

Good example of courtly love essay

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The medieval times or the middle ages witnessed the inception of the ‘Romance’ literature. This kind of literature was inspired into being by the knights’ usually idealistic courtly love of the noblewomen they interacted with on occasion.

What was model knightly behavior in the 12th and 13th centuries?

Using Chretien as an example, knights were held very highly and they were expected to solve dilemmas, which ranged in nature from psychological to ethical dilemmas. A typical knight had a good grip of combat tactics as well as the ability to display martial prowess in rescuing ladies from monsters, giants, and wicked knights (Greenblatt, 8). Knights, such as Alexander’s knights accompanied the master, often a king, and honored his every command regarding combat. A good knight was, therefore, loyal and true to his king. Motivated by their love for the women they revered, they were more daring than the average man at the battlefield or anywhere else. They were brave. In the poem based on ‘Marie de France: Lais’ referred to by the author, tells about the moment when the king was unable to make a judgment brought before him. He is said to have summoned his knights to be jurors. The trust the king had for his knights is proof of their trustworthiness. It also showed that they were wise and had to be able to make clear and unbiased decisions on a regular basis.

What virtues characterized an ideal nobleman or woman? What were the worst crimes they could commit?

An ideal nobleman or woman was one of high birth in the society in the middle ages. In the early English theater, noblemen are said to have

supported the performers financially or even materially since these performers had no dependable means of livelihood and could not, therefore, afford things like costumes. This indicates that noblemen and women were generous and gave to the less fortunate. Noble men and women were known to be highly educated, and they also valued education. This is depicted when in 'Marie de France' it is spoken of a German noblewoman who was highly educated, was proficient in three languages, and had ideas of her own. Her commitment to writing is also an indication of how highly the nobles held education.

It is mentioned in the book that the noblemen, as well as noble women, made their living out of doing nothing in particular or from doing something that was utterly useless to the public. In their times, the publicly useful activities referred to, involved intense manual labor. This meant that these nobles did not value manual labor. In his defense as narrated in the book about maintaining subordination in rank, the author explains that he would no more deprive a nobleman of his respect than of his money. This shows just how respectable the nobles were.

Noblewomen had been known to have illicit relationships, which were not necessarily physical with knights. Being that they were mostly married, they, therefore, committed adultery, which was a crime during the middle ages.

Explain the relationships between lord and vassal, knight and lady. What was the importance of loyalty?

Vassals were answerable to their lords and were mostly left in charge of some property owned by their lords. It was more of a master and servant relationship in several instances. However, these relationships varied from

one lord to another. From the letter written by Lucius the roman emperor to address King Arthur, he laments about king Arthur killing their vassal Frolo. The fact that the killing of his vassal affected him more than all the other misdeeds committed against him, shows just how valued the vassal was to him. It suffices to say that the lord and his vassal had a close relationship. Knights have been acclaimed for the motivation of the ‘romance’ literature that came to be. This is because they had a tendency to fall in love with noblewomen. Their relationship was one that was not necessarily physical. Despite this it was strong enough to make the noblewomen stay chaste when the knights went out to war or far away duties, until they returned. In return, in order to please and honor the noblewomen, they dedicated their lives to them and found motivation in their love to give more and accomplish mighty feats. These relationships were almost always prohibited due to the fact that the noble women were almost always married and unavailable.

Was loyalty ever problematic?

As much as the majority of vassals were loyal to their lords, there are those who strayed from this. Vassals such as the one in ‘Canto 12’, who swears to honor his master and make his virtue known worldwide. Lear and Kent, who can be assumed to have been his initially trusted and close vassal, get into a heated argument. Lear expresses that Kent has betrayed him and their kingdom, and caused them to break their vow. In the end, he sends Kent away with a warning that if he is to be found in the vicinities, he’ll be brought to death. This is seemingly a courtesy by Lear to someone he held closely, but was not loyal. Had Kent not been one Lear held closely, his actions would

have warranted a different outcome far worse than whatever punishment he got.

Explain courtly love.

Courtly love was an idealized and sometimes even prohibited form of love traditionally represented in Western Europe literature of the middle ages, running from 12th century to the 14th century. This kind of love was usually between a noblewoman and a knight or courtier, who devoted himself to her. The knights were known to devote themselves to their objects of love, and would go out and do great things, in the name of their love. What often made courtly love illicit was the fact that most of the noblewomen revered by these knights were married.

What was the knights' quest or journey?

The knights would go on quests at their King's request or command, to solve one crisis or the other. It is said that they moved in smaller groups than an army, and from the praises they received, one can infer that they were mostly successful. They often went out to fight in honor of their king, and as noted earlier, to impress the noblewomen they revered and loved. When advising the king to calm his worries, an advisor implores him to calm down as the knight's love for the noblewoman, inspires him to fight with more fervor each time he goes out on a quest. This further shows that the knights were always on one quest or another, to take care of kingdom affairs that required specialized skill, especially in combat.

References

Greenblatt, Stephen, *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, New York.
W. W. Norton & Company, 2005.