

The myths of the middle ages assignment

[History](#)



However, Hollywood has deemed it fit to slander the Middle Ages with myths such as a knight in shining armor, the death penalty as a common enmeshment, and peasant life as a horrible and unlivable condition (“ Top All of these Ideas are present In Hollywood classics, but do any of them hold a fraction of truth? Surprisingly, knight life tended to be as dull and unadventurous during the Dark Ages, another name used to describe this time period, as those in the military today. Those who didn’t serve the King were typically hired by lords in order to protect their land, or fiefs, from bandits and other invaders.

By offering protection and housing, nobles (lords or barons), would acquire peasants, or serfs, to “ farm the land and roved the lord with wealth in the form of food and products” (“ How Knights Work”). This shows how people were just like the modern working class in that what they did helped the higher classes. These lords typically gained the fiefs from the King himself “ in return for loyalty, protection, and service” (“ How Knights Work”).

Basically, the lords helped out the King by providing mini armies for any Incoming threat.

As knighthood was not an Inherited position, It was common for the younger son of a lord to begin the path to knighthood. At age seven. They would be bestowed with the title of page. Huntsmen and falconers taught them how to hunt, and priests or chaplains taught them religion, reading and writing” (How Knights Work). This quote shows how Knights were not mindless human beings meant only for fighting; they were actually educated. Also, they would practice combat with wooden swords and lances, Imitating knights In the field.

When a page turned fourteen, he would become an esquire, or a squire, to either a knight or a lord, learning the intricacies of social behavior and chivalry. In addition, they learned the martial arts of being a knight, such as handling their horses and more practice with wooden swords and encase. Upon turning twenty-one, a squire would be tested for knighthood. An all night vigil was demanded after a ritual bath on the eve of the ceremony. Once knighted, the knight would be dressed in armor and presented his sword.

In times of war, “knights were called to arms by their lords or by the king” (“How Knights Work”). Basically, the King depended on the lords’ armless to go to war. Much like modern day officers, they would lead foot soldiers and archers into battle. However, during peacetime, knights would manage their “estates, dispense justice, train for battle, and participate in tournaments” (“How Knights Work”). Instead of constantly fighting, as some may believe, knights made plenty of time to have fun and take a breather from the harshness of war.

Another myth that is commonly associated with the middle ages is that peasant life was unlivable. The peasants, who did manual labor, would each day they would be given an assortment of “dried or cured meats, cheeses, and fruits and vegetables from their area” (“Top Both of these quotes show that peasants who worked never starved and were fed quite decently in fact. Even those who didn’t work were better fed than the homeless today. Mainly, the food that distinguished the rich from the poor would be the number of spiced dishes in each course, something the poor could not afford.

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Also, the idea that peasants had thatched roofs with animals living in them has no support. Many tend to think “thatched” means bundles of straw and sticks were thrown on top of a house, when in actuality, the straw was woven into a tight mat. Animals who managed to sneak their way in were promptly removed, just like we remove any animals that enter our homes today. In addition, thatched roofs were not used only for the poor- many castles and grander homes used them as well since they worked so well in keeping out the weather and in insulating homes (“The Middle Ages”).

Another popular myth is that people didn’t typically bath in the Middle Ages. In truth, they bathed more often than most people today. Typically, upper class would bath two to three times a day, heating up the water manually. Peasants usually went into a bathhouse once a day after working in the fields (“Medieval Life”). As the French put it in the following Latin statement: *Winner, lauder, lava, bibber; Hoc est. fiver!* (To hunt, to play, to wash, to drink, – This is to live!)” (“Top The French showed that anyone in the Middle Ages considered this life to be perfectly normal, even though some in modern times may not consider it to be. What’s more, peasants, while working hard in the fields, had regular festivals that “involved dancing, drinking, games, and tournaments” (“Top Peasants were not the all work and no play type and got a considerable amount of relaxation time. Many games, such as chess, checkers, and dice, are still played today. Children spent the festivals wrestling, swimming, fishing, and playing a game that “was a cross between tennis and handball” (“Medieval Life”).

