

Medieval Days





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Features



WORD BUILDER



Where does the word *medieval* come from? What does it mean? Turn to page 5 to find out.

FAST FACTS



When and where did the first universities begin? Find out on page 17.

IN FOCUS



Turn to page 18 to uncover medical mysteries in **Medieval Medicine**.

TRY THIS!

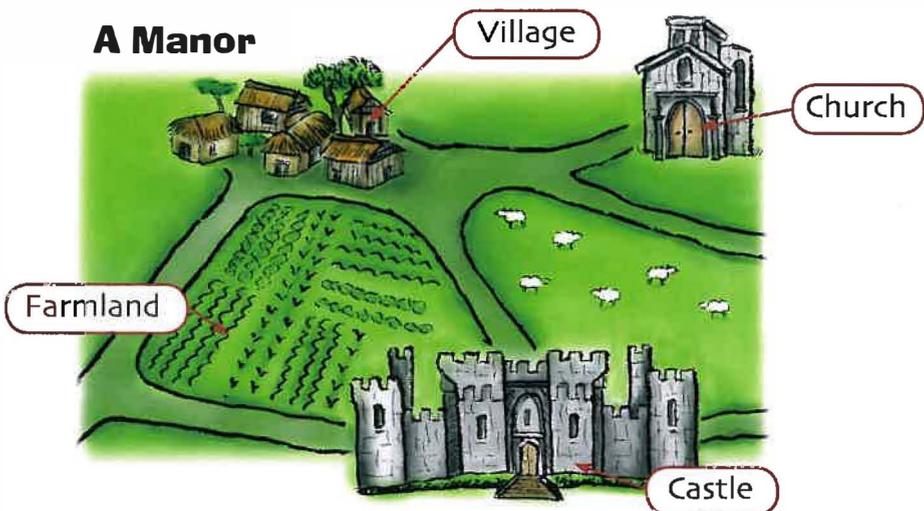


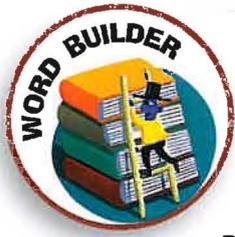
Follow the steps to make your own medieval masterpiece in **Build Your Own Castle** on page 26.

Life in the Middle Ages

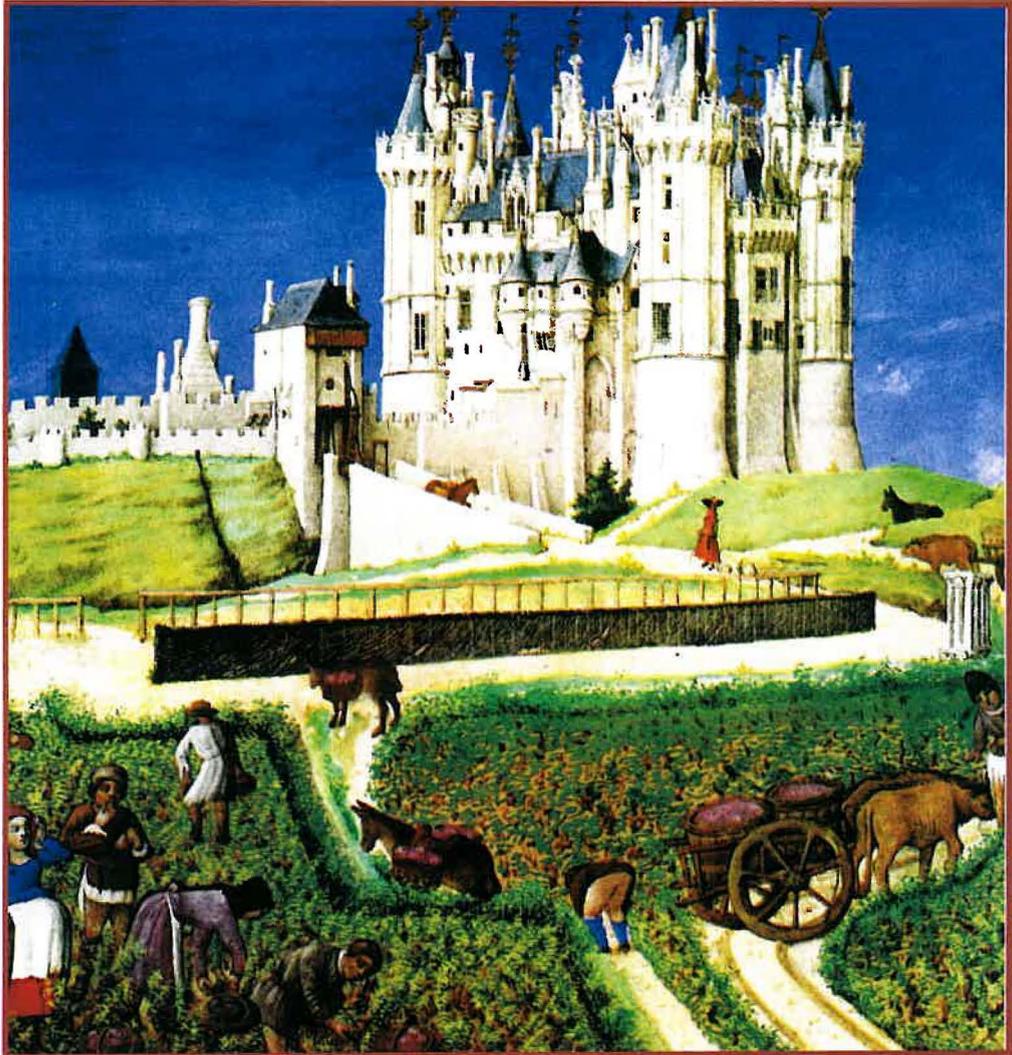
When we think of the medieval days, or **Middle Ages**, we may think of knights in shining armour, **tournaments** and castles. However, life in the Middle Ages was very difficult for most people.

Medieval life centred around control of land. A powerful lord ruled an area of land. His knights fought to keep it safe from attackers. Working people called peasants farmed the land for the lord. In return the lord protected the peasants. Most people lived on a **manor** which included a castle for the lord and lady, a church, the village or town and farmland.





The word *medieval* comes from two Latin words—*medium* which means “middle” and *ævuum* which means “age”.



Lords and Ladies

Lords and ladies lived in large manor houses or castles. A lord was responsible for managing his land, collecting taxes from the peasants and keeping law and order. Lords were protected by the king and queen. In return each lord kept an army of knights who would fight for the king. A lord often owned several castles, and he would take turns staying at each one. A large group of his followers and servants travelled with him.



