

FIRST FACTS
about the
MIDDLE
AGES

Written by
FIONA MACDONALD

Created & Designed by
DAVID SALARIYA

PETER BEDRICK BOOKS

Editor: PENNY CLARKE
Artists: MARK BERGIN
JOHN JAMES
MARK PEPPE

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that prevailed in Europe during the Middle
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FACT: KINGS CLAIMED THEIR POWER CAME FROM GOD



NOBLES were very rich and owned lots of land. They helped the king fight and gave him advice. Sometimes they rebelled, overthrew their king and put a new one on the throne.

WHEN MEDIEVAL KINGS were crowned, they were anointed with holy oil. This was said to show that God had chosen them to rule and that their body was sacred too. Attacking them would be like attacking God, a serious crime. Although most medieval kings claimed their power came from God, few ruled in a god-like way. Some were lazy, some were weak, others neglected their kingdoms or ruled harshly.

It was hard to be a successful king. You had to be a brave soldier, appoint the royal council (from nobles and church leaders), negotiate with Parliament, organize the civil service, make alliances with other rulers, and keep your subjects happy. You were responsible for taxes, the army and navy, and making new laws.

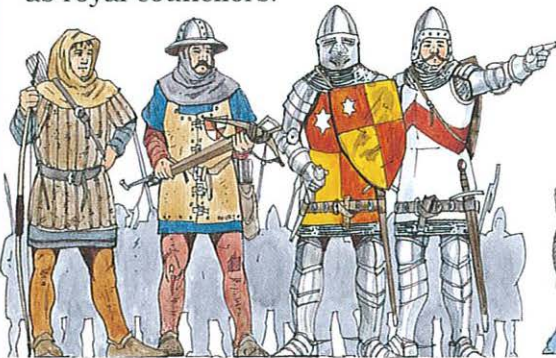
Facts about Medieval Life:

Rich noble people formed between 5% and 10% of the population. Another 5% were wealthy professionals – such as lawyers and merchants. Compared with them, the remaining 80% were poor.

There were no state welfare benefits in medieval times. If people got sick, or could not find work, they had to rely on family or friends for help.



LAWYERS and scribes (left) worked as government officials and also ran the law-courts. Priests (right) cared for people's souls. Senior priests acted as royal counselors.



FOOT-SOLDIERS (left) were recruited from villages and towns. Knights (right) came from rich families and led their own parts of the army.



COUNTRY PEOPLE, called peasants, grew crops, raised animals and spun wool. In towns, ordinary people worked as traders and at various crafts.

KINGS AND LORDS built strong castles to protect their lands. In wartime all the local people took refuge inside the nearest castle, while nobles, knights and foot-soldiers fought off the enemy. A siege could last for months or even years.