

Times Medieval: Teacher's Guide

Grade Level: 3-5

Curriculum Focus: World History

Lesson Duration: One class period

Program Description

Knights in shining armor, tales of valor and bravery, magnificent castles rising out of the mist — they're all here in this four-part video that looks at life in the Middle Ages. *Long Ago and Far Away* — Learn about medieval feudal life. *Castles* — Peek inside these stone strongholds. *Armor* — A look at how knights' metal shells were made. *The Legend of King Arthur* — What does this semihistorical tale reveal about the medieval spirit?

Onscreen Activities

Segment 1, Long Ago and Far Away

- Activity: Make a time-line that has the years 1000 A.D., 2000 A.D., and 3000 A.D. With words and pictures, compare life during each of these time periods. What advancements do we have today that didn't exist in the Middle Ages? Think of all the advancements that might come to be in the next thousand years.

Segment 2, Castles

- Activity: Have your students write stories or draw pictures about life in a medieval castle. Build a model castle with sand or use cardboard, papier mache, or sugar cubes. Where would heat and food come from? Where would you sleep? How would you communicate with friends in other castles? Read *Castle* by David Macauley for more information.

Segment 3, Armor

- Activity: Design and create suits of armor with cardboard and aluminum foil. Have each student design and make a personal coat of arms reflecting their own hobbies and family background. Research the meaning of colors and symbols of the times and include them in the design. Place the coat of arms on a shield.

Segment 4, The Legend of King Arthur

- Activity: Have students find out more about the knights of the Round Table, the Holy Grail, and the Crusades. Discuss the difference between history and legend. Reenact the legend of King Arthur. Divide the class into groups and have each group dramatize a part of the story. Write narration and create costumes.
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Lesson Plan

Student Objectives

Students will understand:

- We learn about people from long ago by reading records, such as diaries, that they left behind.
- In medieval times, only the wealthiest people – the lords, knights, and ladies – were able to read and write.

Materials

- *Times Medieval* video and VCR, or DVD and DVD player
- Colored paper
- Markers
- Glitter glue
- Paper fasteners

Procedures

1. Discuss with students access to education during the Middle Ages, leading them to see that the vast majority of people who lived then were poor, uneducated laborers and that only lords, knights, and their ladies were literate.
2. Luckily, some medieval people who were literate left written records, so we know a lot about life at this time. Explain to the class that they are going to pretend they are medieval lords, knights, and ladies who keep diaries (or journals) so that future generations can read about what their lives are like.
3. Allow students to make up names for themselves as lords, knights, and ladies.
4. Now brainstorm with your class to produce a list of topics that the lords, knights, and ladies would write about in their diaries. Such a list might include the following topics:
 - Their daily lives in their castles – comfort (or lack of comfort), space, lighting, furniture
 - Activities for entertainment
 - Romantic relationships
 - Attacks on the castle by other lords and knights
5. Direct students to write two entries in their diaries and to make up the date for each entry. The two entries can focus on one topic or can cover a variety of topics. Advise students to include as many details as possible in each entry.
6. Give students sheets of colored paper to decorate as front and back covers for the diaries. On the fronts, they should write the names they chose as lords, ladies, and knights. Using markers



and glitter glue, students can decorate the rest of the front and the back cover with signs and symbols they make up to represent their families. Use paper fasteners to hold each diary together.

7. After you have read students' entries, select a few of the most detailed for their writers to read to the class.

Discussion Questions

1. The majority of the people who lived in the Middle Ages were peasants—poor, uneducated laborers who farmed the lord's land and had to give him much of the food. Under the system of feudalism, they belonged to the lord and were not free to leave the land. They were allowed to keep some of the food they grew, and they were protected against attackers by the lord's knights. List the good and the bad aspects of this system and discuss how this system could have been changed to be fairer to the peasants.
2. Discuss how the Crusades helped lead to the end of the Medieval Period, or Dark Ages, and the beginning of the Renaissance. Focus on what items and knowledge the crusaders brought back from the Holy Land.
3. Would you like to live in a castle? What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of living in a castle? Compare castles with modern homes. Describe the "defense" features of the modern home.
4. Discuss how you could improve on the castle using modern technology. How would you improve its defense systems? How would you improve its basic comfort and convenience level?
5. How do the lives of medieval women compare to the lives of modern women? Which jobs and activities are similar? Which jobs and activities are different?