When the lord was away from home his wife, the lady, would be in charge. Ladies were trained how to spin, weave, sew and rule the household servants.





Knights and Armour

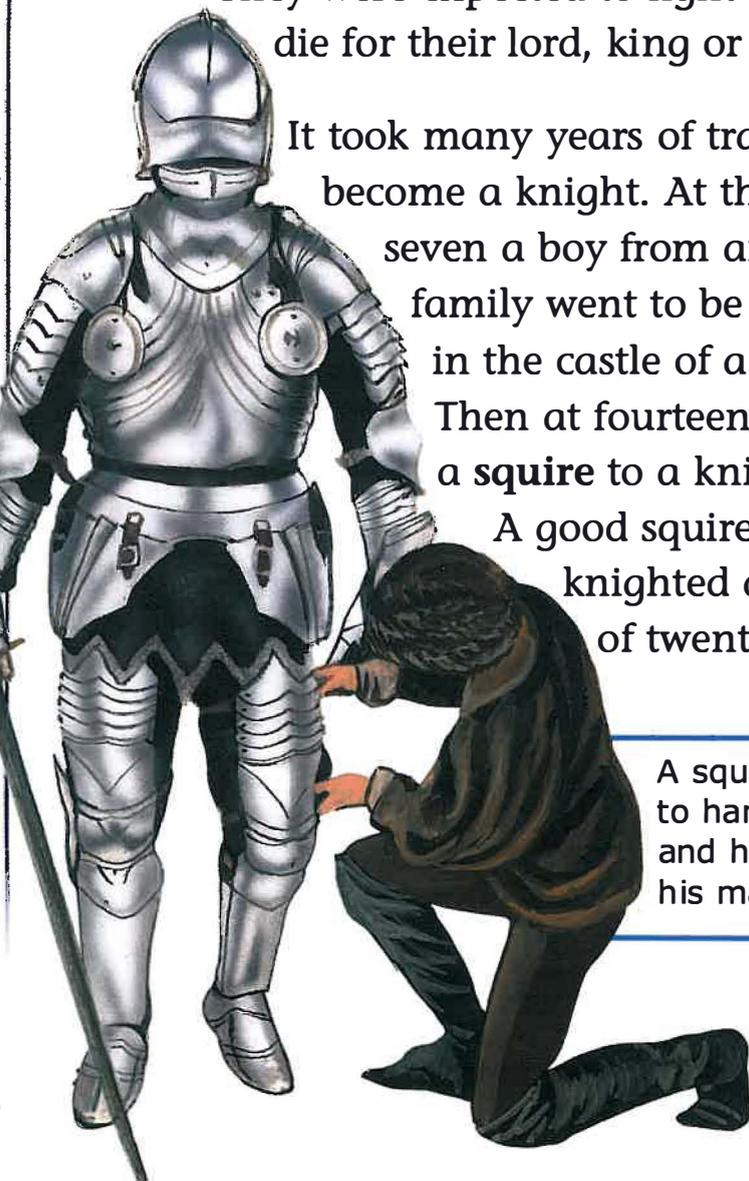
In times of war lords depended on their knights to protect them. The knights received land in exchange for their service.

They were expected to fight and maybe die for their lord, king or country.

It took many years of training to become a knight. At the age of seven a boy from an important family went to be a **page** in the castle of a great lord. Then at fourteen he became a **squire** to a knight.

A good squire would be knighted at the age of twenty-one.

A squire learned how to handle weapons and how to look after his master's armour.



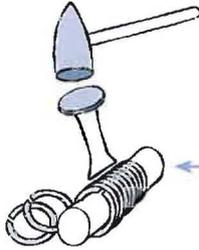


Chain-Mail Armour

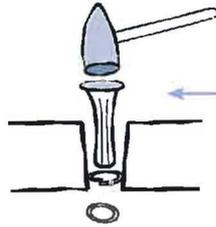
During the 1200s knights wore chain mail for protection from arrows and swords. Later plate armour became popular. Plate armour gave better protection against new weapons, but it was very expensive and very heavy to wear!



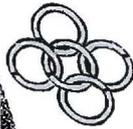
- 1 Wire is wound around a metal bar to make a coil.



- 2 Each circle of the coil is chopped off the bar to make a link.



- 3 The links are forced through a narrow space so they overlap at the ends.



- 4 Other links are threaded through the first link and hammered closed. Slowly the chain mail comes together.

