



Empires in the Middle Ages

Lesson 2: Lords and Serfs



Chapter 2 “To the Manor Born”

Vocabulary 2.1

Vocabulary for “To the Manor Born”

1. **lord, *n.*** a man in the upper class who ruled over a large area of land (10)
2. **lady, *n.*** a female member of the nobility (10)
3. **privileged, *adj.*** having more advantages, opportunities, or rights than most people (10)
4. **rival, *adj.*** competing (13)
5. **loyal, *adj.*** showing complete faithfulness and support (**loyalty**) (13)
6. **scythe, *n.*** a farming tool with a curved blade and long handle that is used to cut crops such as wheat, oats, rye, and barley (15)

Chapter 2 “To the Manor Born”

The BIG Question

How were the lives of serfs and lords different from each other?

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Chapter 2

To the Manor Born

THE BIG QUESTION
How were the lives of serfs and lords different from one another?

If you lived during the Middle Ages, your life followed one of a few set paths. If you were the child of a king and a queen or a **lord** and a **lady**, you lived a **privileged** life. You had enough food to eat and clothes to wear. You lived in a relatively nice house. You had servants, too. You may have been one of the few who learned to read and write. You even learned to ride a horse. If you were a boy, you learned to become a skilled swordsman. Privileged girls may have learned to embroider, to dance, and to play a musical instrument. Occasionally girls, too, learned to read. As a privileged child, you likely grew up to become a king or a queen, or a lord or a lady, yourself.



Privileged family in the Middle Ages

But most people in the Middle Ages were not privileged. In the early Middle Ages, nearly everyone in Europe worked on the land. Most farmworkers were called serfs. Serfs grew the food and tended to the livestock, or animals, that fed the people. Some had more freedom than others and were called freemen. Serfs were at the bottom of the social order and had the least amount of power.

What are some of the things privileged boys and girls learned to do?

What does the author tell us were the primary responsibilities of serfs?

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Serfs usually spent their entire lives working on a landowner's or lord's estate. In return for the work they did, the lord allowed serfs to use some of the land to grow their own food. The lord lived in his castle or manor house. He owned all the land around his home and often the nearby towns and villages, too. The lord also controlled the lives of most of the people who worked for him.



Serfs worked on the land throughout the year.

Serfs were not educated. They did not learn to read or write. If serfs wanted to travel to a nearby town, they needed permission from the lord. When serfs wanted to marry, the lord had the right to approve or disapprove of the match. When serfs had children, those children usually grew up to work as serfs for the same lord.

What is another name for a castle?

Who do you think had more power and freedom in the Middle Ages – serfs or lords? Why?

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In the Middle Ages, serfs worked on farmland that was divided into strips. The serfs spent about half of their time working for the lord. The rest of the time, they worked on the strips of land where their own crops were grown.

Most serfs lived in small, simple houses in or near a village. Their houses were made from wood and mud. The roofs were thatched, meaning they were made from rushes, or straw. They usually had just one room. Serfs slept on straw beds. Inside each house was a small fireplace for cooking. Smoke from the fire escaped through a hole in the roof.

The lord increased his wealth in many different ways. In addition to working the farmland for the lord, serfs paid taxes to the lord in the form of money, crops, and livestock. Sometimes the lord ran a mill and even charged his serfs a fee to grind their grain into flour.

If crops failed or illness struck, people during the Middle Ages struggled to survive. In times of hardship, the lord did not always come

How did a lord become even richer or wealthier through his serfs?



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to the aid of his serfs. Even when food supplies were low, serfs were not allowed to hunt in the lord's forests. However, to avoid starving, people sometimes hunted illegally. This was called poaching, and serfs who were caught poaching were severely punished.

Some farmworkers were freemen. Freemen were not under the same strict control of the lord. If a serf ran away from his home, and managed to live for a year and a day in a town without being found, he could become a freeman, too.

The Middle Ages was a violent time compared to how we live today. There were frequent wars and uprisings, including rebellions against the king by **rival** nobles. The need for armed protection shaped medieval society. Usually, high-ranking nobles swore their loyalty to the king and lords swore their loyalty to higher-ranking nobles. Freemen and serfs had to be **loyal** to their lord. In exchange for their loyalty, the lord offered his protection. If the lord needed to raise an army, he would require freemen on his estates to serve as foot soldiers.



