early Anglo-Saxon law codes in Britain followed the Germanic tradition of treating women as property. There were fines imposed for extra-marital sexual relations to be paid by the male fornicator to the woman's guardian. If the woman was married, the adulterous male paid a fine to the injured husband. However Anglo-Saxon women also had a strong legal position in matters of property ownership: Marriage could be terminated by mutual consent, widows who had borne living children inherited half of their husband's goods, and wills took daughters into consideration as well as sons. By the tenth century Anglo-Saxon women had considerable power over property. They made wills, disposing of their lands as they wished.

As we move toward the Central Middle Ages we see the formation of a new social and political order in Europe which would replace the old barbarian law codes and affect the status of women: this order is known as Feudalism. The feudal relationship – formed in the crucible of the economic and political chaos during the era of Viking, Magyar, and Muslim invasions – was based essentially on the holding and inheriting of land in exchange for military service. Thus, a social structure emerged designed to provide military security, which were traditionally male undertakings in which women had limited active roles. Indeed the necessity of primogeniture (the inheritance of the eldest son to avoid destructive inheritance battles among family members) in this scheme did much to hurt the status of younger sons as well. Women of all but the highest class of the social order were severely restricted in regard to inheritance under early feudalism. As estates by necessity passed intact with their military obligations to a single male heir who could perform such duties, women generally did not inherit them – they could possess a hereditary right of ownership if they had no brothers, but their husband would then administer the land as his own (e.g. Eleanor of

Aquitaine). Aristocratic women frequently subverted political and military claims on their inherited estates by joining a religious order or by establishing a convent school. These institutions offered many women a safe and personally rewarding alternative to politically desirable but personally undesirable marriages. A powerful and wealthy widow could protect her minor son's inheritance and ward off an undesired marriage by entering a convent. These institutions played a vital role as the primary centers of learning for women throughout the Middle Ages. (More detailed information of the feudal rights of women is presented in **Lesson Two** of this packet.)

During the Central Middle Ages an element of feudal culture emerged which reflected a male ambivalence toward women in this new social context. This development is generally known as courtly love or chivalric culture. Here we see woman simultaneously placed on a pedestal as an ideal and yet often reviled as the source of temptation to sin. Clerics constantly repeated the tale of Eve's beguiling Adam, while also elevating the Virgin Mary to the status of religious worship. Correspondingly, in the secular culture women were extolled by the troubadours, the trouvères and the minnesingers as well as debased in the bawdy fabliaux. Clerical misogyny had patristic roots and continued in the clerical writings of the Central Middle Ages, being used as the philosophical justification for the subjugation of women (see **Lesson Three**). Conversely, with no apparent sense of incongruity, the chivalric representation of woman as the source of virtue and worthy of adoration enjoyed a popularity which has lived on into the popular culture of today. One must remember, though, that these cultural icons reside in the realm of the ideal and may not help us discern how real life was lived on a daily basis. However, the evidence of a general improvement in the status of women — primarily however in the aristocratic class — is rather extensive. As an example, by the thirteenth century widows were allowed to do homage to their husband's lord for the lands of their own inheritance and retain them. Yet this ambivalence toward women is evidence of the uncertain place which women held in an essentially military-oriented social order.

It is perhaps better to examine the daily lives of women for information regarding their real roles in society as opposed to the ideals set forth in chivalric literature — this of course holds true especially for the vast majority of women, who lived among the peasantry. The typical woman was overwhelmingly a wife and more generally a housewife, but marriage was not the lot of every woman. Because the number of women exceeded the number of men through most of the Middle Ages, unmarried women and widows were numerous. Women villeins (unfree peasants) and cottagers, both married and unmarried, could always find work upon the land in addition to their household tasks and care of the children — and hired themselves out for a wage to weed, hoe and help with the harvest. Women performed almost every kind of agricultural labor with the exception most often of the heavy

business of ploughing. They frequently acted as thatchers' assistants, and on many manors they did the greater part of the sheep-shearing. The care of the dairy animals and the small poultry was always in their hands. In the towns women carried on a great variety of trades. Of the five hundred crafts recorded in Étienne Boileau's *Livre des Matiers* in medieval Paris, women held a monopoly over at least five, and in a large number of others women were employed as well as men. Three industries in particular were dominated by women—ale making, cloth and silk work (see **Supplemental Activities** section). The expansion of cities and commerce between various regions in the Central and Late Middle Ages resulted in the expansion of women's roles in the urban economy.

For most women, the roles of wife and mother were their primary obligations. A girl, well-born or not, married very young, generally by age fourteen or fifteen, to a man selected by her father. Her dowry was of the utmost importance. Disparagement in marriage as a result of an insufficient dowry was so much dreaded that even in the lowest ranks of society the bride was expected to bring something with her besides her person when she entered her husband's house. The dowering of poor girls was one of the most common forms of medieval charity.

The problem of the unmarried girl of the nobility was more difficult, for in feudal society there was no place for women who did not marry at a young age. Women turned to the church as an alternative and convents dotted the landscape of Europe. These convents absorbed only women of the nobility and the gentry—it was only in the Later Middle Ages that some admitted the daughters of the urban bourgeoisie. Monastic life permitted noble women who could not or did not wish to marry the opportunity to participate in the management of household and estates and in the administration of the community. Their education was often better than that received by most of the secular population. By the Later Middle Ages such lay movements as the Beguines developed in the cities to provide similar religious opportunities to women of the bourgeoisie and urban dwellers who had been traditionally shut out of the aristocratic convents.

The lady of the manor, while seeming to enjoy a life of idleness was in fact responsible for the orderly maintenance of the household, the training of the servants and slaves, budgeting of expenses and supervision of the manufacture of all the products used by the household. She was also expected to have some rudimentary medical skills in tending to the sick. The social and physical conditions of life, the constant wars, and above all the slowness of communication, threw a great deal of responsibility upon wives as the representatives of their absent husbands. While her husband was away on military expeditions, pilgrimages, business, or at court it was the lady who became the "lord of the manor." As Eileen Power has stated, "Europe was full of competent ladies, not

spending all their time in hawking and flirting, spinning and playing chess, but running estates, fighting lawsuits, and even standing sieges for their absent lords. When the nobility of Europe went forth upon a crusade it was their wives who managed their affairs at home, superintended the farming, interviewed the tenants, and saved up money for the next assault. When the lord was taken prisoner, it was his wife who collected his ransom, squeezing every penny from the estate, bothering bishops for indulgences, selling her jewels and the family plate.”¹ *Livre de Trois Vertus* (c. 1406) by Christine de Pisan, an outstanding woman of letters in the Late Middle Ages is an excellent primary source which discusses the many and varied tasks of the medieval lady.

The status of women and their myriad roles thus depended upon a number of factors which varied with time, place and social status. Much interest in the place of women in medieval society has motivated extensive research in the past few years in order to gain deeper insight into this long-neglected element of history. It is certain that this interest will produce an even better understanding of the importance of women’s roles during the Middle Ages in the future.

¹Eileen Power, “The Position of Women,” in *The Legacy of the Middle Ages*. eds. C.G. Crump and E. F. Jacob (New York: Oxford University Press, 1926), pp. 403–33.

V. LESSON PLANS

1. Women in the Germanic Tribes of the Early Middle Ages
2. The Property Rights of Women During the Feudal Period
3. The Central Middle Ages: The Flowering of Medieval Culture and the Status of Women
4. Supplemental Activities

DRAMATIC MOMENT

Women Take up Arms

During the Middle Ages women were frequently called upon to help defend their family's territory. There were some women whose actions had a major effect even on the history of their countries. The most famous, of course, is Joan of Arc and her role in the 100 Years War. A curious incident of this kind occurred in 14th-century France when three women were involved in a war with each other to secure lands claimed by their sons or husbands.