Assessment

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson.

- 3 points: Student diaries included two clearly written, detailed entries; error-free grammar, usage, and mechanics; carefully decorated cover.
- 2 points: Student diaries included two clearly written entries with some details; some errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics; carelessly decorated cover.
- 1 point: Student diary entries not clear or detailed; many errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics; carelessly decorated cover.

Vocabulary

apprenticing

Definition: The act of learning a certain job by practicing with an experienced person in that job.

Context: A woman could gain a foothold in business by apprenticing in her parents' trade or by inheriting a shop from her dead husband.



bailey

Definition: A courtyard within the external wall or between two outer walls of a castle.

Context: Inside all these defenses was the courtyard, called the bailey, some smaller buildings, and the noble's castle.

chivalry

Definition: An attitude of honor, generosity, and courtesy.

Context: As equals, the Knights of the Round Table worked together to perform good deeds, behave with chivalry, aid those less fortunate, and protect the king's realm.

crusades

Definition: Massive treks of hundreds of thousands of European knights and pilgrims to Jerusalem, or the Holy Land, to fight for and win it for the Christians.

Context: Hundreds of thousands of pilgrims and knights trooped to the Mediterranean Sea to fight for their church. These massive treks to Jerusalem were called the Crusades.

feudalism

Definition: A system of government in the Middle Ages in which a lord, or nobleman, owned land and governed and protected the people, or tenants, who lived and farmed there.

Context: This system of government, called feudalism, had a number of positive points. In addition to food, the peasants had the protection of their lord's army and the stability of his laws to solve their disputes.

Gregorian chant

Definition: A rhythmically free liturgical chant of the Roman Catholic Church.

Context: The Gregorian chant endured as the main form of church music throughout the Middle Ages.

indentured

Definition: Bound to work for another for a period of time, usually in exchange for some payment.

Context: Most medieval women were peasants and worked for their fathers or husbands farming the land. They may also have been indentured to a large feudal estate.

jousting

Definition: A tournament in which knights pretended to fight so they could practice and show off their skills.

Context: The knights engaged in this favorite activity, pretending to fight. This event, called jousting, was part of a tournament that a baron or king might host as a celebration.

keep

Definition: A fortress or castle; or the strongest and securest part of a castle.



Context: The castle was called a keep because the noble and his family were kept there.

moat

Definition: A deep and wide trench around the rampart of a fortified place (as a castle) that is usually filled with water.

Context: A trench with water called the moat surrounded many castles. Friendly knights and nobility crossed the moat on a drawbridge.

outer curtain

Definition: A barrier wall surrounding a compound for protection.

Context: In later castles, a double-thick stone wall called the outer curtain surrounded the compound's grounds. Observation and defense towers manned by armed soldiers were built at intervals along the wall.

Renaissance

Definition: 1500-1800 A.D. in Europe. A period of time in Europe, after the Medieval Era, based on a rebirth of intellectual activity, a new way of thinking, and a new emphasis on learning about art, literature, and modern science.

Context: In time the Middle Ages gave way to this rebirth of intellectual activity, and a new era called the Renaissance was born.

Academic Standards

Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)

McREL's Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education addresses 14 content areas. To view the standards and benchmarks, visit <http://www.mcrel.org/>.

This lesson plan addresses the following national standards:

- History – World History: Understands the redefinition of European society and culture from 1000 to 1300 A.D.

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)

NCSS has developed national guidelines for teaching social studies. To become a member of NCSS, or to view the standards online, go to <http://www.socialstudies.org>

This lesson plan addresses the following thematic standards:

- Time, Continuity, and Change
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