Why was medieval society organized for war?

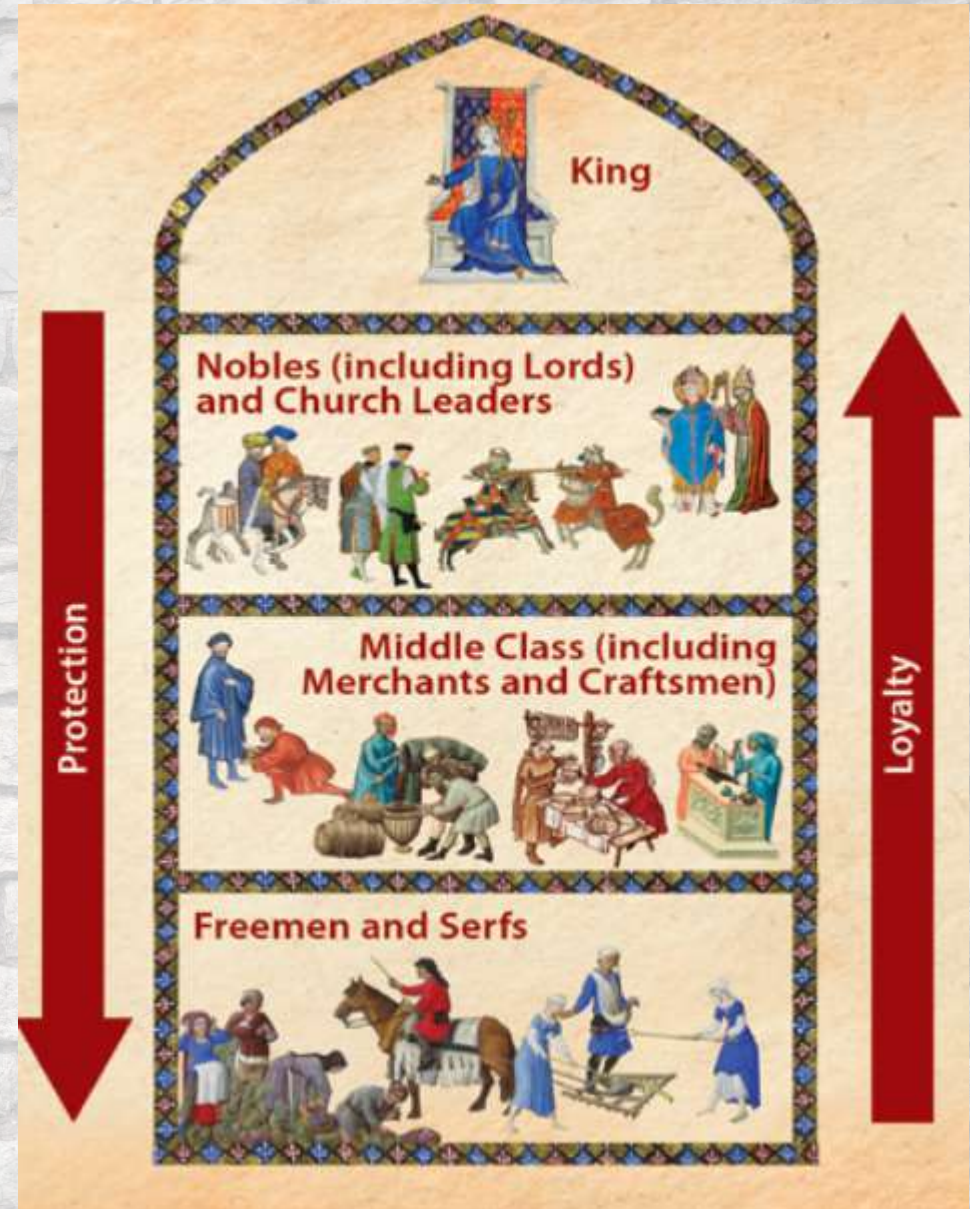
Chapter 2 “To the Manor Born”

Activity Page 2.2

What did lords offer serfs in exchange for their loyalty?

