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Honors English – 2nd Period

Medieval Occupations – Commoners and Peasants

In the medieval time period there were really two main classes: Those with power and those without. There are numerous jobs that people in medieval times had, including:

They were many craftsmen in the medieval work force. Amorers were required to make armor that was specially fitted to the owner who ordered it. It was a very important job in the workforce and was considered a specialist job.

Scientists/ Medicine workers worked together; for example the without the herbalist, the apothecary and the physician could not do their jobs. Herbalist were often a religious person (such as a monk), who took care of medicinal plants, roots and herbs. Apothecaries were usually a priest who gave out remedies made from herbs, plants and roots; many times it was for the sick and poor because physicians were very expensive. Physicians were much higher up on the social latter than most peasants. They learned bleeding, lancing and surgical procedures. Astrologers were often regarded to as mystical; these people studied the stars and planets.

Entertainers were also few. Jesters, also called fools, were in charge of keeping the court entertained. Minstrels were the musical entertainment and often wrote songs of the tales of great knights.

Bankers included a chamberlain - Today’s equivalent of an accountant. They were in charge of household's budget, collecting revenues, and paying expense. A clerk, they keep accounts. And a moneylender, they were basically the medieval bank.

Laborers were many. Bakers were hired by nobles to cook bread because bread was a daily staple in medieval times. Barbers would cut hair but would also serve as dentists, surgeons and blood letters. They did a lot in personal care. Cooks were in charge of cooking meals in the castle kitchen. Ditchers dug castle ditches, moats, and foundations. Clothiers were required to know info on various expensive and fine materials, and they made the clothes for the nobles. Gardeners are required to have a vast knowledge of herbs and plants. Their work was safety and protection of a castle - castle walls had to be kept clear of ivy or anything else that could be used to climb the castle walls and they were expected to dig ditches for defensive purposes. Bottlers were charge of the bottlery, storing and dispensing wines and other expensive provisions. Spinster was a woman who earned her living spinning yarn; the spinning wheel was invented in the medieval era.

Servants made up a lot of the population. Butlers were responsible for the cellar and was in charge of the drinks.Cottars were the weak or old, it was one of the lowest occupations for a peasant, and there were many lowly duties such as swine-herd and prison guard. Ewerers fetched and warmed up water for nobles. Chancellors were the nobleman’s secretaries. Castellans were much like today’s custodian; also known as a porter or janitor.   
 Keepers of the wardrobe were in charge of the tailors and laundress, and the dressing room/storage room that was referred to as the wardrobe. Messengers carried receipts and letters. It was a dangerous job because if they delivered a message to an unhappy recipient, they often got punished for it. (Ever heard of ‘don’t shoot the messenger’?) Stewards were the administration in the castle and household and took care of events in the great hall. Scullions were the lowly kitchen servants; they washed and cleaned the dishes.  
 Reeves were basically property managers. They made sure work began and ended on time. Marshals were in charge of a household's horses, carts, wagons, containers and the transporting of goods. Scribes were writers who often came from religious backgrounds where reading, writing, and comprehension was required. Pages began their work at seven years old, they were junior squires, and they wore colorful outfits. It was their duty to wait at tables, care for the lord's clothes and assist them in dressing.   
 Chaplains were in charge of religious activities, and might also include that of a clerk and keeping accounts. A priest would usually look after the spiritual needs and confessions of the nobles and their families. Heralds were knights assistants, and would announce things on the behalf of a noble or king to the public. Everyone would usually gather around the castle and he would shout out the news.

Law Enforcement/Security was not in high demand on a daily basis so there were only a few jobs. Watchmen were the medieval security guards. Torturers tortured people in order to make them confess to crimes.

Visual Aides –

The PowerPoint is to show and give examples of some of the occupations back in the medieval era.