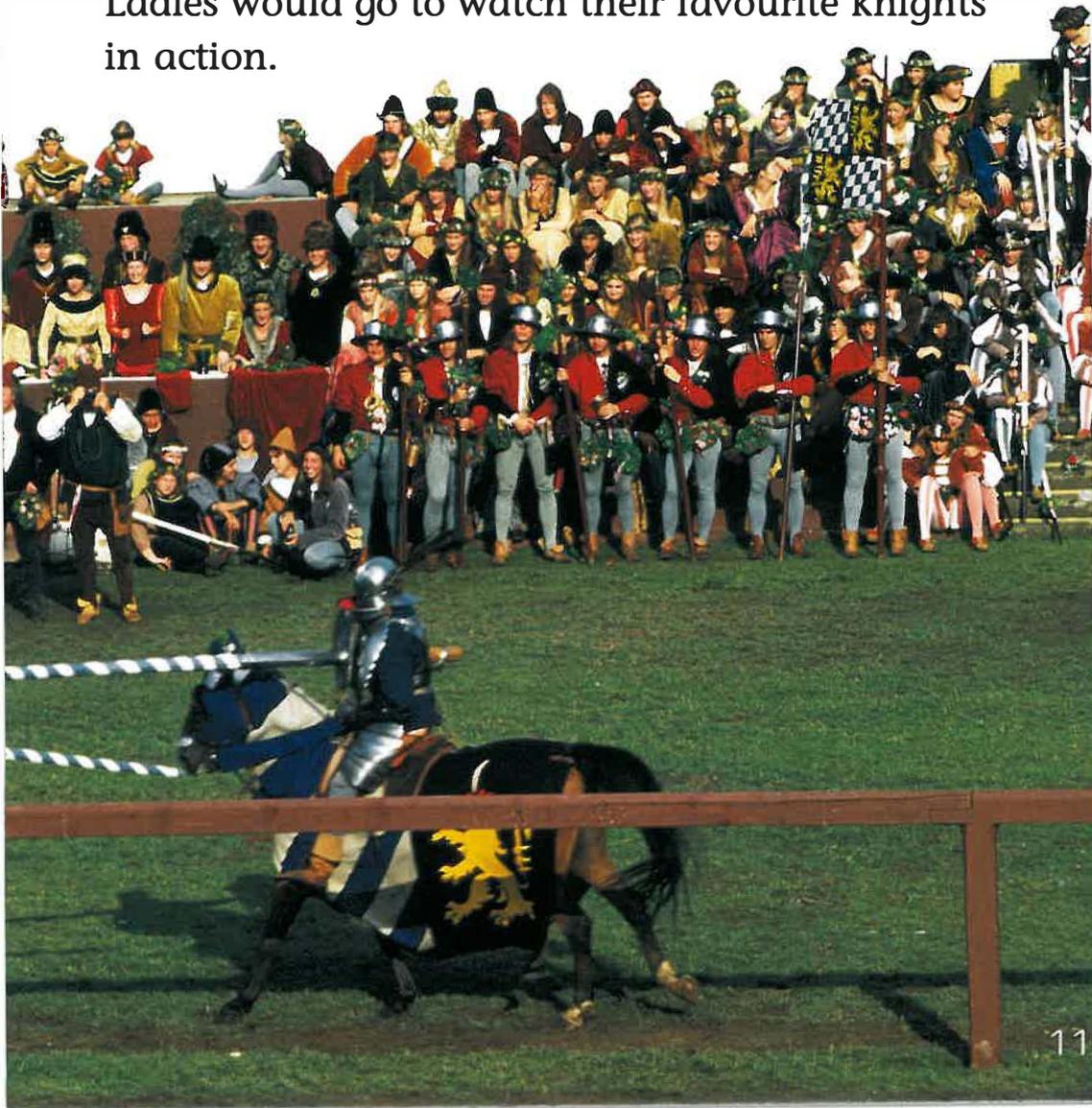


The Art of Jousting

In times of peace knights practised their skills in jousts and tournaments. In a tournament two teams of knights fought a pretend battle. Sharp weapons and battle armour were used at first, but later knights started to use blunt weapons instead.

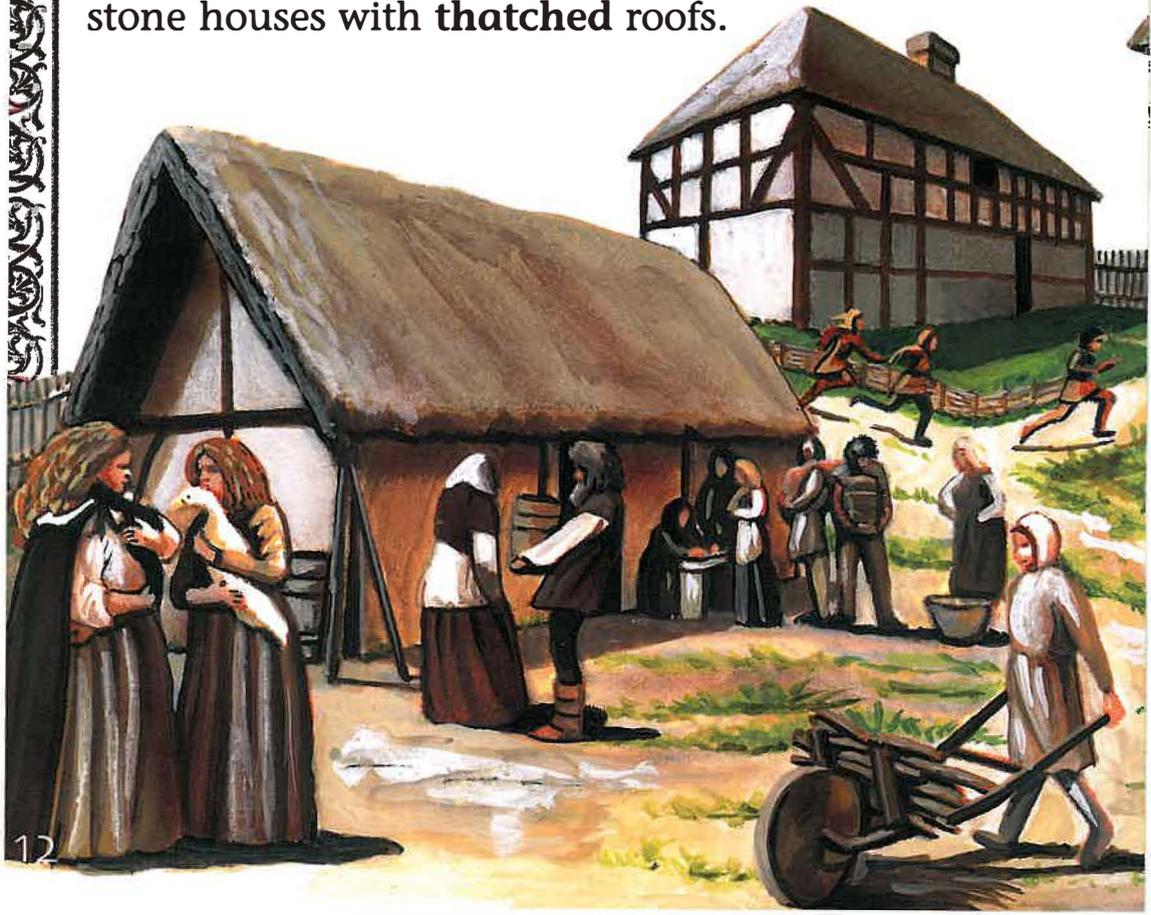


Around the same time jousting became part of tournaments. In a joust two knights on horseback charged towards each other and tried to knock one another to the ground by using a lance. Tournaments were popular in the Middle Ages. Ladies would go to watch their favourite knights in action.