One of these women, Jeanne de Montfort, was particularly known for her wit and daring. We know some details of her abilities from the writings of the French historian Froissart who describes her military exploits. In order to maintain the loyalty of her vassals during her husband's imprisonment she spoke to them thus, "Ah, sirs, be not cast down because of my lord, whom we have lost: he was but one man. See here my little child, who shall be, by the grace of God, his restorer [avenger] and who shall do well for you. I have riches in abundance, and I will give you thereof and will provide you with such a captain that you shall all be comforted." Thus she exhorted her warriors to fight for the defense of her husband's fiefs.

When the forces of the French King laid siege to her castle, "The Countess herself, wearing armor, rode on a great war horse from street to street, desiring her people to make good defence, and she caused women to tear up the pavements of the streets and carry stones to the battlements to cast upon their enemies, and great pots full of quicklime.

"The Countess de Montfort did hear a hardy feat of arms, and one which should not be forgotten. She had mounted a tower to see how her people fought and how the Frenchmen were ordered without. She saw how that all the lords and all other people of the host were all gone out of their field to the assault. Then she . . . mounted once more her war horse, all armed as she was, and caused three hundred men a-horseback to be ready, and went with them to another gate where there was no assault. She and her company sallied out, and dashed into the camp of the French lords, and cut down tents and fired huts, the camp being guarded by none but varlets and boys, who ran away. When the Lords of France looked behind them and saw their lodgings afire and heard the cry and noise there, they returned to the camp crying 'Treason! treason!' so that all the assault was left."

Teacher Background

The account tells that Jeanne de Montfort could not re-enter her town and so continued on to the castle of Brest, three leagues away; but when one of the French commanders saw her flight, he “with a great force of men at arms” followed her. “He chased her so near that he slew and hurt divers of them that were behind. . . . ; but the Countess and the most part of her company rode so well that they came to Brest, where they were received with great joy by the townspeople.”

After a great naval battle this same Countess Jeanne de Montfort was described, “The Countess that day was worth a man; she had the heart of a lion, and in her hand she wielded a sharp glaive [sword] where with she fought fiercely.”

Adapted from Pierce Butler, *Women of Medieval France* (Philadelphia: Rittenhouse Press, 1907), pp. 293–295.

Teacher’s Note: This Dramatic Moment comes from the Late Middle Ages, so be sure to clarify this as you move to **Lesson One**, which begins over one thousand years *earlier* than the **Dramatic Moment**.

LESSON ONE

WOMEN IN THE GERMANIC TRIBES OF THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES

A. OBJECTIVES

- ◆ To examine the roles of women in the Germanic tribal structure as described by Tacitus in the *Germania*.
- ◆ To explore explanations for the roles that women played within the tribal framework of groups which resettled in the western portions of the the Roman Empire.
- ◆ To compare some aspects of feminine roles in the *Germania* with those of women in the Roman Empire.
- ◆ To use primary source materials to formulate cultural generalizations.

B. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The tribes that penetrated the western Roman Empire formed the basis of a new civilization that we can directly trace as our own. Therefore it is useful to examine what these people were like. What were their basic life-style, customs, and attitudes? And what place did women occupy in the framework of the tribe? There are very few primary sources for the early Germanic tribes. They had no written language and few outsiders were able to observe their culture first hand. The most commonly used source is the *Germania* by the Roman historian Tacitus.

Publius Cornelius Tacitus was one of Rome's greatest historians. He was born in A..D. 55. In A..D. 77 he married into a politically influential family and rose as a prominent statesman, serving for one year as counsel. Very little is known about the details of his life. He died sometime after 116 but it is not known exactly when or where.

Tacitus' writings dealt with the history of Rome between A..D. 14 to his own time at the end of the second century A..D. The *Germania*, written in 98, was based primarily upon information by earlier writers, including Julius Caesar, and reports of soldiers and merchants who had returned from the Roman frontier. Tacitus probably never visited the region. Rome had entered its period of decline when Tacitus compiled his many writings. He lived through the period which witnessed the decline of moral standards in Rome. His focus on the customs of

Lesson One

non-Romans was intended to instruct his fellow citizens by emphasizing the strict moral standards, freedom and discipline of the German tribes. His *Germania* remains the best description we have of the “barbarians” north of the Roman Empire.

C. LESSON ACTIVITIES

1. Present the **Historical Background Information (B)** to introduce the lesson material to the students.
2. Have students read **Document A**, the excerpts from the *Germania*. The suggested discussion questions may be used for each segment.
3. **Worksheet 1:** Instruct students to formulate three or four generalizations based upon the reading that define the role of women in the Germanic tribes. At least one supporting quote should be used for each generalization.

D. EVALUATING THE LESSON

1. Informal evaluation based upon classroom discussion.
2. Evaluation of **Worksheet 1**.
3. Inclusion of objective or essay questions related to the lesson in a test on the Early Middle Ages.

Excerpts From the *Germania*

by Tacitus
(Primary Source)

And what most stimulates their courage is, that their squadrons or battalions, instead of being formed by chance or by a fortuitous gathering, are composed of families and clans. Close by them, too, are those dearest to them, so that they hear the shrieks of women, the cries of infants. They are to every man the most sacred witnesses of his bravery – they are his most generous applauders. The soldier brings his wounds to mother and wife, who shrink not from counting or even demanding them and who administer both food and encouragement to the combatants.

Tradition says that armies already wavering and giving way have been rallied by women who, with earnest entreaties and bosoms laid bare, have vividly represented the horrors of captivity, which the Germans fear with such extreme dread on behalf of their women, that the strongest tie by which a state can be bound is the being required to give, among the number of hostages, maidens of noble birth. . . . They even believe that the sex has a certain sanctity and prescience, and they do not despise their counsels, or make light of their answers.

Discussion Questions

1. What are the roles of women in the military life of the Germans?
2. Why do entire families go along to the battles?
3. What statements reveal the value of women in the society?
4. Can you identify one or more implied criticisms of the Romans in this excerpt?

Whenever the men are not fighting, they pass much of their time in the chase, and still more in idleness, giving themselves up to sleep and to feasting, the bravest and the most warlike doing nothing, and surrendering the management of the household, of the home, and of the land, to the women, the old men, and all the weakest members of the family.

Discussion Questions

1. What does this passage tell you about the responsibilities of women with respect to everyday life?
 2. Can you identify a prejudice of Tacitus in this section?
-

Their marriage code however, is strict, and indeed no part of their manners is more praiseworthy. Almost alone among barbarians they are content with one wife, except a very few among them, and these not from sensuality, but because their noble birth procures for them many offers of alliance. The wife does not bring a dowry to the husband, but the husband to the wife. The parents and relatives are present, and pass judgment on the marriage-gifts, gifts not meant to suit a woman's taste, nor such as a bride would deck herself with, but oxen, a caparisoned steed, a shield, a lance, and a sword. With these presents the wife is espoused, and she herself in her turn brings her husband a gift of arms. This they count their strongest bond of union, these their sacred mysteries, these their gods of marriage. Lest the woman should think herself to stand apart from aspirations after noble deeds and from the perils of war, she is reminded by the ceremony which inaugurates marriage that she is her husband's partner in toil and danger, destined to suffer and to dare with him alike both in peace and in war. The yoked oxen, the harnessed steed, the gift of arms, proclaim this fact. She must live and die with the feeling that she is receiving what she must hand down to her children neither tarnished nor depreciated, what future daughters-in-law may receive, and may be so passed on to her grand-children.