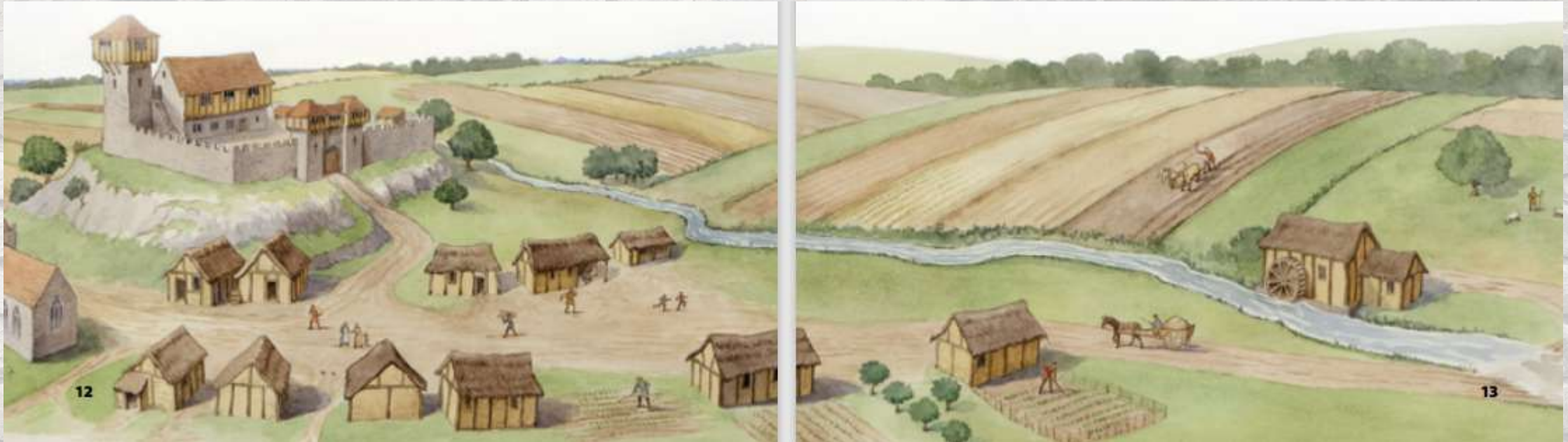
If the lord needed to put together an army for the king, who was required to fight?

Why do you think the lord did not make serfs fight?



Chapter 2 “To the Manor Born”

Look at the image on pages 12 and 13.



What do you think is shown in this image?

Chapter 2 “To the Manor Born”

If You Were a Boy Serf

From an early age, you work a full day. You wake up just before sunrise and go to sleep when it is dark. For breakfast, you have rye bread and water, or perhaps watery ale. Even before the sun is fully risen, and regardless of the



Boy serf plowing fields

weather, you begin your work on the land. In springtime, you are busy plowing and planting seeds. You assist in the delivery of baby lambs and calves. At midday, you walk home for a simple meal of rye bread and maybe a small piece of cheese. After lunch, you return to work, cutting logs for the lord's fire.



Boy serf chasing birds away from crops

In the summer months, you tend to the crops you planted in the spring. You keep the hungry birds and insects away from the growing crops.

Autumn, the time to harvest crops, is perhaps the busiest time of all. You help your mother and sisters pick fruits and berries, which they preserve and store for the winter. Using a simple tool



Boy serf harvesting grain

called a **scythe**, you harvest grain crops such as wheat, oats, rye, and barley. You help store the grain. A good harvest makes everyone, especially the lord, very happy. It means there is food to eat during the winter months. A good harvest is a time of celebration for all.

Nevertheless, you have to get used to having less food to eat in the wintertime, and to feeling hungry and cold more often than not. At times, your parents find it difficult to make ends meet. Even

if ice and snow lay upon the frozen earth, you still have jobs to do.

You have to feed and care for the livestock. You repair fences and barns. All the while, you continue to work on your family's strips of land. Each evening as the sun is setting, you return home quite exhausted. You end your day with a meal called pottage that your mother or sisters have prepared. Pottage is a vegetable stew with grain and a tiny piece of meat or fish in it. After a good night's sleep, you will wake up and do it all again!



Serf family eating a meal together

How did the serfs' jobs change during different seasons of the year?

Chapter 2 “To the Manor Born”

Medieval Musings

1. In the Middle Ages, a kind of food made from grain was used as a plate. What was it?
2. In the Middle Ages, people kept coins in clay pots. The pots were made from a type of clay called *pygg*. Today, many children place coins in a special container, the name of which originates in the Middle Ages. What is the container called?