Life in the Country

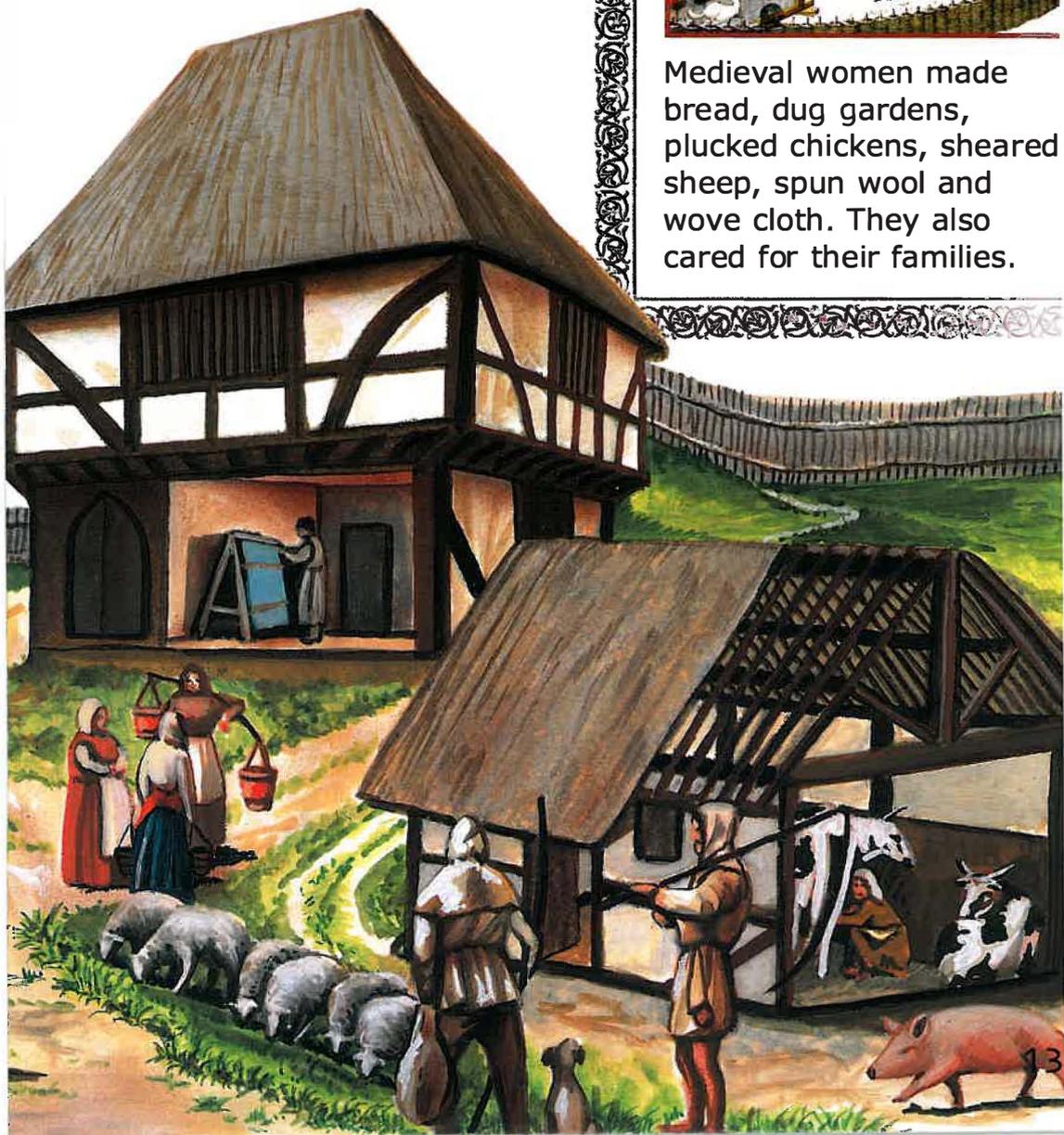
Most people in medieval days made their living by farming the land. Nearly all work was done by hand. The peasants had to work from dawn to dusk. Men, women and sometimes children worked in the fields ploughing, planting, harvesting, cutting hay to feed cattle and horses and picking fruit. Peasants usually lived in small wooden or stone houses with **thatched** roofs.



Often one room of the house was used for eating and sleeping. The other room was used as a barn for the family's cattle.

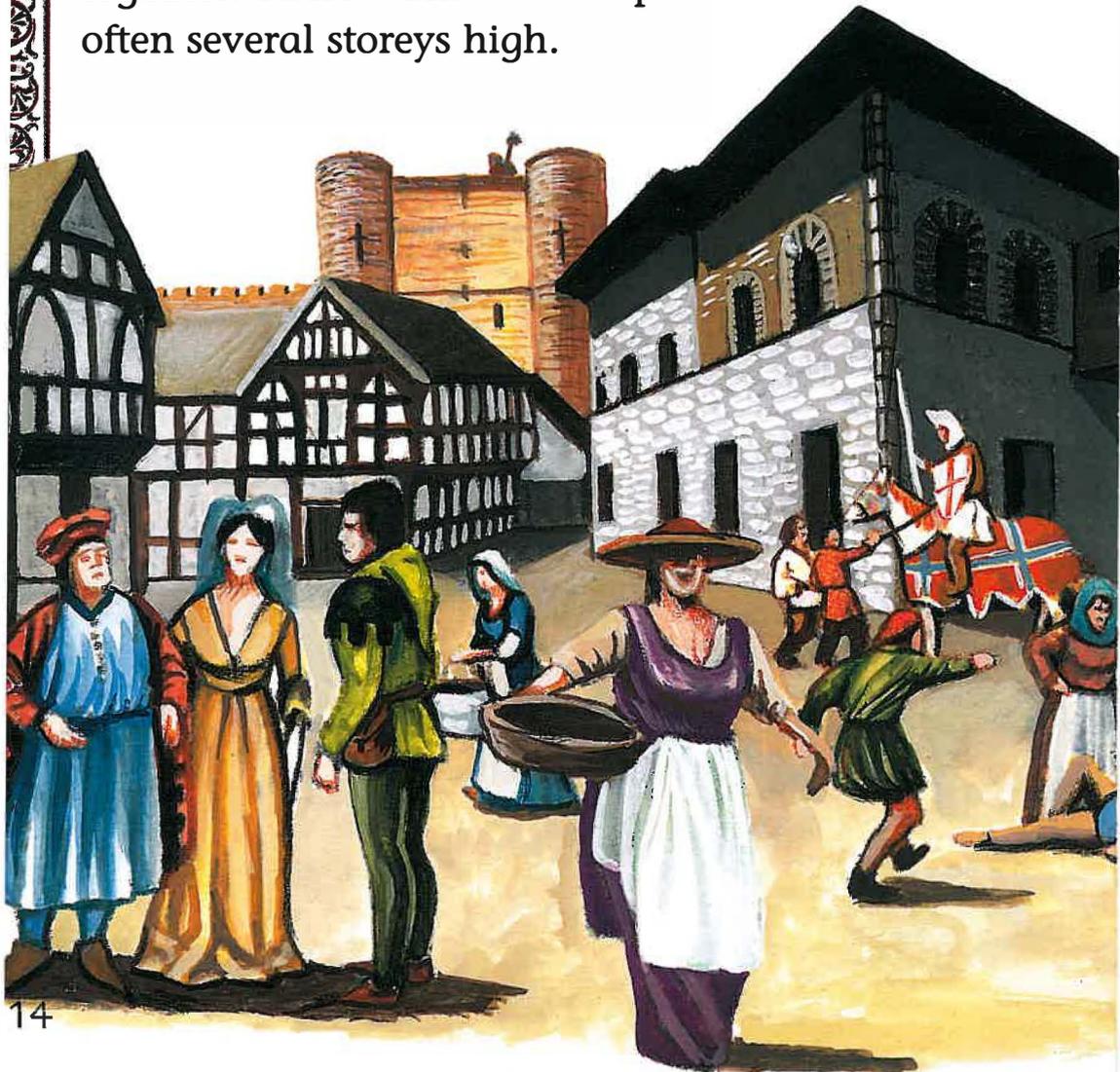


Medieval women made bread, dug gardens, plucked chickens, sheared sheep, spun wool and wove cloth. They also cared for their families.