Thus with their virtue protected they live uncorrupted by the allurements of public shows or the stimulant of feasting. Clandestine correspondence is equally unknown to men and women. Very rare for so numerous a population is adultery, the punishment for which is prompt, and in the husband's power. Having cut off the hair of the adulteress and stripped her naked, he expels her from the house in the presence of her kinsfolk, and then flogs her through the whole village. The loss of chastity meets with no indulgence; neither beauty, youth, nor wealth will procure the culprit a husband. No one in Germany laughs at vice, nor do they call it the fashion to corrupt and to be corrupted. . . . Still better is the condition of those states in which only maidens are given in marriage, and where the hopes and expectations of a bride are then finally terminated. They receive one husband, as having one body and one life, that they may have no thoughts beyond, no further-reaching desires, that they may love not so much the husband as the married state. To limit the number of their children or to destroy any of their subsequent offspring is accounted infamous, and good habits are here more effectual than good laws elsewhere.

Discussion Questions

1. Why are some men permitted to have more than one wife?
 2. What conclusion can you draw from the fact that the bridegroom gives the bride a marriage donation and that the woman does not bring a dowry?
 3. What is the importance of the husband's donation within the structure of the family?
 4. Why do you think the punishment for adultery is so harsh?
 5. Can you identify any implied criticisms of Roman society?
-

In every household the children, naked and filthy, grow up with those stout frames and limbs which we so much admire. Every mother suckles her own offspring, and never entrusts it to servants and nurses. The master is not distinguished from the slave by being brought up with greater delicacy. Both live amid the same flocks and lie on the same

ground till the freeborn are distinguished by age and recognised by merit. The young men marry late, and their vigour is thus unimpaired. Nor are the maidens hurried into marriage; the same age and a similar stature is required; well-matched and vigorous they wed, and the offspring reproduce the strength of the parents. Sister's sons are held in as much esteem by their uncles as by their fathers; indeed, some regard the relation as even more sacred and binding, and prefer it in receiving hostages, thinking thus to secure a stronger hold on the affections and a wider bond for the family. But every man's own children are his heirs and successors, and there are no wills. Should there be no issue, the next in succession to the property are his brothers and his uncles on either side.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think Tacitus makes a point of stating that every mother nurses her own children?
 2. Why do young people marry late?
 3. What evidence does Tacitus present to support his statement that the relationship between uncles and nieces or nephews is of great importance?
 4. Are women able to inherit property?
 5. Can you conclude criticisms of Roman society by Tacitus here?
-

Source: Tacitus, *The Complete Works of Tacitus*, trans. by J. Church & Wm. Brodribb. Edited by Moses Hadas. Copyright 1942 and renewed 1970 by Random House, Inc. Reprinted by permission of Random House, Inc.

Instructions

Formulate at least three generalizations based on excerpts from Tacitus' *Germania*. Then support each generalization with at least one quote from the readings.

Generalization

Quotation(s)

Generalization

Quotation(s)

Generalization

Quotation(s)

LESSON TWO

THE PROPERTY RIGHTS OF WOMEN DURING THE FEUDAL PERIOD

A. OBJECTIVES

- ◆ To examine the legal rights of English noble women during the Central Middle Ages by focusing on their rights to own, inherit and will property.
- ◆ To understand the relationship between marriage and property ownership during the Central Middle Ages.
- ◆ To analyze the extension of English noble women's property rights in the Magna Carta.
- ◆ To appreciate the importance of the Magna Carta in the development of noble women's legal status in medieval England.

B. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

As we have already learned, the women of the early Germanic tribes that penetrated the Roman Empire seemed to have fairly active status within the society. According to Tacitus, their advice in the management of the tribe was valued. Men were required to present gifts to the bride (the husband's donation) in order to marry. Women handled the affairs of the household, and could pass property to their children.

As feudalism spread throughout Europe the status of women in western European society was altered. Feudalism grew out of a period of political and economic confusion during the Viking, Magyar, and Muslim invasions; therefore, it was shaped to provide order and protection. This resulted in a society organized for war, in which the basis for military service was the possession and inheritance of land. Since women did not provide mounted military service they were not eligible for the land as a reward, hence they were severely restricted in regard to property ownership and inheritance. Parents took the initiative in choosing their children's mates and negotiating the marriage settlement. The bride's family contributed the dowry or marriage portion, which for nobles or merchants usually consisted of land or money; for peasants, clothing, furniture and utensils. If the marriage was dissolved or the husband died before children were born, the dowry usually reverted to the bride. The husband contributed the dower or jointure, which was also usually land. It provided a kind of social security for the widow. If a husband died before the wife, she became a widow and came into dower rights. Generally this meant that she inherited one-third of all the property, the rest going to her eldest male child or to other heirs. This dower land and property was to be the widow's support during her old age;

often she had only a life interest to it and could not sell it. Upon her marriage or death, it went to the eldest male heir or, if there were none, to a female heir.

Feudal estates usually passed intact with their military obligations, to a single male heir. Only in the absence of male heirs could a woman inherit. Even if not an heiress, a woman under feudalism spent most of her life under the guardianship of a man – of her father until she married, of her father’s lord if her father died, and of her husband until she was widowed. The lord pocketed the income of his ward’s estate until she married, and she had to marry a man of his choice or lose her inheritance. A law book from the reign of Henry II, King of England from 1154–1189, pronounced, “Even if a female heir is of age, she shall remain in the wardship of her lord until she is married according to the desire and with the consent of her lord. . . . And if a girl . . . marries without the consent of her lord, by the just law and custom of the realm she shall lose her inheritance. . . .”

The lord could also “sell” his ward’s marriage, exacting a price from a suitor for the privilege of taking over control of the heiress’s estate, as well as to compensate for his own loss of income. All this was necessary because the lord could not allow or afford to have lands which he had originally granted out to a supporter fall out of his control and into the hands of an enemy. The issue here was more the control of the land than the control of the woman. However, the woman’s freedom of activity was obviously restricted for the sake of the safe transfer of land, which was the basis of all order and wealth in this society.

There were some rights for women, however. A man who married an heiress – the daughter of a well-to-do peasant, or a lady who had inherited her father’s lands in default of male heirs – could not sell his wife’s property without her consent. If a husband mismanaged his wife’s land, she could go to court and defend her title to the land; he could not exclude her from the enjoyment of the advantages of her land. Married or single, women could hold land, sell it, give it away, own goods, make a will, make a contract, sue and be sued, and plead in the law courts, both in England and in most places on the continent.

C. LESSON ACTIVITIES

1. Read or have students read **Historical Background Information (B)** which presents some general information regarding the legal status of women during the Middle Ages.
2. Have students read **Document B**. Discuss the reading using the questions at the end of the reading as a guide.

Lesson Two

3. Divide the class into small groups to prepare a petition to the King requesting that he improve the legal rights of women for both marriage and ownership of property.
 - a. Have a spokesperson for each group read the petition.
 - b. Then read the King's response, the passage from the Magna Carta (**Document C**) which relates to these issues.
 - c. Have students comment upon their reaction to the King's charter.
 - d. Use the discussion questions at the end of the reading to further the discussion.

D. EVALUATING THE LESSON

1. The petitions written by small groups of students may be collected and evaluated.
2. Students may be instructed to write an essay on their reactions to the King's charter pertaining to marriage and widows' property rights. A variation of this writing activity is to have each student take the position of a particular individual, i.e. king, noble, church official, or widow, and express his/her opinion from that perspective.

