

The daily lives of peasants and lords



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The medieval life is the lives of all the classes, rich and poor, were dominated by the feudal system. In this assignment, we focus more detail on the daily lives of peasants and lords on a medieval manor. Moreover, we want to describe about peasants and lords lives condition such as lives condition, work condition, food, clothes, children and schooling, marriage and divorce.

It certifies that well manor means the lords estates and medieval means the Middle Ages so I guess it means where the lords lived or did most of their work in the middle Ages. A medieval manor is a plot of land of about 1200 acres of land given to a lord for service to the king. In 1982, after 10 years in the basement of the Eliot Hotel near Kenmore Square, we relocated to 246 East Berkeley Street, between Albany and Harrison, in Boston's South End. We are in the first brick building on the right, diagonally across from the MOBIL station.

Daily life for us peasants is generally pretty hard. I get up each morning at dawn, eat a quick breakfast of homemade bread and ale and then I'm off to the fields for a full day of work. We have to plant, tend, and harvest at least one good crop a year or we will starve in the winter. We usually try to plant and harvest at least two crops each year. After working all day, I sometimes stop in the village tavern for a bit of socializing before heading home to have my dinner, and then off to bed.

Elizabeth gets up at the crack of dawn as well. She has my breakfast ready for me before I leave. After that, her day is full. There's the vegetable garden to tend, clothing to wash, bread to bake for tomorrow, cloth to weave, and a

house to keep clean. Rebecca and Samuel help her by tending to the animals (we have some pigs, a cow, some chickens, and a couple sheep), and doing other chores. Mathew usually works in the fields with me. He's learning to be a farmer so he can support his own family some day. When Samuel is about 10, he'll come to the fields to work too. Until then, Samuel attends school at the village church to learn some prayers and songs, and how to do a bit of math.

Peasants worked long hours every day, rain or shine, to ensure that their families had enough to eat. Most peasants were farmers, although a few were millers, blacksmiths, and tavern owners. Peasant farmers were the backbone of medieval society. They worked land leased to them by wealthier land holders in the nobility. The farmers produced all of the food, and paid most of the taxes. Their lives weren't all hard work though. They had feasts on holidays, and celebrated births and marriages. They rested each Sabbath day and attended church.

Peasants lived in small towns or nearby farms on a lord's manor. The average peasant lived in a two room cottage that was constructed of mud plastered branches and straw or of stone and wood with a roof of thatch. The rooms had dirt floors and a few furnishings such as stools, a table, and maybe a chest to hold clothes in the common room. In the other room, sacks of straw served as beds for the entire family. A wealthy peasant might own a bed stand and a few iron pots. In the winter, the common room was shared with the livestock, who helped provide warmth. An open kitchen hearth was also located in the common room. Windows were small slits and didn't have

glass in them. The interior of the cottage was lit by candles made of tallow (and probably smelled pretty icky).

The clothing of the peasants and other lower class people was usually made of rough wool or linen. Peasant women spun wool into threads and wove cloth that was turned into clothing for their families. Peasants probably had only one set of clothing, two at most. Men wore coarse tunics, and long stockings or leggings. Women wore long dresses of coarse wool, and stockings. Some peasants may have worn linen undergarments to offset the uncomfortable wool clothing. The outer garments were almost never washed, though the undergarments were laundered regularly. Wood smoke permeated the clothes and acted as a kind of deodorant for peasants. The base for the cloth was usually a russet (brown), so most clothing was a fairly drab combination of browns, reds, and grays, with only small variations. Children were dressed as miniature adults. Both men and women wore wooden clogs or shoes made of thick cloth or leather. In cold weather, peasants would have worn sheepskin or woolen cloaks, woolen hats, and woolen mittens to keep out the rain and cold. Many peasants died during the winter months from over exposure to the elements.

Peasants had a fairly unchanging diet of baked bread, porridge, stew, seasonal vegetables, and some meat. If a peasant lived near a stream or ocean, he may have caught fish to supplement his diet and ate it fresh, smoked, or salted. Otherwise, peasants ate what they could grow. Peasants mainly grew crops of beans, barley, rye, and wheat. Each family also had a vegetable garden near their home that provided onions, peas, beans, radishes, carrots, and other vegetables. Some peasants may have had fruit

trees as well. Peasants also harvested acorns and other nuts and berries from the nearby forest. Peasant women made butter and cheese from the milk of cows as well. In the fall, they slaughtered most of the animals for their meat. If it was too rainy or too dry for a good crop to grow, peasant families had a very good chance of starving to death.

Birth and infancy were the most dangerous stages of life for people in the Middle Ages. Records from the time period suggest that approximately 20% of women died during childbirth and 5% of infants died during delivery with another 10-12% dying in their first month. Healthy children were regarded as a gift from God. Most families wanted sons, who would one day carry on the family name, as opposed to daughters, who would require a large dowry when they married. However, many parents probably rejoiced at the birth of a daughter as well, especially if they had been childless for many years or their infants had died.

Childbirth during the Middle Ages was very dangerous for both the mother and the infant. When the mother went into labor, she was attended by a midwife, generally a townswoman who was experienced in delivering babies. If the delivery went well, so much the better, but in the event of complications the midwife could do very little. There were no Cesarean sections and no advanced medical equipment to help mother and child. Many women died during childbirth and many infants died during delivery.