Life in the Towns

Medieval towns were often built near a castle or church. Walls surrounded the town and soldiers guarded the walls from attackers. Inside the walls houses were crowded together. There wasn't much space so houses were often several storeys high.



Medieval towns were crowded and dirty. People threw their rubbish onto the narrow streets. There was no clean running water and streets often flooded. Medieval towns were dark and dangerous. People lit their homes with candles and carried lanterns and torches at night.



A person who stole food or a small amount of money was likely to spend time locked in the town stocks. People walking in the street sometimes threw eggs or vegetables at the prisoners!



Centres of Learning

Very few people could read or write in medieval days. Those who could were often monks living in **monasteries** or nuns living in **convents**. A monastery or convent could have several hundred people living in it. Monks and nuns led quiet lives studying and working.

Monasteries and convents were very important to the people living around them. These places often had a hospital, guest houses for travellers and schools. Monasteries and convents were safe places where people knew they would be looked after.



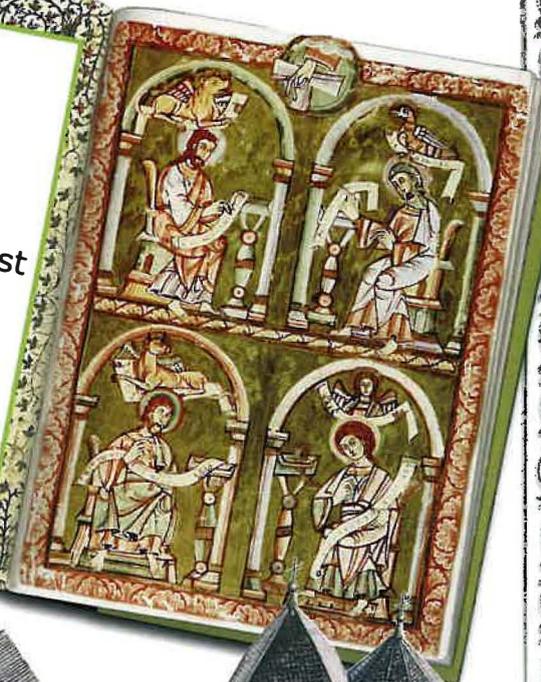
Herbs grown in the monastery garden were used to make medicines.



FAST FACTS

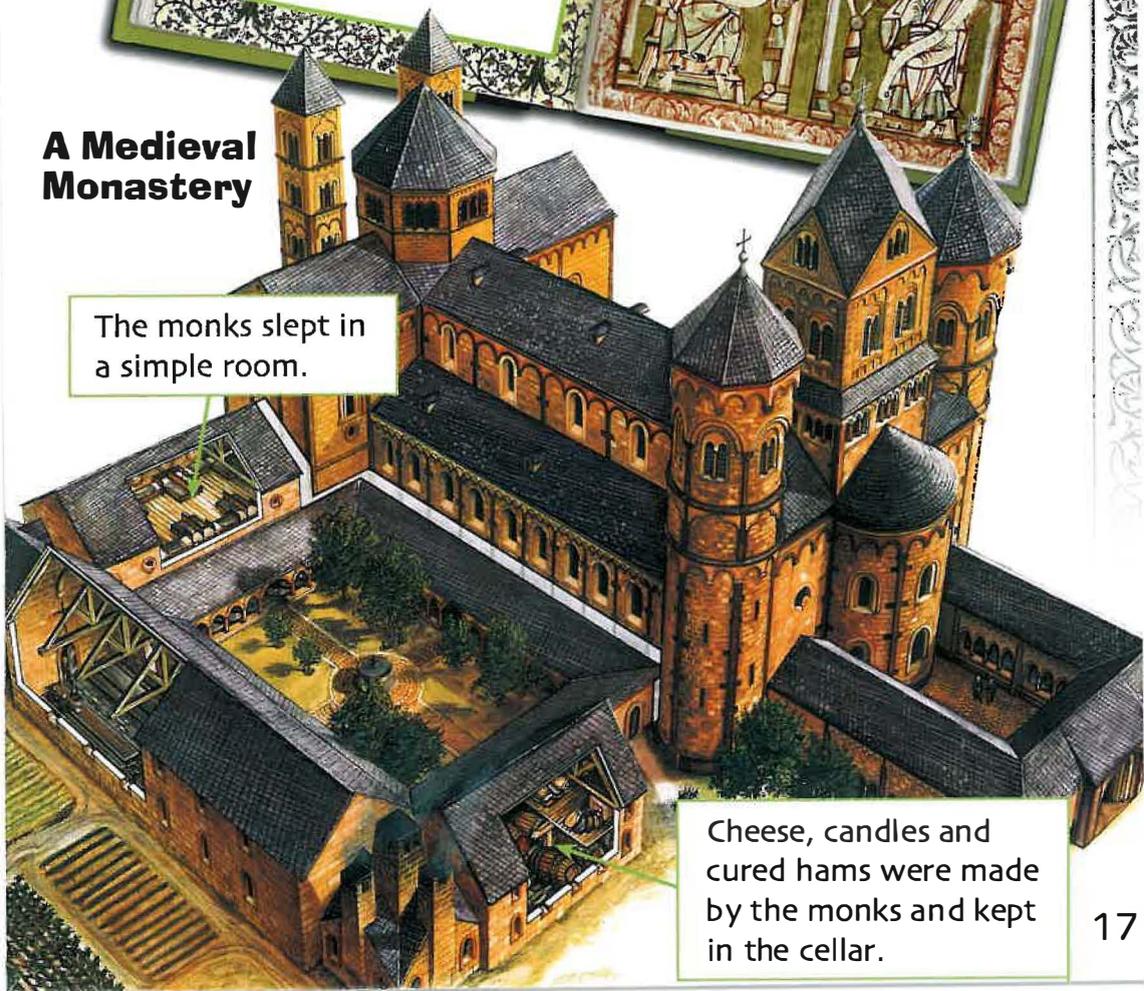


The first universities began in Europe during the Middle Ages. However, most young people never went to school. Parents taught their children the skills they needed to earn a living.