**EXTRACTS FROM ACCOUNTS RENDERED BY SHERIFFS IN THE
REIGN OF KING JOHN, 1207**
(Primary Source)

Thomas of Whitchurch gives 100 marks and two palfreys [light, easy-gaited horses] to have as his wife Margaret Lestrangle who was wife of Thomas Noel, with her inheritance, her marriage portion and her dower.

Fulk FitzWarin owes 1200 marks . . . and two palfreys to have as his wife the daughter of Robert Vavaseur, that is, Matilda, with her inheritance.

Matilda, who was wife of Hugh Wake, offers 20 marks that she may not be forced to marry again.

Quenlid, daughter of Richard FitzRoger, owes 60 marks and two palfreys that she may be allowed to marry whomever she pleases, with the advice of her friends, as long as she marries no one who is an enemy of the king.

Source: Mildred Alpern, *Ancient and Medieval World – Worksheet Masters* (White Plains, NY: Longman Publishing, 1987), p. 52.

Discussion Questions

1. Under what basic premise of feudalism is the king permitted to charge fees for marriage?
2. How may a woman avoid an undesirable marriage?
3. What might explain the wide range of prices that the king charges for the various privileges described?
4. What social class of people are described here?

EXCERPT FROM THE MAGNA CARTA, 1215
(Primary Source)

A widow, after the death of her husband, shall have her marriage portion and her inheritance immediately and without obstruction, nor shall she give anything for her dower or for her marriage portion, or for her inheritance, which inheritance her husband and she held on the day of the death of her husband; and she may remain in the house of her husband for forty days after his death, within which time her dower shall be assigned to her, if it were not assigned to her before, or unless the house be a castle; and if she depart from the castle, an adequate house shall be forthwith provided for her, in which she may validly dwell, until her dower be assigned to her, as aforesaid; and she shall have in the meantime her reasonable estovers [food and fuel] of the common [undivided estate]. And for her dower shall be assigned to her the third part of all the lands of her husband which were his during coverture [period of marriage], unless she had been endowed of less at the church door. No widow shall be distrained to remarry, [so long as she prefers to live without a husband,] provided she gives security that she will not marry without our [that is the king's] consent, if she holds [land] of us, or without the consent of her lord if she holds [land] of another.

Discussion Questions

1. Cite specific examples of improvements in the status of aristocratic widows contained in the Magna Carta.
2. What rights does the king still hold in the marriage of aristocratic widows?
3. Why does the king make an exception of castles in the section that permits a widow to remain forty days in the house of her husband?
4. Do the clauses selected from the Magna Carta suggest an improvement or a decline in safeguarding aristocratic women's rights? Defend your answer with reference to specific rights.
5. Since the Magna Carta resulted from the king's abuses of royal rights, what privilege was he abusing in regard to women and their inheritance and remarriage?

LESSON THREE

THE CENTRAL MIDDLE AGES: THE FLOWERING OF MEDIEVAL CULTURE AND THE STATUS OF WOMEN

A. OBJECTIVES

- ◆ To analyze the extent to which women shared in the cultural life and learning of the eleventh through fourteenth centuries.
- ◆ To use primary source materials for information about the male attitudes of the period.
- ◆ To formulate generalizations based upon the documents.
- ◆ To speculate on the reasons why women did not share to any great extent in the intellectual side of the cultural developments during this period.

B. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND—A GREAT LEAP FORWARD

According to the well-known modern historian Kenneth Clark in his book *Civilization*, “. . . three or four times in history man has made a great leap forward. . . . One such time was . . . about the year [A.D.] 1100. . . . Its strongest and most dramatic effect was in Western Europe. . . . In every branch of life—action, philosophy, organization, technology—there was an extraordinary outpouring of energy, an intensification of existence.” The period of the Central Middle Ages (A. D. 1000–1300) saw rapid development in several areas of life. There was increased population, growth of cities and trade, as well as of feudal monarchies and new religious orders, and a deepening contact with other cultures. One of the major results of this cultural expansion was the medieval universities and the growth of learning on a larger scale than had existed before. However, in this area of education and learning there was little involvement of women. Using the five excerpts below and the associated reading in your text, can you draw some conclusions about why women did not participate more in this great expansion of culture during the Central Middle Ages?

C. LESSON ACTIVITIES

1. Introduce the lesson by having students read the **Historical Background**, "A Great Leap Forward."
2. Have students read aloud the excerpts from **Document D**.
3. As the excerpts are read, use the inserted questions for each passage. **Worksheet 2** may be used independently or as a class discussion after all readings have been discussed.
4. Have students draw some general conclusions either in the form of a written essay or orally. Conclusion: Women did/ did not participate in the academic developments of the Central Middle Ages. Be sure to back up statements with supporting evidence.
5. Have each student choose a reading and write a letter to the author. The letter may be from the perspective of a twentieth-century individual or from the medieval perspective and must either support or refute the point of view presented in the reading.

D. Evaluating the Lesson

1. Informal evaluation on student responses to questions and their discussion.
2. Evaluation of student essays or letters on form, content, and ability to support conclusions.

This lesson was adapted from Mildred Alpern, *Ancient and Medieval World Worksheet Masters* (White Plains, N.Y.: Longman, 1987).

READINGS ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
(Primary Sources)

Excerpt 1

From the *Decretum*, a compendium of canon law by Gratian, a jurist from Bologna, ca. 1140.

Women should be subject to their men. The natural order for mankind is that women should serve men and children their parents, for it is just that the lesser serve the greater.

The image of God is in man and it is one . . . woman is not made in God's image. Woman's authority is nil; let her in all things be subject to the rule of man. . . . And neither can she teach, nor be a witness, nor give a guarantee, nor sit in judgment.

Adam was beguiled by Eve, not she by him. It is right that he whom woman led into wrongdoing should have her under his direction, so that he may not fail a second time through female levity.

Source: Julia O'Faolain and Lauro Martines, eds., *Not in God's Image* (NY: Harper and Row, 1973), p.130.

Discussion Questions

1. How does Gratian view the place of women in society?
2. What religious justification does he make for his opinion?
3. Do you think that Gratian approved of education for women? Why?
4. What was Gratian's background and what were his sources for authority?
5. Do you suppose Gratian had much contact with women?

Excerpt 2

From *The Story of My Misfortunes* (ca. 1140), an autobiography of Peter Abelard, a French philosopher and theologian.

Now there dwelt in the same city of Paris a certain young girl named Heloise, the niece of a canon who was called Fulbert. Her uncle's love for her was equalled only by his desire that she should have the best education which he could possibly procure for her. Of no mean beauty, she stood out above all by reason of her abundant knowledge of letters. Now this virtue is rare among women, and for that very reason it doubly graced the maiden, and made her the most worthy of renown in the entire kingdom. . . . I believed that I could win the maiden's consent all the more easily by reason of her knowledge of letters and her zeal therefore; so, even if we were parted, we might yet be together in thought with the aid of written messages.

Source: Brian Tierney and Joan Scott, compilers, *Western Societies: A Documentary History* (New York: Knopf, 1984), p. 309.

Discussion Questions

1. What qualities attract Abelard to Heloise?
2. Is her level of education usual for women of that period?
3. What social class was Heloise from?

Excerpt 3

From the *Summa Theologica* of St. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), an Italian Dominican monk educated at the abby of Monte Cassino. St. Thomas Aquinas also lived for a time in the monastery of St. Jacques, Paris.

As regards the individual nature, woman is defective and misbegotten, for the active force in the male seed tends to the production of a perfect likeness in the masculine sex; while the production of woman comes from a defect in the active force or from some material disposition, or even from some external influence. . . .