Basically, the Middle Ages brought about many games that we still play today. In addition, knights typically incorporated training in the festivals by performing a form of gymnastics and running foot races. Music was often played during these festivals and during other holidays or special parties. The instruments consisted of “ horns, trumpets, whistles, bells, and drums” (“ Medieval Life”). In addition to games, the Middle Ages brought about new songs and experimented with plenty of instruments for fun. Many would take these songs to the fields in order to keep them motivated during work. “ Off with his head! ” In most movies and TV shows, it may seem that the penalty for pretty much any crime was execution. However, the Middle Ages typically reserved the death penalty for serious offenders who committed murder, treason, or arson. For minor offences, most people would endure public humiliation or pay a fine. If the same person repeatedly offended, they would be exiled. In addition, the Middle Ages also “ maintained trials for those accused of crimes; verdicts were not strictly the decisions of kings and noblemen” (“ 5 Biggest... “).

Perhaps they were not a democracy, but the courts were run similarly in terms of trials. As for the beheading, they were not the huge spectacles many make them out to be today. They tended to be reserved for the upper class and were done in privacy instead of the town square. Another misconception is that the execution swings to decapitate the head” (“ The Dark Ages”). This quote shows how the quick one swing in Hollywood movies is inaccurate. Unfortunately, if the executioner was unable to kill the convicted, they ended up bleeding to death.

Another form of execution during the Middle Ages was hanging since it was easy, did not cost much, and the king could let the bodies hang for a while as a warning to others. For those criminals particularly hated, such as those who committed treason, suffered the enmeshment of being “ hanged, drawn, and quartered” (“ The Dark Ages”) in front of the public eye. Typically, this was rare and it shows how many books are incorrect about how all the people hung were left to the birds. While there was violence during the Middle Ages, no person was the equivalent to our modern day Stalin, Hitler, and Osama bin Laden.

The Dark Ages were not the violent “ bloodless that many movies and books have claimed it to be” (“ Top Before the Enlightenment, genocide, mass murder and serial killing was virtually unheard of, something that is now common during modern times. In fact, only two serial killers are recorded from the Middle Ages: Elizabeth Battery and Gilles De Rais (“ The Dark Ages”). Elizabeth Battery was a countess in the Kingdom of Hungary. Though the precise number of victims is still debated, she is remembered as “ the Blood Countess” (“ The Dark Ages”).

The term “ blood-sucker” was circled around her name as it was said that she would bath in her victim’s blood, hoping to rejuvenate her skin. She and four collaborators were “ accused of torturing and killing hundred of girls, with one witness attributing to them over 650 victims, though the number for which they were invoiced was eighty’ (“ The Dark Ages”). To most citizens’ dismay, Battery was neither tried nor convicted because of her status and connection to the nobility in the Kingdom of Hungary.

However, she was placed under house arrest and remained immured there until her death four years later. The fictional Count Drachma was somewhat based on Battery, thus creating the myth of vampires. Gilles De Rais was a “ Breton knight, a leader in the French army, and a companion- in-arms of Joan of Arc” (“ The Dark Ages”). This shows how Gilles was originally respected for his work in the army. From 1427 to 1435, Gilles fought alongside Joan of Arc as a commander in the Royal Army during the Hundred Years’ War.

When he retired from military life in 1434, he depleted his wealth by staging “ an extravagant theatrical spectacle of his own composition and dabbled in the occult” (“ The Dark Ages”). Soon after, Gilles engaged in a series of child murders, some estimating that he murdered hundreds. When a violent dispute with a clergyman broke out in 1440, his crimes were brought to light. On the twenty-sixth of October in 1440, Gilles was condemned to death and hanged at Nantes. The fairy tale “ Blueberry” and several other novels are believed to be inspired by Gilles.

The Dark Ages, named for its lack of electricity, was very routine and actually somewhat better than modern day in terms of violence. Any peasants living during this time can be compared with the modern working class and although knight life wasn’t extremely adventurous, as it is made out to be, it still held an important role in society. In addition, Many offenders only suffered public humiliation and fines instead of beheading and other forms of execution.