A Medieval Monastery

The monks slept in a simple room.



Cheese, candles and cured hams were made by the monks and kept in the cellar.

Medieval Medicine

In medieval days many people died from diseases such as plague, leprosy or smallpox. In those days doctors did not have modern medicines. They used herbs to treat their patients as best they could.

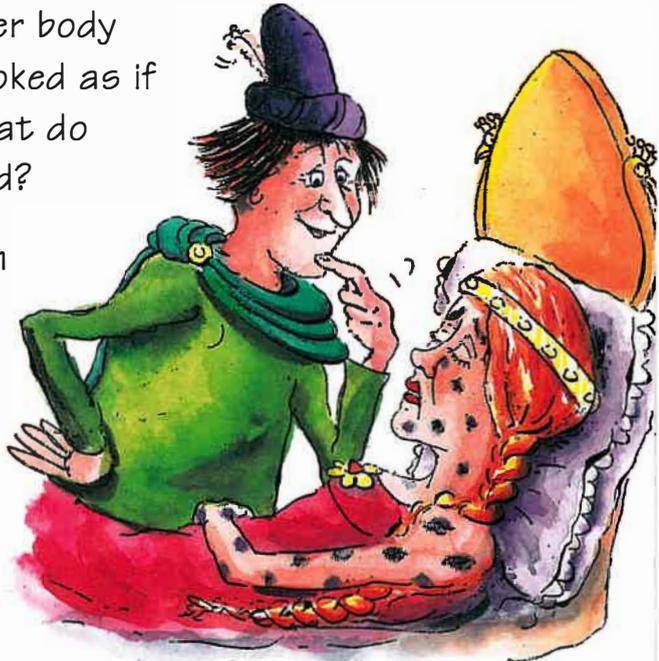
What Was the Treatment?

(You can check your answers on pages 28–29.)

First Patient:

This patient had black and blue blotches all over her body and was very sick. It looked as if she had the plague. What do you think the doctor did?

- A. spread egg whites on the patient's skin
- B. gave the patient a herb treacle
- C. wrapped the patient in bandages and shaved her hair





Second Patient:

The second patient had signs of leprosy—sores, bent fingers and weak muscles. What do you think the doctor did?

- A. gave the patient some bells and sent him out of town
- B. cut off the patient's arms
- C. put yoghurt on the patient

Third Patient:

The last patient had chills, a fever, a headache and pimple-like spots. He had smallpox. What do you think the doctor did?

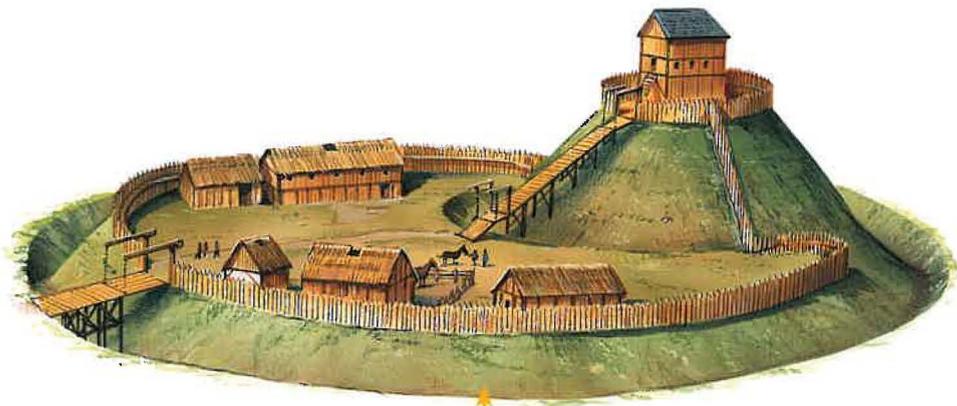
- A. sprinkled perfume around the room
- B. fed the patient chicken soup
- C. wrapped the patient in red cloth



At Home in a Castle

During the Middle Ages people were often at war. Strong castles were very important. A castle was not only the home of a king and queen or lord and lady. It was also a safe place for villagers during times of war.

Many castles were built on a hill or cliff. This made them hard to attack. The first castles were built of wood. As weapons changed castles changed too. Later castles had thick stone walls to keep enemies out. Some castle walls were up to 10 metres thick!



An early wooden castle

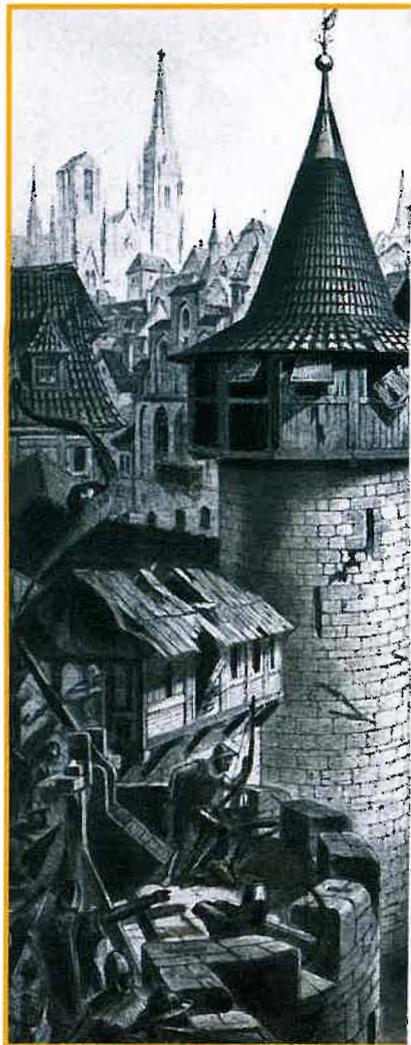
- 1 A king or lord held banquets in the Great Hall.
- 2 The drawbridge to the gatehouse could be closed in times of war.
- 3 Arrows could be shot through slim openings called arrow loops.
- 4 Royal bedrooms were on several floors of the owner's **turret**.
- 5 Treasure was hidden in a cellar. This could be reached through a trapdoor in the floor.
- 6 Soldiers guarded the castle from behind the battlements.



Under Attack!

When an enemy army attacked a castle the drawbridge was closed. Soldiers hid behind battlements. They shot arrows at the enemy. The enemy often used battering rams to try breaking through the castle walls.