Subjection is twofold. One is servile, by virtue of which a superior makes use of a subject for his own benefit. . . . There is another kind of subjection, which is called economic or civil, whereby the superior makes use of his subjects for their own benefit and good. . . . so by such a kind of subjection woman is naturally subject to man, because in man the discernment of reason predominates.

Source: Martha Lee Osborne, ed. *Women in Western Thought* (NY: Random House, 1979).

Discussion Questions

1. According to Thomas Aquinas, why is woman defective?
2. How does Thomas base his argument on philosophical views of women?
3. Why should woman be subject to the will of man?
4. Who was Thomas Aquinas and who read his works? Do you think he had much contact with women?

Excerpt 4

From *The Four Ages of Man* by Philippe de Navarre, France, 13th century.

Women should not learn to read or write unless they are going to be nuns, as much harm has come from such knowledge. For some men will dare to send or give or drop letters near them, containing indecent requests in the forms of songs or rhymes or tales. . . . And even if the woman had no desire to err, the devil is so crafty and skillful in tempting that he would soon lead her on to read the letters and answer them. . . .

Source: *Ancient and Medieval World Worksheet Masters* (White Plains, NY: Longman Publishing, 1987).

Discussion Questions

1. What is Philippe of Navarre's argument to justify keeping females illiterate?
2. Based upon this selection, can you infer what category of women were the best educated during the Middle Ages?
3. What social class of women do you think Philippe de Navarre is concerned with here? Is there an assumption here that the women can already read?

Excerpt 5

From a medical license granted by Charles, Duke of Calabria, Naples, 1321.

Francesca, the wife of Matteo de Roman of Salerno, has had to prove herself to the legitimate judges in the royal office to be sufficiently versed in the essentials of surgery. She has, therefore, urgently applied to our Magnificence to grant her permission to practise this art. As it has been ascertained that Francesca is faithful to us and comes of a faithful family, and having been examined by the royal doctors of our fathers and by our surgeons she has been found sufficiently knowledgeable in this art as a lay person, although it might be unsuitable for women to join in meetings of men, as this could impair matrimonial morality and lead forthwith to the sin of forbidden operations; as, however, according to law, the practice of medicine is open to women and we further considered that for the sake of decency women are better suited than men to treat female patients, we now give her permission to practice medicine.

Discussion Questions

1. Why has the license to practice surgery been granted to Francesca?
2. Is the granting of the license an admission that women have equality with men in the practice of surgery?
3. Could she practice medicine on men?
4. Is this reading a contradiction of the other readings in this lesson?
5. Why do you suppose women were considered more suitable for this profession? Is there still similar thinking today (i. e. nursing)?
6. Do you think Francesca was representative of women as doctors?

General Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think that women were excluded from the developing educational opportunities beginning in the eleventh century?
2. What assumptions do you see about the nature of women in these passages?
3. Are there similar assumptions in our society about what women are capable of doing?
4. Based on what you know about the lack of a defined role for women in a feudal society, and the fact that the rise of educational opportunities roughly coincides with the feudal period (Central Middle Ages), can you see any parallels between the two developments?

SUPPLEMENTAL ACTIVITIES
The Role of Women in Medieval Europe

Activity One	Simulation Game (Role-playing)
Activity Two	Newspaper
Activity Three	Identifying Female Occupations



Activity One: Simulation Game (Role-Playing)

A. OBJECTIVES

- ◆ To empathize with the study of a historical character.
- ◆ To learn the techniques of independent research.
- ◆ To practice skills of oral expression.
- ◆ To recognize varied points of view.

B. INTRODUCTION

This activity requires students to perform independent research in order to place themselves in the roles of individuals who participated in specific events or social situations during the medieval period. This may be presented as a major project for the unit on the Middle Ages. Each topic should be presented within the context of the appropriate chronology. However, the project should be assigned early enough in the study of the period so that students will have adequate time to prepare their roles.

C. INSTRUCTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

1. Distribute the project sheet entitled, **Instructions and Guidelines for Simulation**, to each student.
2. Explain that although the class has not yet studied the events described on the sheet, it is necessary to assign the project in advance to permit sufficient time to complete the work.
3. Provide the class with the following instructions and guidelines:

The roles on the project sheet are suggested roles. You are encouraged to develop your own roles. It is important in the context of our emphasis on the roles of women during the Middle Ages to encourage more female roles.

4. The last group may be handled in a somewhat different manner. Student guild members set up a guild meeting in which the entire class participates. The roles are: President of the Guild, Chief of Apprentices,

Social Director, Chief Shoe Designer, Member of the Guild on the City Council, etc. At least one role should involve women's activities in the guild. Each student presents information on his/her special office. The President can present a history of the guild with general information for membership, etc. Each guild officer can present a proposal for the guild members (the rest of the class) to vote on. These issues produce some very interesting classroom discussion and are a lot of fun.

5. Finally, post the presentation date for each panel, keeping in mind the coordination of panel topic to the course outline.

Instructions and Guidelines for Simulation

A simulation game is an activity that requires the participants to assume the identity of an individual within the context of a particular event or situation. It requires each person to research the event or situation to determine how he/she would react if he/she were living at the time and were personally involved in what was happening. Our major project for the unit on the Middle Ages will get you involved in one of the topics described below. The class will be divided into five groups, one for each topic. However, you are solely responsible for your presentation and will be evaluated individually. You will be required to prepare a 3–5 minute oral presentation, engage in debate or discussion with other members of your panel and to answer questions posed by the class and your teacher. There will be a possible maximum of 50 points: 40 for your oral presentation, 5 for inter-panel discussion, and 5 for your ability to answer questions.

Group One: Attitudes Toward the Feudal Social Structure

By the year A.D. 1000 feudalism was a firmly entrenched economic, political, and social institution in most of Europe. The system had its advantages and disadvantages for each person within it. Each person in this group will present his/her views of the society in which he/she lives from a personal point of view. Be prepared to discuss both the advantages and the disadvantages of the system to you in terms of your everyday life, individual interests, and your relationship to others.

King	Serf (male or female)
Nobleman	Knight
Wife of the king or nobleman	Nun
Village priest	Widow
Young unmarried lady (Sister of the Nobleman)	

Group Two: The Crusades

In A..D. 1095 Pope Urban II appealed to the Christians of Europe to send armies to the Holy Land to re-capture Jerusalem from the Muslim Turks who had seized control of that city and who were refusing Christian pilgrims entry to it. The efforts of Christians to wrest Jerusalem from the Turks were known as the Crusades. In your simulation you are to put yourself in the role of one of the individuals identified below and discuss your attitudes and experiences in the particular Crusade in which you were involved.

King	Peasant (male or female)
Feudal lord	Knight
Pope Urban II	Moslem Caliph
Wife of feudal lord	Crusade Pilgrim (male or female)
Child in the Children's Crusade (male or female)	

Group Three: The Black Death

You live in Paris in the year A.D. 1348. A terrible sickness is rapidly spreading through the city and many people are dying. No one seems to know what to do about it. You have been asked to attend a meeting to discuss this devastating problem and are to present your views based upon your position and interests in the society.

King of France	Doctor (male or female)
King of England	Pope
Peasant (male or female)	Jew (male or female)
Priest	Merchant or craftsman (male or female)

Group Four: Joan of Arc

Early in the fourteenth century there began a long series of wars between the kings of England and France for control of the French land and the French monarchy. These wars dragged on for more than 100 years during which the English controlled a large portion of France. Joan of Arc, a simple peasant girl believed that she was divinely inspired to help the French king regain his territory and his crown and she led an army on his behalf to break the Siege of Orleans. The people below are meeting in a discussion group to present their attitudes and opinions of Joan and her exploits.

