

Facts about Village Life in The Medieval Ages

In The Middle Ages people were busy:

- The Village was the central place where people lived, worked, socialized, married, attended festivals and church, gave birth to and eventually died. Villagers rarely ever ventured beyond its boundaries.
- People depended on the village for protection.
- Villagers wore simple dress and lived on a meager diet.
- Villagers were busy, living and working mostly outdoors.
- Villagers mostly worked the land, trying to grow enough food to survive another year. People in Medieval villages were almost entirely farmers.
- Some villages were temporary. The society would move on if the land proved infertile or weather made life too difficult.
- Every village had a Lord, even if he didn't make it his permanent residence. After the 1100's, castles often dominated village landscapes.
- Some villages continued to exist for centuries.

the Village People

Peasants, Serfs and Farmers

Peasants were the poorest people in the medieval era and lived primarily in the country. Serfs were the poorest of the peasant class, and were a type of slave. Lords owned the serfs who lived on their lands. In exchange for a place to live, serfs worked the land to grow crops for themselves and their lord. In addition, serfs were expected to work the farms for the lord and pay rent.

Everyday peasants could be educated and marry if they could afford it. Serfs, however, could do neither and were not permitted to relocate without the lord's approval.

Farmers were a bit better off than peasants, as some owned their own farms. Most worked the farm lands themselves or with the aid of peasants and serfs.

Farmers and peasants lived in cottages. They built their homes using wood, reeds, twigs, mud and straw. The roofs were thatched, made of bundles of reeds. The inside walls were mostly made of wattle and daub (twigs weaved and coated with mud and straw to make a hard, plaster-like surface) to keep out drafts. Villagers often brought their animals into their homes to protect them.

Carpenters

Carpenters were highly skilled and were elite tradesmen. One had to gain the knowledge of math, woodworking and the use of tools so it was necessary to join a guild as an apprentice and learn the craft to become a carpenter.

Kings and nobles used the finest carpenters and kept them employed on their staff as specialists. After all, castles and estates needed to be decoratively furnished to show their great prestige and status. A master carpenter was always in demand and could earn high wages.

Metalsmiths

The metalsmith, sometimes called blacksmith, had to first make his tools before he could make metal parts such as horseshoes, nails and door hinges. A blacksmith was named because he was a 'smith' who worked in the "black" metal, namely iron. The "white" metals were tin, silver or gold.

It could take a smith as much as a year to make a full suit of armour for a Knight. If everything didn't fit just right, it could be dangerous.

The Medieval Blacksmith made a huge variety of items and objects which included:

- Medieval Weapons including swords, daggers, lances, arrow heads etc.
- Siege Weapons
- Medieval Armor and shields

◆Tools
◆◆◆◆◆Nails
◆◆◆◆◆Church and Castle Doors - hinges, locks and keys
◆◆◆◆◆Instruments of torture and chains
◆◆◆◆◆Household objects including knives, light fittings, pokers etc.
◆◆◆◆◆Ornaments, Jewelry & Decorative Objects

Classroom discussion

1. What kind of job would you like to do if you were in Medieval times?

2. Why is life better and easier for us today? Start a comparison between now and then.

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