



# Empires in the Middle Ages

Lesson 3: Writing an Informative Paragraph about Lords



# Chapter 2 “To the Manor Born”

## The BIG Question

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

# Chapter 2 “To the Manor Born”

## Chapter 2

### To the Manor Born

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

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.

Look at the sentence “If you lived during the Middle Ages, your life followed one of a few set paths.”

The word **path** has a few different meanings.

How is the word **path** used in this sentence?

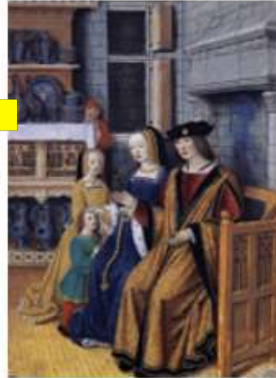
# Chapter 2 “To the Manor Born”

## Chapter 2

### To the Manor Born

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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 words or phrases provide clues to the meaning of **privileged**?

What clues do you get from the images on pages 10-11?

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### To the Manor Born

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in the Middle Ages

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The text says, “In the early Middle Ages, nearly everyone in Europe worked on the land.”

**Nearly everyone** – means almost every person

**Worked on the land** – means that they performed work outside (farming, tending to the animals)

What do you think the author means by “nearly everyone in Europe worked on the land?”

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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.



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 does the word **controlled** mean in this sentence?

How were the lives of lords and serfs different from one another in the Middle Ages?

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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.

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] In times of hardship, the lord did not always come



Based on the entire sentence, what do you think it means when the text says, “If crops failed”?

Which part of the sentence gives you a clue about the meaning of the phrase **crops failed**?

# Chapter 2 “To the Manor Born”

to the aid of his serfs.

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.



The author says, “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.”

The author uses the word **however** in the second sentence to signal a contrast or difference taking place. Taken together, what do these two sentences mean?

# Chapter 2 “To the Manor Born”

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.

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The Middle Ages was a violent time compared to how we live

serfs were their loyalty to higher-ranking nobles. Freemen



In this paragraph, the author describes the structure of society in the Middle Ages. How was medieval society structured?

Why was it structured in this way?

# Chapter 2 “To the Manor Born”

## If You Were a Boy Serf

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
For breakfast, you have rye bread and water, or perhaps watery ale. Even before the sun is fully risen, and regardless of the 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



Boy serf plowing fields

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

What did working a full day mean for a boy serf?

Based on what you read in the text, what season is shown in the bottom image? How do you know?

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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.

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

The word **nevertheless** is used as a signal that, despite what was just described, something will happen.

Taken together, what do these two sentences mean?

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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.

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

When the author says, “Your parents find it difficult to make ends meet,” they are using an idiom.

An idiom is a phrase whose meaning is different from the literal meaning of the words used in the phrase.

This phrase means they don't always have enough money or food on which to live.

# Chapter 2 “To the Manor Born”

## Discuss the Chapter

Contrast the lives of serfs and lords.

# Chapter 2 “To the Manor Born”

## Discuss the Chapter

Contrast the lives of serfs and lords.

- Lords were privileged and had more power than serfs.
- Lords controlled their land, or manor, and those who lived in it, as well as surrounding villages and those who lived in them.
- Lords allowed serfs to grow their own crops in return for growing crops for the lord and his family.
- Lords received taxes from serfs and offered them protection.
- Most people in the Middle Ages were serfs.
- Serfs worked and lived on land owned by the lord had little power.
- Serfs lived difficult lives and endured hard daily work growing crops and tending to livestock.

# Word Work - *Loyal*

## From the Text

“Freemen and serfs had to be **loyal** to their lord.”

## Definition

Showing complete faithfulness and support

## Part of Speech

Adjective

## Sentence

Even when Charlotte made new friends at school, she remained **loyal** to her best friend, Olivia.

# Writing – Informative Paragraph- *Lords*

ELEMENTS OF AN INFORMATIVE PARAGRAPH POSTER	
<b>Elements of an Informative Paragraph:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• topic sentence (introduces what you will describe)</li><li>• two or three detail sentences (uses five senses/sensory details and vivid language)</li><li>• concluding sentence (emphasizes the importance of topic from topic sentence)</li></ul>	
<b>A good topic sentence states the main point of your paragraph.</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• specific subject</li><li>• specific attitude or feeling about the topic/why it is important enough to write about</li></ul>	
<b>Good Detail Sentences Include:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• sensory details: use "showing sentences" not "telling sentences"</li><li>• vivid language/picture in mind</li><li>• setting of topic/people's feelings toward topic</li></ul>	
<b>A Good Concluding Sentence:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• retells topic sentence in a different way</li><li>• leaves reader with a BAM/zinger/something memorable</li></ul>	

# Writing – Topic Sentence

A good topic sentence states the main idea of the paragraph.

- In Europe in the Middle Ages, a lord was a powerful member of society.
- During the Middle Ages, lords had most of the money and power.
- During the Middle Ages, a lord controlled the land and the people who worked on it.

# Writing – Detail Sentences

- There are 5 categories on the graphic organizer. Pick the top 3 most interesting categories – the ones you have the most information about – to transform into detail sentences.
- Your notes on the graphic organizer are paraphrased fragments. Now you must transform them into sentences!
- A sentence needs a subject (who or what) and a predicate (what the subject is doing).

# Writing – Transition Words

Transition words and phrases are helpful for making the sentences sound good together in a paragraph.

- In addition,
- Also,
- For example,

# Writing – Concluding Sentence

A concluding sentence retells the topic sentence in a different way.

It should be something that makes the reader remember the topic of the paragraph.

- That is why Lords were the most powerful members of medieval society.
- As you can see, Lords were more powerful than serfs.
- To sum it up, Lords had the right to control everything on the manor, including the serfs' lives.