

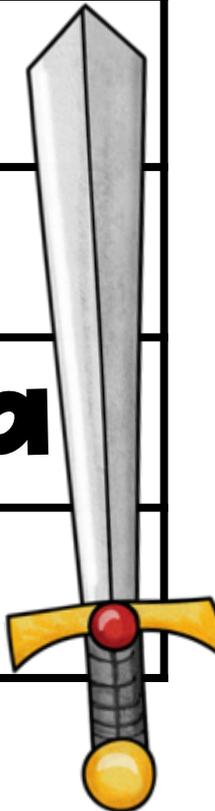
ROOTED IN READING
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medieval
moments

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Medieval Ages

Although the beautiful castle on the front of this book makes you think this time period was one of fancy things and beauty, it was actually a time period of struggle for the large majority of people. Countries during this period had a duke, king, prince, or emperor. These rulers owned the land and rented it out to you if you worked the land for them. This system was called the **feudal system**. Poor people were called serfs and they were treated very much like slaves. The knights were an essential piece to this system because the lords needed help protecting their land and homes. There was a lot of war and unrest during this time period.



Becoming a Knight

In order to become a knight you were most likely a man from a fairly wealthy family. Being a knight was expensive because you had to buy your gear, food, and other supplies. There was no paycheck for being a knight. Some men would marry into noble families to get their wealth.

You also had to be an excellent fighter. Soldiers taught boys how to fight at a young age using wooden swords. Boys also practiced jousting so they would be prepared for their test to become a knight.

To signify someone becoming a knight, another knight would tap them on both shoulders with a sword.



Battles

A knight had to be prepared for battle at all times. His lord or king might demand that he fight at a moment's notice so he had to make sure his armor was in excellent condition. When he went to battle he would usually bring with him a group of men consisting of foot soldiers, mounted soldiers, and his squire. A squire was a teenage male that wanted to become a knight. He helps the knight put on all his armor before a fight.

Many times a battle would begin by knights on horseback charging their enemies. Battles could last anywhere from one to three days. The towns near battles were greatly damaged by soldiers looking for food or ruining properties so their enemies couldn't use the homes as shelter.



Armor and Gear

Chain Mail- A flexible armor that knights wore all over their bodies to protect them from strikes from the sword. Unfortunately arrows could still injure the soldiers through this armor.

Helmets- The earliest helmets only covered the tops of their heads. Eventually visors were added so nothing could get to the knight's face.

A Shield- If the enemies were shooting arrows at them, knights could use their shield for coverage. It could also stop the heavy blows of a sword.

Swords- Knights carried different lengths of swords for different purposes. Swords were very expensive and heavy!



Horses

Horses were a crucial element to a knight's success. The best mares and stallions were used for breeding. These horses needed to be extremely strong, fast, and loyal to their knight. If a horse was too stubborn, it wouldn't work because it wouldn't listen well to its rider. The horses also wore armor to prevent as many injuries as possible.

The knight had to have perfect control of his horse with just one hand, because he had his sword in the other hand. The knights wore spurs on their heels to make the horse gallop.



A Knight's Life

In addition to fighting in battles, knights had to keep up their land and run estates. Knights were expected to collect taxes for the king and help enforce laws.

Luckily knights had a lot of people to help them carry out their duties such as pages, squires, priests, servants, and cooks. There was also a lady of the castle who oversaw everything.

At dinner time the knight, lady, and their guests ate at a special table. Everyone else ate at long dining tables. When they weren't in battle, knights also competed in tournaments. Tournaments helped them practice their skills and win prizes of gold or armor.



The End of an Era

The invention of the cannon changed everything. No matter how strong a knight was in battle, he was completely **defenseless** to a cannon. People started to figure out how to get themselves out of the feudal system through a trade or education so there weren't people to work the land for lords.

Powerful countries like England, France, Spain, and Portugal started putting their money towards the **exploration** of the Americas. And so the age of knights came to an end.



Glossary



- defenseless- without protection or defense (p 7)
- enforce- to make someone follow a rule or law (p 6)
- exploration- the act of traveling to an unknown area (p 7)
- feudal system- a peasant or worker known as a vassal received a piece of land in return for serving a lord or king (p 1)
- gallop- a sprint (p 5)