Joan of Arc

Henry VI of England

Mother of Joan

The Duke of Burgundy

Charles VII, King of France

Soldier in the French army

Archbishop of Rheims

Soldier in the English army

Group Five: Guild Meeting

In the late Middle Ages, when trade revived and towns began to grow, people engaged in various craft occupations organized into groups called guilds. You are a shoemaker who holds an important office in the guild in your town. You will be conducting a meeting of all the guild members to discuss such issues as membership requirements, quality of the shoes, prices, hours of labor, improved methods of production, advertising, methods for training new workers, and other activities of the guild. At least one role should involve women's activities in the guild.

Activity Two: Newspaper

A. OBJECTIVES

- ◆ To research women's roles during the Middle Ages.
- ◆ To gain practice in clear and concise written expression.
- ◆ To practice skills of organization of written materials.

B. INTRODUCTION

This activity requires the preparation of a newspaper which features women's issues in the Middle Ages. This project lends itself well to biographical sketches of famous women of the period and events in which women were directly involved. Editorial opinion should also be included.

C. INSTRUCTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

1. The class may be divided into small groups, each to produce its own newspaper, or each student may be assigned responsibility for an article.
2. Review with students the five W's, who, what, when, where, and why, that are essential to every newspaper account. Show students some articles from current newspapers that might serve as models for their articles.
3. The following are some suggested topics for the student articles:
 - a. Ordeal of a Queen, the Trial of Queen Emma.
 - b. Eleanor of Aquitaine (or Margaret of Navarre) Goes on Crusade.
 - c. Lady Aethelflaed Defeats the Danes.
 - d. The War of the Three Ladies.
 - e. Peasant Girl Wins Crown for the Dauphin.
 - f. Women Flock into the Convents.

- g. European Children are not Considered Special.
- h. Woman Accused of Witchcraft.
- i. Margaret of Anjou Stands in for Henry VI.
- j. Wynflaed Frees Slaves in Will.
- k. Jewish Women in a Christian World.
- l. Can Women Learn?
- m. Women in Medicine.
- n. Christine de Pisan Commissioned to Write King's Biography.
- o. Catherine of Siena urges an End to the "Babylonian Captivity" of the Papacy.

Note to the Teacher:

Sources for information on these topics are listed in the bibliography at the end of this packet. A particularly valuable resource for these topics is the book by Susan Hill Gross and Marjorie Wall Bingham, *Women in Medieval/Renaissance Europe*.

- 4. Have students bring their articles to class. Editing may take place within each group, or articles can be passed around so that several students may have the opportunity to see what others have done and to offer constructive criticism.
- 5. Student volunteers may be solicited to prepare feature articles, visuals, cartoons, etc. to round out the paper.
- 6. The final product may be prepared by each group or by the class as a whole. An alternative is for a few students to make up the newspaper after all the articles have been submitted and edited. A useful computer program for this assignment is called *Newsroom*.

ACTIVITY 3

Women's Occupations as Depicted in Art

A. OBJECTIVES

- ◆ To understand that art may be a valid source of information about an era or culture.
- ◆ To become familiar with some of the techniques and styles of medieval art.
- ◆ To visualize the technology and means of production used in some medieval occupations.
- ◆ To gain insights into the social fabric of the middle ages by looking at images of daily life.

B. INTRODUCTION

This activity requires students to identify various activities of women during the medieval period by studying the art of the period for clues.

C. INSTRUCTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

1. Present **Document E**, medieval artistic renderings of female occupations.
 - a. Have students attempt to identify the task being performed in each picture. They may work in small groups or this may be done as a teacher-led activity.

Illustration #:

- 1: Working women
- 2: Working women
- 3a: Working women
- 3b: Working women
- 4: Women silk workers. The silk making crafts were dominated by women.
- 5: Women weaving.
- 6: Woman carding (combing) wool.
- 7: Women carrying milk. Medieval peasant women carried milk on their heads like women in modern developing countries.

- b. When the identification process is complete, have students summarize or generalize the various occupations shown.
2. Have students complete **Worksheet 3**. Discuss the answers.

Note to the Teacher:

Resources that specifically relate to the roles of women during the medieval period are sparse. The following are a few that may be used with this unit.

Popular Feature Films: (Available on video-tape)

1. *Joan of Arc*. directed by Victor Fleming, based on the play by Maxwell Anderson. (1948) Ingrid Bergman and José Ferrer.
2. *Lion in Winter*. Peter O'Toole and Katherine Hepburn. The stormy marriage of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine.

Television:

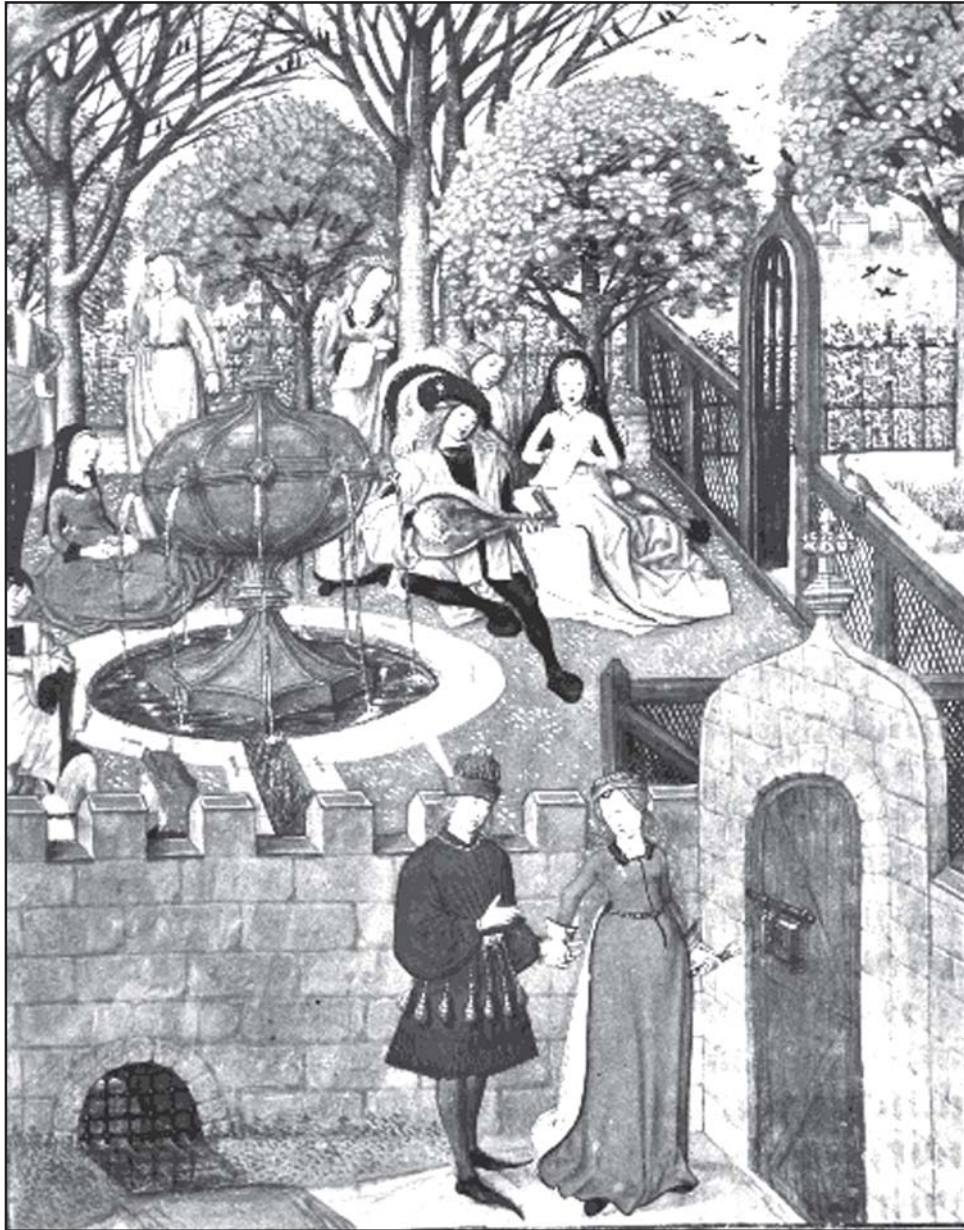
1. *Castle*. ETV. Narrated by David Macaulay and based on his book which describes the construction of a medieval castle. Included is the daily life which includes some information about women.
2. *Newscasts From the Past*. Recreates events of the past with TV anchorpersons, roving field reporters, point/counterpoint debates; feature stories, and even commercials. The segment on Joan of Arc applies directly to the topic of women, although all contain some women's issues.

