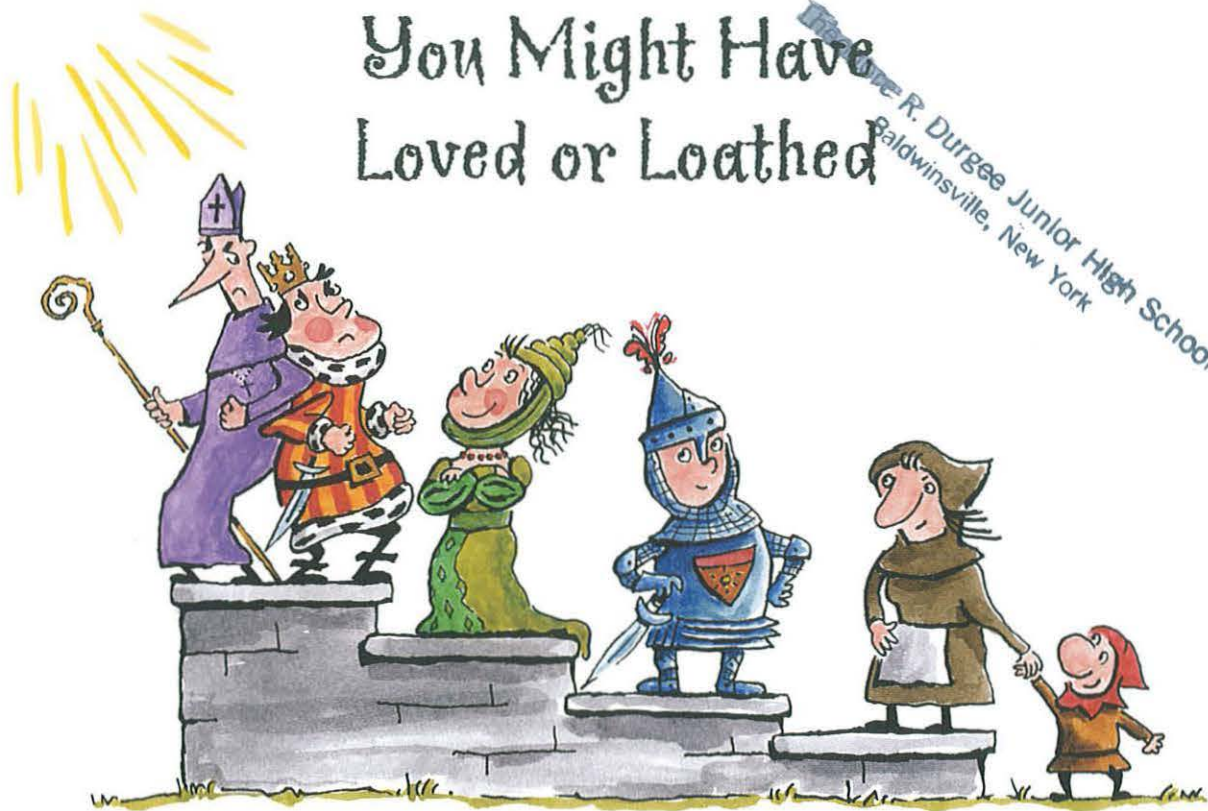


Archers, Alchemists, and 98 Other Medieval Jobs You Might Have Loved or Loathed

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2003

Annick Press Ltd.
Toronto • New York • Vancouver

ABBOT; ABBESS

As abbot or abbess, you are the head of your religious community. (The prior or prioress is second in command.) If you are an able leader, you can achieve great power, including membership on the king's council.



Other power roles exist for men, but abbess is the most powerful job a noblewoman can hold in religious life. If you undertake this career, you may rule a convent as big as a city, with 5,000 or 6,000 people, though 100 to 500 was more usual. Nuns, novices (women hoping to become nuns), and lay sisters (other women who serve the community) live inside the convent walls; men at arms may be housed just outside. The convent usually has quarters for visitors and for male clerics. It has an infirmary or hospital for sick people, herb and vegetable gardens, and often fish ponds (you eat more fish than meat). Outside the walls are fields where peasants grow other food for the community. Even though you delegate supervision to others as much as possible, you are in charge of everything.

FRIAR

You are a wandering religious man, belonging to a holy order. Francis of Assisi started the Franciscan order of monks. He preached to the birds, who seemed to listen to his sermons.

Francis believed that monks should go into the world and care for lepers and beggars, but friars did not always live up to the high ideals of their orders. Friar Tuck was one of Robin Hood's band of outlaws. Medieval stories depict him in much the same way modern films do: a jolly fellow, fighting with others more often than rescuing them.

