

## The Middle Ages

The common people were peasants, and serfs. There was a difference between a peasant and a serf.

craftsmen	assigned	buy	stayed	permission	slaves
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**Serfs were bound to the manor.** They were not \_\_\_\_\_. These people could not be bought and sold. Serfs could \_\_\_\_\_ their freedom, but where would they get the money? Serfs could not leave the manor without \_\_\_\_\_. If they did not work, they were punished. If the manor land was sold or reassigned to a new owner, the serfs \_\_\_\_\_ with the land. Serfs had many jobs on the manor including \_\_\_\_\_, bakers, farmers, and tax collectors - serfs did all kinds of jobs. Their job was \_\_\_\_\_. They had to do the job they were assigned to do.

**Peasants were free to leave if they wished,** but where would they go? War was everywhere. Peasants worked the land and made the goods in exchange for protection. They might own their own business or have room enough for garden of their own. Other than that, their life was just like a serf's life. A few peasants escaped the hard work on the farm by joining the church. But most lived and died on the manor where they were born.

**Taxes:** Everyone had to pay taxes to the lord. There was a payment due on every service they received. To pay the crop tax, some crops went to the lord, and some they kept. To pay the bread tax, some bread they made went to the lord, and some they kept. To pay the coat tax, some of the warm coats they made went to the lord, and some they kept. All peasants had to set aside a certain number of days each year to work on the roads or on the lord's home or on whatever else needed doing. Everything was paid in barter. Coinage or money did not exist on the manor.

**Church Festivals:** The only time commoners had a chance to relax and enjoy each other's company was at a church festival. Festivals offered stage plays, which were religious in nature, along with archery contests, wrestling, dancing, and singing. Often there were jugglers and magicians. Festivals were held often. Payment for the festivals was the responsibility of the lord of the manor. The lord paid for the festivals by giving the church food and clothing the peasants had made.

**Power of the Priests:** People believed that the only way to get to Heaven was to follow the teachings in the Bible. The common people could not read or write. The village priest read to them from the Bible and told them how to behave. The

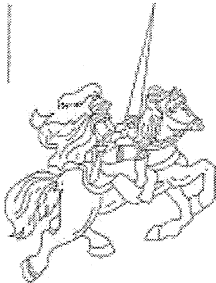
priest told them who they must marry and when. You had to do everything the priest said if you wanted to get to heaven.

**Feudal Obligations:** In spite of the hardships of their lives, peasants and serfs were mostly content with their lot. For one thing, they knew no other life. For another, they knew their work kept everyone on the manor fed and comfortable, including themselves.

**Tournaments** were public contests of skill between knights. Anyone could enter a tournament if they had armor, a horse, a sword, and a shield. You could make at tournaments by winning prizes.

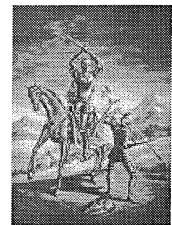
Wooden stands were build to seat the nobles who came to the event. Stands were decorated with colorful pennants. There were even some tents put up for more wealthy peasants. Anyone could attend a tournament, including women and children.

**Activities at the tournaments** included kickboxing and many forms of fighting. Two favorites were consistently the joust and the melees. They were both rough sports. Many knights died. Many horses bolted in panic. Some ran into the audience and killed onlookers. Yet still, the tournaments were a most popular form of entertainment in the Middle Ages.



**The Joust:** The joust was a form of combat between two knights. A low wooden fence separated the knights. The two competing knights started on horseback, holding long sharp lances. A lance was a long pole with a sharpened end. The two knights rode towards each other, with their lances up and ready, each on their own side of the fence. The goal was to knock your opponent off his horse. This was pretty hard to do. Saddles had a back piece that rose up about a foot. This was designed to help a knight keep his seat in battle, and it served the same purpose at the joust.

**The Melee:** The melee was a team sport. Each team of knights had colored flags on their backs. Each side tried to knock their opponents flags off using clubs and blunt swords.



It is no wonder that many knights died during the tournaments. These were rough sports indeed. The church tried to stop tournaments because they were too violent. They never succeeded. Interest in tournaments began to fade with the widespread introduction of guns.