3. A popular board game that is still played today arrived in Europe from Persia in the 800s. What is the name of that game? (Clue: Make sure you check your answer.)



Wealthy lords and ladies played games like this.

Letter Quest

Stained-glass windows adorned medieval churches. Most people in the Middle Ages could not read and write. Stained-glass windows depicted stories from the Bible and helped to communicate Christian beliefs.

Look closely at this stained-glass window; a letter of the alphabet has been hidden for you to find. When you find it, record this letter on Activity Page 2.3. After you find all the letters in the Letter Quest activities, you will rearrange them to spell a word related to the Middle Ages.



Search for the
hidden letter!
Record the letter on
Activity Page 2.3.

At the end of unit 2,
we will arrange all
the letters to spell a
word related to the
Middle Ages.

Chapter 2 “To the Manor Born”

Discuss the Chapter

Serfs and the lord each did something for the other. What did each promise the other?

Chapter 2 “To the Manor Born”

Discuss the Chapter

Serfs and the lord each did something for the other. What did each promise the other?

- Serfs spent part of their time working for the lord and promised their loyalty.
- The lord provided land for serfs to grow their own food and promised them protection.

Chapter 2 “To the Manor Born”

Discuss the Chapter

Imagine you are traveling through the medieval countryside, and you see a boy about your age. Based on today's reading, what evidence would you use to decide whether the child is a serf or a noble?

Chapter 2 “To the Manor Born”

Discuss the Chapter

Imagine you are traveling through the medieval countryside, and you see a boy about your age. Based on today’s reading, what evidence would you use to decide whether the child is a serf or a noble?

- His clothes would provide a clue.
 - A noble would be wearing nice clothing.
 - A serf would be wearing work clothes.
- What he is doing would be another important clue.
 - A noble boy would be riding a horse, learning how to use a sword, or reading and writing.
 - A serf boy might be working in the fields or the forest, taking care of crops or animals, or walking to and from the fields.

Chapter 2 “To the Manor Born”

Discuss the Chapter

Describe what you would see on a lord's estate during the Middle Ages?

Chapter 2 “To the Manor Born”

Discuss the Chapter

Describe what you would see on a lord's estate during the Middle Ages?

- A large, well-protected manor house
- A small church
- Small serfs' houses
- Fields divided into strips
- Serfs plowing the lord's fields and tending to their own
- Smaller gardens
- Serfs tending to livestock

Chapter 2 “To the Manor Born”

Discuss the Chapter

Why do you think the feudal system existed?

Chapter 2 “To the Manor Born”

Discuss the Chapter

Why do you think the feudal system existed?

- Lords needed people to work for them.
- Serfs needed protection.
- It was a way to obtain food and shelter.

Chapter 2 “To the Manor Born”

Activity Page 2.7

Use complete sentences with capital letters and punctuation!

Write one sentence for each of the four images to describe what the serf might be doing in each image. Refer to the text, “If You Were a Boy Serf,” to find evidence to support your response. Incorporate vocabulary words from the text when possible and use complete sentences.









Word Work - ***Rival***

From the Text

There were frequent wars and uprisings, including rebellions against the king by **rival** nobles.

Definition

Competing

Part of Speech

Adjective

Sentence

The baseball players won their game against a **rival** team.

Word Work - ***Rival***

Synonyms

(Words that have a similar meaning)

Antonyms

(Words that have the opposite meaning)

Language – Grammar

Nouns and Adjectives

Nouns

- Words that name people, places, or things

Language – Grammar

Nouns and Adjectives

Nouns

- Common Nouns name people, places, and things in general
- Proper Nouns begin with capital letters and name specific nouns

Language – Grammar

Nouns and Adjectives

Adjectives

- Describe nouns
- Provide details about color, shape, mood, numbers
- Help you picture the noun in your mind
- Good writers use adjectives to make their writing more interesting!

Language – Grammar

Nouns and Adjectives

Label nouns with **N** and adjectives with **Adj**.

Draw an arrow from the adjective to the noun it describes.

Rich lords lived in large castles.

Language – Grammar

Nouns and Adjectives

Label nouns with **N** and adjectives with **Adj**.