Filmstrips:

1. *Women in Medieval and Renaissance Europe*. Filmstrip and cassette which accompany the book of the same title. (See bibliography.)

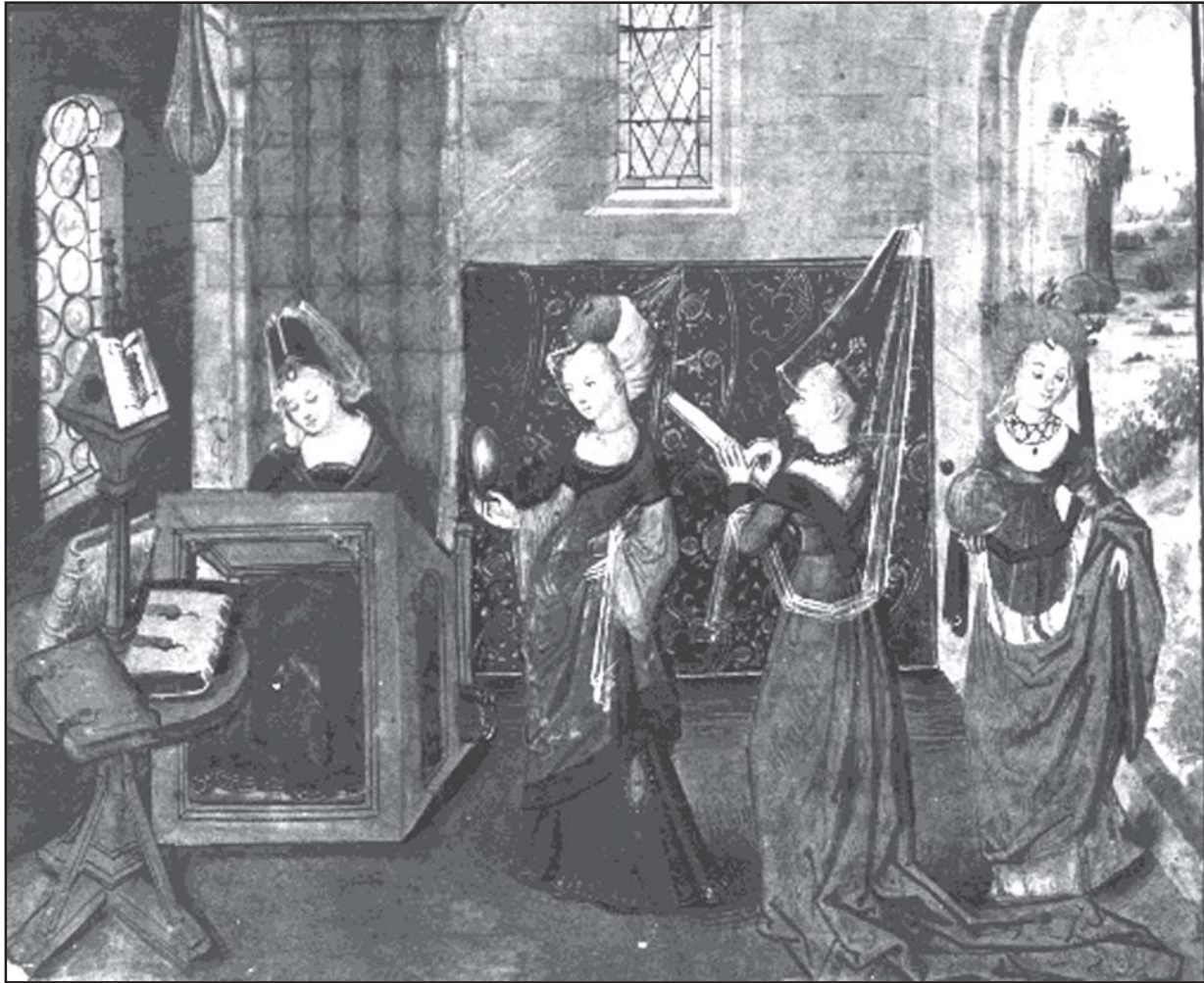
ARTISTIC RENDERINGS OF
SOCIAL CLASSES

Illustration 1



Roman de la Rose: Garden Scene (London: British Museum), (S12764). Courtesy of Art Resource, New York, NY.

Illustration 2



Christine de Pisan, *La Cite des Dames* (Paris: Bibliotheque Nationale). Courtesy of Art Resource, New York, NY.

Illustration 3a



Froissart, *Petrarch's Triumphs: Triumph of Chastity* (Paris: Bibliotheque Nationale), (LA 140434). Courtesy of Art Resource, New York, NY.

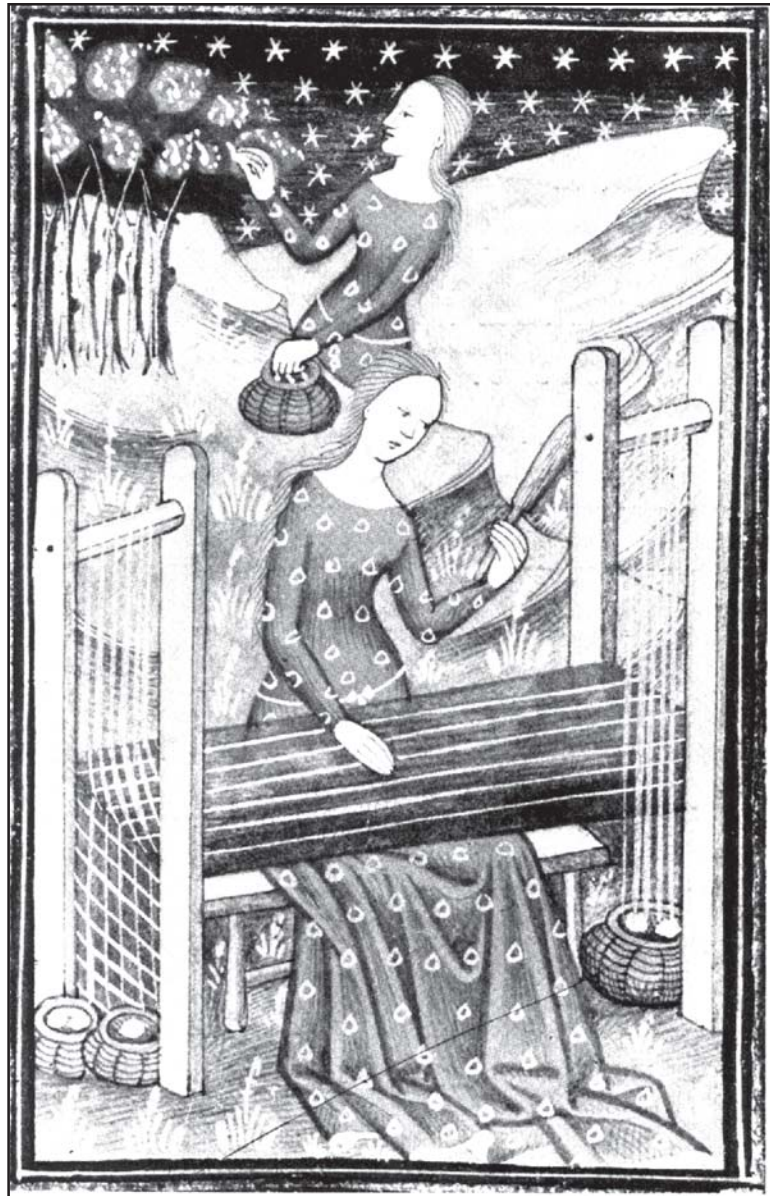
Illustration 3b



"Qui veul du bon lait?" (Paris: Bibliotheque Nationale), (LAC 122323)

Courtesy of Art Resource, New York, NY.

