**FEUDAL LIFE**

Government in Europe during the middle ages was based around the feudal system. Small communities were formed around the local lord and the manor. The lord owned the land and everything in it. He would keep the peasants safe in return for their service. The lord, in return, would provide the king with soldiers or taxes.

**Service for Land**

Under the feudal system, land was granted to people for service. The king granting land to a baron for soldiers and the barons gave away land all the way down to a peasant getting land to grow crops.

**The Manor**

The center of life in the Middle Ages was the manor. The manor was run by the local lord. He lived in a large house or castle where people would gather for celebrations or for protection if they were attacked. A small village would form around the castle which would include the local church. Farms would then spread out from there which would be worked by the peasants.

**Hierarchy of Rulers**

**King** - The top leader in the land was the king. The king could not control all of the land by himself, so he divided it up among the Barons. In return, the Barons pledged their loyalty and soldiers to the king. When a king died, his firstborn son would inherit the throne. When one family stayed in power for a long time, this was called a dynasty.

**Baron** - Barons ruled large areas of land called fiefs. They reported directly to the king and were very powerful. They divided up their land among Lords who ran individual manors. Their job was to maintain an army that was at the king's service.

**Lord -** The lords ran the local manors. The lords owned everything on their land including the peasants, crops, and village.

**Peasants or Serfs -** Most of the people living in the Middle Ages were peasants. They had a hard rough life. Some peasants were considered free and could own their own businesses like carpenters, bakers, and blacksmiths. Others were more like slaves. They owned nothing and were pledged to their local lord. They worked long days, 6 days a week, and often barely had enough food to survive.

**Fun Facts about the Middle Age Feudal System**

•Around 90 percent of the people worked the land as peasants

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•Peasants worked hard and died young. Most were dead before 30 years old.

•The kings believed they were given the right to rule by God.

•Lords and Barons swore oaths to their kings.

•The Lord held absolute power over the fief or manor including holding court and deciding punishments for crimes.

**DAILY LIFE IN FEUDAL SOCIETY**

**Life in the Country**

Most people lived in the country and worked as farmers. A local lord lived in a large house called a manor or a castle. Local peasants would work the land for the lord. The peasants worked hard all year long. They grew crops such as barley, wheat, and oats. They also had gardens where they grew vegetables and fruits. They also sometimes had a few animals such as chickens for eggs and cows for milk.

**Life in the City**

City life was very different from country life, but it wasn't much easier. The cities were crowded and dirty. A lot of people worked as craftsmen. Young boys would serve as apprentices for seven years learning a craft. Other jobs in the city included servants, merchants, bakers, doctors, and lawyers.

**What were their homes like?**

Although we often think of pictures of castles when we think of the Middle Ages, most people lived in small one or two room homes. These homes were very crowded and usually everyone slept in the same room. In the country, the family animals, such as a cow, may also live inside the home. The home was usually dark, smoky from the fire, and uncomfortable.

**What did they eat?**

Peasants did not have a lot of variety in their food. They mostly ate bread and stew. The stew would have beans, dried peas, cabbage, and other vegetables sometimes flavored with a bit of meat or bones. Other foods like meat, cheese, and eggs were usually saved for special occasions. Since they didn't have a way to keep their meat cold, they would eat it fresh. Leftover meat was smoked or salted to preserve it. The nobles ate a wider variety of food including meats and sweet puddings.

**Did they go to school?**

Few people attended school. Most peasants learned their job from their parents. Some children learned a craft through apprenticeship. Wealthy children often learned through tutors. They would go to live in the castle of another lord where they would work for the lord, learning about how a large manor was run.

There were some schools run by the church. Here students would learn to read and write Latin. The first universities also began during the Middle Ages. University students would study a wide range of subjects including reading, writing, logic, math, music, astronomy, and public speaking.

**Interesting Facts about Daily Life in the Middle Ages**

•The bread eaten by people of the Middle Ages was gritty from the millstones used to grind the grain. This caused the people's teeth wear down quickly.

•Peasants were not allowed to hunt on the lord's land. Punishment for killing a deer was death.

•Medicine was not safe. Sometimes doctors would "bleed" people by putting leeches on their skin.

•Marriages were often arranged, especially for nobles. Noble girls often married at 12 years old and boys at 14.

**FEUDAL LIFE**

Please answer these questions

1. How did people acquire land in these times?

2. What two reasons would cause the people to gather at the lord’s manor?

a.

b.

3. Why did Kings have to divide up their land?

4. What happened when the king died?

5. What is a “fief?”

6. The word “hierarchy” means “a system or organization in which people or groups are ranked one above the other according to status or authority.”

 Describe the hierarchy of the middle ages (from the top down)

7. What was life like as a peasant?

**DAILY LIFE IN FEUDAL SOCIETY**

Please answer these questions

1. What kind of crops were grown on the manor?

2. What kind of animals did they keep there?

3. What is an “apprentice?”

4. Describe what cities were like in a few words.

5. Describe what homes looked like in a few words.

6. What kind of things did they eat?

7. Since there were few schools, how did most people learn?

8. What did people who went to schools run by the church learn?