One of the best ways to attack a castle was to stop all food and water from going in. Sometimes the people inside had to live for months on food they had stored.



1

Siege tower:
a tower with
a drawbridge.
Soldiers climbed
the tower and
scrambled over
castle walls.





2

Battering ram:
a thick log used
to break down
castle walls



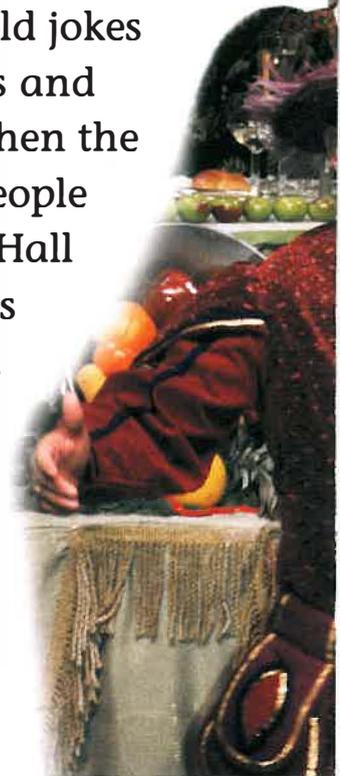
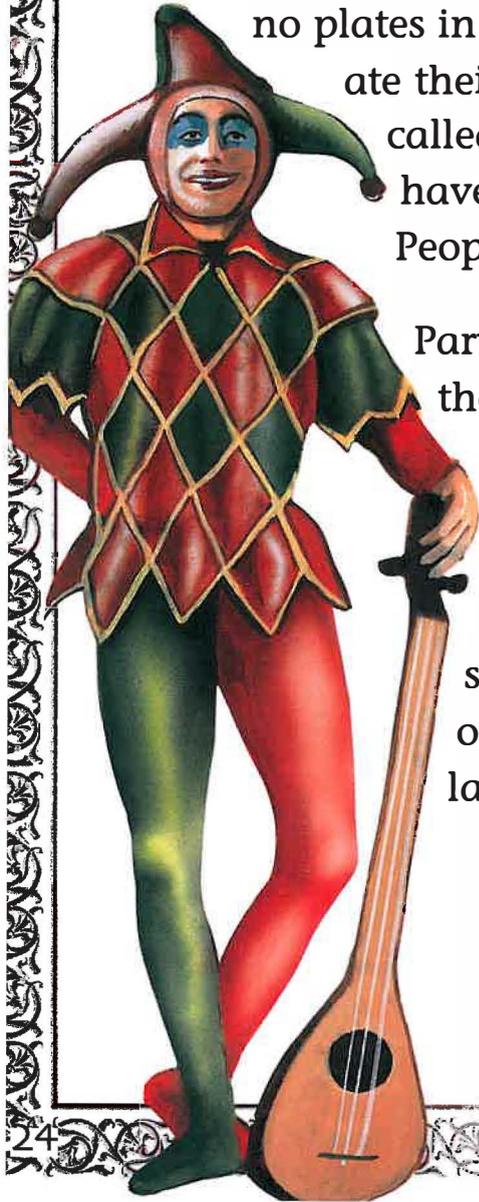
3

Trebuchet:
a machine used to
throw rocks at or
over castle walls

Party Time

Most castles had a large room called the Great Hall. This is where the important people sat at long tables to eat. They had no plates in the Middle Ages so people ate their food off pieces of stale bread called trenchers. They didn't have forks or spoons either. People ate with their fingers!

Parties were often held in the Great Hall. People called jesters juggled, told jokes and funny stories and played music. When the party was over people slept in the Great Hall on straw mattresses laid upon the floor.





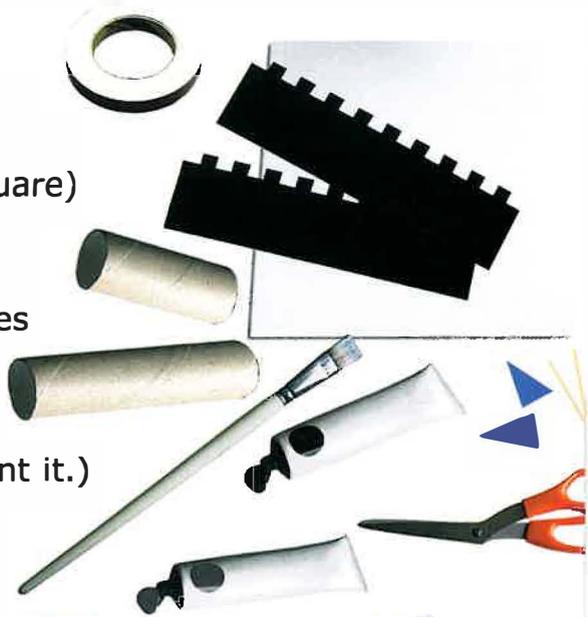
Today special medieval dinners are popular. Actresses and actors dress in clothes like those from the Middle Ages. Guests feast, sing and have fun.



Build Your Own Castle

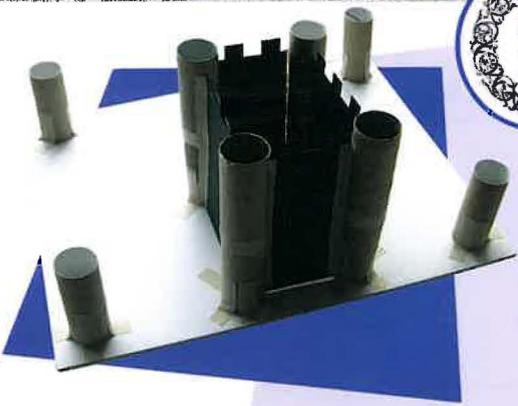
You Will Need:

- 1 large piece of heavy cardboard or foam board (about 50 centimetres square) for a base
- 4 small cardboard tubes and 4 long cardboard tubes
- 1 sheet of light cardboard
- tape (Paper tape is best because you can later paint it.)
- scissors
- a paintbrush and paints
- toothpicks
- coloured paper

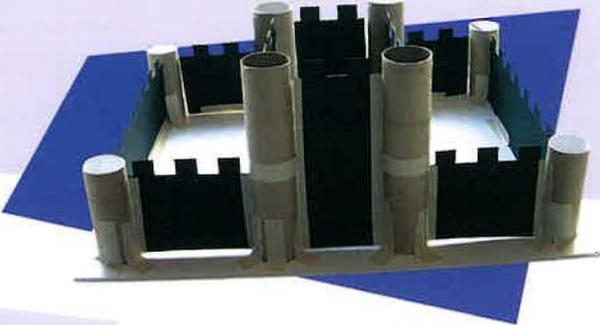


Use pieces of tape to stick one small cardboard tube on each corner of the base. These tubes are the turrets. Next stick two longer tubes at the front of your castle. These are the gate towers. Stick the last two long tubes behind the gate towers to make the gatehouse.