Illustration 4



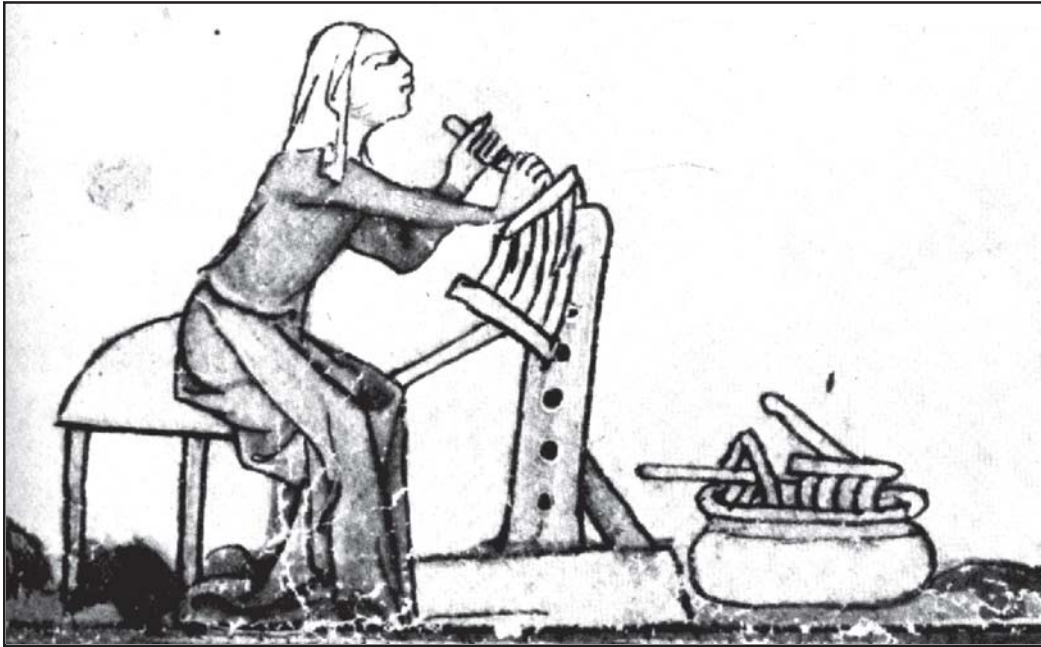
By permission of the British Library.

Illustration 5



By permission of the British Library.

Illustration 6



By permission of the British Library.

Illustration 7



By permission of the British Library.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think that there are few pictures of women in warrior roles?

2. Is it difficult to tell what the people are doing?

3. When do you see men and women working together?

4. Is art a valid way to learn about history? Explain your answer.

5. What can you learn best about history from art? This may lead to a discussion about cultural values, where art was found, who commissioned it, etc.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bell, Susan B. *Women from the Greeks to the French Revolution*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1973.

An excellent and thought-provoking collection of primary source materials and contemporary essays highlighting many aspects of feminine life from ancient Greece to the end of the eighteenth century.

Bishop, Morris. *Horizon Book of the Middle Ages*. New York: American Heritage Publishing, 1968.

A general history of the medieval period that includes many references to women's issues. Contains excellent primary source documents and superb photographs and illustrations.

Ennen, Edith. *The Medieval Woman*. Trans. Edmund Jephcott. Oxford: Basil Blackwood, 1989.

Excellent use of primary sources, with emphasis on Germany.

Gies, Frances and Joseph. *Women in the Middle Ages*. New York: Crowell, 1978.

This book focuses on the lives, expectations, and accomplishments of medieval women. It provides historical and cultural background and biographical sketches of seven important women of the medieval period and illustrations from medieval manuscripts. A filmstrip for use in the classroom accompanies this book.

Gross, Susan Hill and Marjorie Wall Bingham. *Women in Medieval/Renaissance Europe, Women in European History and Culture, Volume II*. St. Louis Park, MN: Glenhurst Publishing, 1983.

Discusses the roles of medieval women in politics, religion, economic affairs, social environment, education, and the arts. Excellent representations of medieval art. Uses many primary source materials.

Harsen, Sibylle. *Women in the Middle Ages*. New York: Abner Shram, 1975.

This book examines women's depressed status under medieval law and instances where the law might be overlooked or construed to the benefit of the woman. It presents an account of daily life in castles, towns and villages. Excellent illustrations.

Herlihy, David. "Land, Family and Women in Continental Europe, 701-1200," *Tradition* 18 (1962).

Very good presentation of the conditions of inheritance for women during the Early and Central Middle Ages.

_____. *Medieval Households*. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press 1985.

This book is most useful in understanding the role of women in the most common context of their lives during this period – the family. It is filled with information on inheritance, relations with children, daily life, etc. This exceptional bibliography is a very good place to find additional information on other selected subjects.

Howell, Martha C. *Women, Production, and Patriarchy in Late Medieval Cities*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986.

Excellent social history on women's occupations in Late Medieval cities and their working conditions.

Morewedge, R. T., ed. *The Role of Women in the Middle Ages*. [Papers of the Sixth Annual Congress of the Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies 1972] Albany, 1975.

A Collection of papers resulting from the above congress held on Women and the Middle Ages.

Power, Eileen. *Medieval Women.*, ed. M. M. Postan. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975.

A collection of lectures on different aspects of women's lives during the Middle Ages. The text is supplemented with illustrations from contemporary manuscripts.

Radcliff-Umstead, Douglas, ed. *The Roles and Images of Women in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*. [University of Pittsburgh Publications on the Middle Ages and Renaissance 3]. Pittsburgh: Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1975.

This is a very good collection of eight essays, including Sara Lehrman, "The Education of Women in the Middle Ages," (pp. 133-144) and Thomas G. Benedek, "The Roles of Medieval Women in the Healing Arts," (pp. 145-159).

Rose, Mary Beth, ed. *Women in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*. Syracuse: Syracuse Univ. Press, 1986.

Collection of eleven essays on various topics.

Wemple, Suzanne F. *Women in Frankish Society. Marriage and the Cloister, 500 to 900*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981.

A fascinating and enlightening analysis of the roles and status of women during the relatively obscure Merovingian and the later Carolingian periods. It emphasizes marriage customs and the impact of Christianity on feminine education and marriage.

Williams, Mary Newman, and Anne Echols. *Between Pit and Pedestal: Women in the Middle Ages*. Princeton: Markus Wiener, 1994.

This readable survey of women in the Middle Ages covers a range of topics from beauty and fashion to work roles and religious life. A number of good illustrations are included.