Draw an arrow from the adjective to the noun it describes.

The selfish king did not help his hungry serfs.

Language – Grammar

Nouns and Adjectives

Activity Page 2.4

Nouns and Adjectives

Write *n.* above the nouns and *adj.* above the adjectives. Draw an arrow from each adjective to the noun it describes. The information following each sentence provides a clue about the number of nouns and adjectives you should find in each sentence.

Example: The ^{adj.}old, ^{adj.}wise ^{n.}king speaks to his ^{adj.}young ^{n.}son. (2 nouns; 3 adjectives)

1. Kings gave land to loyal lords. (3 nouns; 1 adjective)
2. People created impressive and inspiring architecture. (2 nouns; 2 adjectives)
3. Jesters entertained rich families. (2 nouns; 1 adjective)
4. Lords ate good food and lived in comfortable homes. (3 nouns; 2 adjectives)
5. Kings were challenged by power-hungry relatives and disloyal friends. (3 nouns; 2 adjectives)
6. Serfs lived their lives on small farms. (3 nouns; 1 adjective)
7. Children kept hungry birds away from growing crops. (3 nouns; 2 adjectives)
8. A good harvest is a joyful time of celebration. (3 nouns; 2 adjectives)
9. Young men tended to cows and pigs. (3 nouns; 1 adjective)
10. Starving serfs hunted in the royal forest. (2 nouns; 2 adjectives)

Language – Morphology

Prefixes ***un*** and ***non***

- Prefixes are a syllable or syllables placed at the beginning of the root word to change the word's meaning.
- ***Un*** and ***non*** both mean “not”.

Language – Morphology

Prefixes ***un*** and ***non***

- Familiar
 - Definition: well-known
 - Part of speech: adjective
 - Servants were familiar with hard work.

Language – Morphology

Prefixes ***un*** and ***non***

- Familiar
 - Definition: well-known
 - Part of speech: adjective
 - Servants were familiar with hard work.
- Unfamiliar
 - Definition: not well-known
 - Part of speech: adjective
 - Royal family members were unfamiliar with hard work.

Language – Morphology

Prefixes ***un*** and ***non***

- Essential
 - Definition: important and necessary
 - Part of speech: adjective
 - Food and water are essential to survival.

Language – Morphology

Prefixes ***un*** and ***non***

- Essential
 - Definition: important and necessary
 - Part of speech: adjective
 - Food and water are essential to survival.
- Nonessential
 - Definition: not important or necessary
 - Part of speech: adjective
 - During a drought, my family and I don't water our lawn or use water for other nonessential things.

Language – Morphology

Prefixes ***un*** and ***non***

- Common/Uncommon
- Equal/Unequal
- Verbal/Nonverbal
- Threatening/Nonthreatening

Language – Morphology

Prefixes **un** and **non**

Activity Page 2.5

un- and **non-**: Prefixes Meaning “not”

Write the correct word to complete each sentence.

uncommon	common	unequal	equal
nonverbal	verbal	nonthreatening	threatening

1. Everyone in our classroom has a(n) _____ goal; we all want to learn new things about the world.
2. Animals love Vern because he speaks to them in a(n) _____ voice and walks up to them very slowly.
3. My baby sister is _____, as she cries to tell us what she needs rather than asking for things.
4. We always make sure to cut the cake into _____ pieces so no one can brag that they received the biggest piece.
5. Sometimes teachers give _____ instructions where they say what to do; other times there are written instructions that we can read ourselves.
6. Kate and Max discovered something _____ in the side of the cliff. It turned out to be a dinosaur bone! Now that is something you don't find every day!
7. “Those skies look _____,” said the farmer, as he pointed to the dark clouds that looked like they would pour rain any second.

Language – Morphology

Prefixes *un* and *non*

Activity Page 2.5

8. Write a sentence using the one word left in the box.

Challenge: Write a sentence using one of your own *un-* and *non-* words.

Language – Morphology

Prefixes *un* and *non*

Activity Page 2.5

8. Write a sentence using the one word left in the box.

Challenge: Write a sentence using one of your own *un-* and *non-* words.

Writing – Taking Notes

Activity Page 2.6

LORDS AND SERFS GRAPHIC ORGANIZER		
	Lords	Serfs
Homes		
Work		
Clothing		
Food		
Amount of Power		