If both mother and infant survived childbirth, the child was usually bathed in lukewarm water and then swaddled in warm cotton or wool fabric. If it was thought the infant would not live, it was immediately baptized by the

midwife or by a man nearby, often the father. If the infant was thought to survive it was baptized several days after its birth in a local church. Here it was named, often after a close relative or a saint, and was promised to be brought up as a Christian.

After the baptism, the child was brought home and life returned to normal. The infant was generally nursed at home by its mother or a wet nurse. In peasant families, where every person was needed to work the fields, infants were sometimes left alone in the home for long periods of time, or in the care of a brother or sister who was as young as 2 or 3. Many accidents befell infants left alone or in the care of other children, helping to account for the high infant mortality rate.

If the child lived through the first year, it was soon walking and talking. Young children would have been given small chores like feeding the chickens or washing the dishes, but were otherwise free to play up until the age of around seven. Peasant children whose families were almost always poor wouldn't have had many toys. Fathers and older siblings might make a child a wooden spinning top, a doll, or a set of blocks. Most of the time though, children played with what was available and used their imaginations.

Around the age of seven, children began to learn what they would need to know for their adult lives. Younger male children might attend a village school run by the local church. There they would learn important prayers and songs, and a smattering of Latin and mathematics. When a male child was old enough to be useful, he would go to work with his father or another villager as an apprentice. As an apprentice, the boy would learn everything

he would need to support himself and his family. Most male children, especially the eldest, worked the same job as their father. Girl children didn't usually receive formal schooling. Instead, they stayed home with their mothers and learned how to be a good housewife and mother. They learned how to weave cloth, cook, grow vegetables, make butter, clean house, tend children, and other necessary things.

Marriages of all classes of people were arranged by the parents of the couple. Marriages were contracted to join two families together, and no family would leave such important matters to be decided on the emotions of the people involved. Peasant girls could marry as young as 12 and boys as young as 14. Most of the time though, girls married around 17 or 18 and boys in their late 20's or 30's. The groom was almost always much older than his bride. The prospective bride and groom would probably have already met and known each other for some time as peasants tended to live in or close to the same village their whole lives.

The couple were married in a simple ceremony unlike the elaborate marriage ceremonies today. The actual ceremony differed from place to place. In the early part of the Middle Ages, the Church was not very involved in the marriage ceremony and it was usually conducted at home with several witnesses present. Over the course of the Middle Ages, the Church became more and more involved in the marriage ceremony and by the end of the period, a Christian marriage ceremony almost always accompanied a wedding.

Once the wedding was over, married life began. It was undoubtedly awkward for both the husband and the wife for a time until they got to know each other better. Mutual friendship and respect eventually developed among most married people and sometimes the partners also grew to love each other.

The man was the head of the household in the Middle Ages and the wife was legally his property. A man was allowed and even expected to beat his wife, as long as she lived through the experience. Husbands had complete control over all of their wife's belongings and any other property that was owned by the family. The husband had the final say in all matters. However, many husbands asked for and heeded the advice of their wives.

Husbands were allowed to divorce their wives for many reasons, the most popular being adultery. Wives, on the other hand, could not divorce their husbands. Towards the end of the Middle Ages, this changed slightly, and wives were allowed to divorce husbands convicted of certain crimes or away on a long campaign of warfare. In the peasant class, where everyone knew everyone else, adultery and divorce were less common than in the upper classes where the husband was often gone for long periods of time.

Life wasn't all hard work though. The Catholic Church had many holidays that were observed. On these holidays, peasants had feasts, sometimes provided by the lord of the nearby manor, and socialized with their neighbors. They danced, sang songs, and generally had a good time.

Peasants also celebrated the birth and baptism of a new child, marriages of family members, and other important events.

However, Medieval Feudalism was based on the exchange of land for military service. King William the Conqueror used the concept of feudalism to reward his Norman supporters with English lands for their help in the conquest of England. Daily life of lords during the Middle ages centred around their castles or Manors or fighting for the King during times of war. The daily life of lords can be described as follows: Lords and Nobles would attend to business matters in relation to his land. Reports would be heard regarding estate crops, harvests and supplies. Finances – rents, taxes, customs and dues. The Lords would also be expected to exercise his judicial powers over his vassals and peasants. They complaints and disputes regarding tenants would be settled, permission to marry. Also, they are in charge of political discussions and decisions, control weapon practice. In the morning, they prayers to a meal and turned to hunting, hawking or inspecting the estate in the afternoon. For evening, they prayer and then supper in the Hall of the Castle or Manor House and after supper there might be some entertainment-music, dancing, jugglers, acrobats, Jesters. Finally, they went to bed by prayer.

Peasants lives supported for lords lives because they need to harvest, plate, tending animals, grow vegetable, for their families and lords by one or two times per year. The Lords give the land that King provide to peasant to cultivate the crops.

Peasants and lords have relations with each other but the activities and norms of each are different: Peasants from the morning till night stayed at the field for cultivate crops, harvest, plate and tending animals. Furthermore, they live in the small cottage, don't have own land. In sort, they live as a hard life. For Lords, they live in the good condition. They didn't stay at the

field. Every day, they control the lords instead the King and report also. In sort, they live as a merchant, so their lives are easy and freedom.

In conclusion, peasants lives are hard working, no freedom and especially don't have right to join in the political events. However, lords lives as a merchant, good condition, freedom and especially have right to do involve the political events.