**2**

Cut out high walls from the light cardboard and stick them between the four towers. Remember to cut out battlements at the top of the walls. Next make shorter walls to go around the rest of the castle.


3

Paint the castle walls and towers grey, tan or white. Paint the windows black. Use the toothpicks and coloured paper to make flags for your towers. Now your castle is complete!



Medieval Medicine

The Treatment Was . . .

First Patient:

The correct answer is B.

A treacle was a medieval herbal treatment to help cure almost everything from fever to plague. More than 60 ingredients were used to make treacles, including the roasted skins of snakes.



Second Patient:

The correct answer is A.

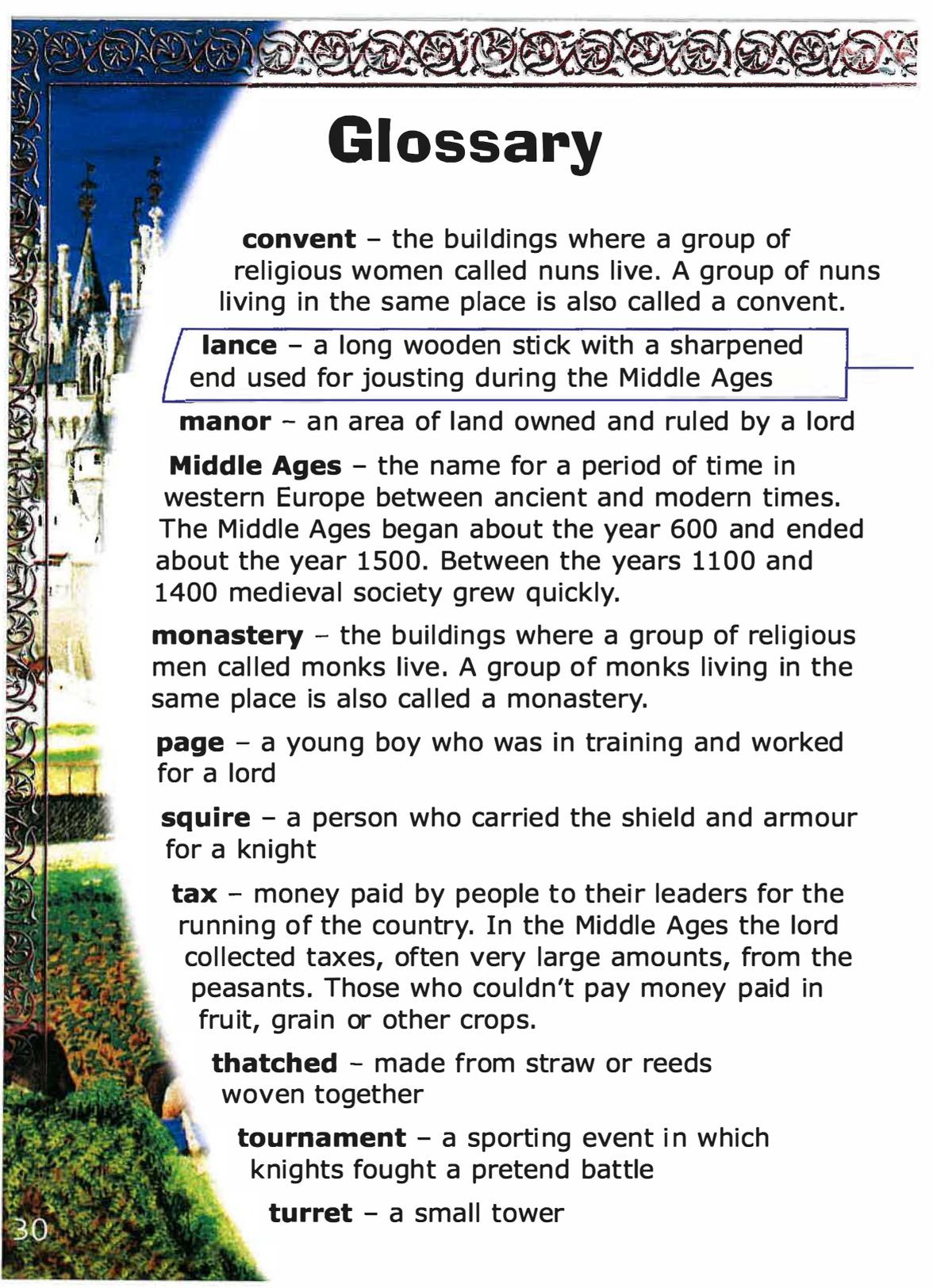
During the Middle Ages people with leprosy had to ring bells to warn others to keep away from them. Many were forced to live in special leper colonies.

Third Patient:

The correct answer is C.

Hanging coloured cloths around a person with smallpox was a popular treatment in the Middle Ages.



A decorative border at the top of the page features a repeating pattern of stylized floral and scrollwork motifs. On the left side, there is a vertical illustration of a castle with multiple spires and towers, set against a blue sky. The castle is partially obscured by a white, curved shape that frames the title.

Glossary

convent – the buildings where a group of religious women called nuns live. A group of nuns living in the same place is also called a convent.

lance – a long wooden stick with a sharpened end used for jousting during the Middle Ages

manor – an area of land owned and ruled by a lord

Middle Ages – the name for a period of time in western Europe between ancient and modern times. The Middle Ages began about the year 600 and ended about the year 1500. Between the years 1100 and 1400 medieval society grew quickly.

monastery – the buildings where a group of religious men called monks live. A group of monks living in the same place is also called a monastery.

page – a young boy who was in training and worked for a lord

squire – a person who carried the shield and armour for a knight

tax – money paid by people to their leaders for the running of the country. In the Middle Ages the lord collected taxes, often very large amounts, from the peasants. Those who couldn't pay money paid in fruit, grain or other crops.

thatched – made from straw or reeds woven together

tournament – a sporting event in which knights fought a pretend battle

turret – a small tower



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Discussion Starters

1 If you could travel back through time to medieval days would you choose to be a king or queen, lord or lady, monk or nun, knight, squire or peasant? Why?

2 Do you think that the medieval system of lords ruling the land and peasants working the land was a good one? Why or why not? In what ways was the medieval system different from how we live today?

3 What would be good about living in a castle? What would be bad?

