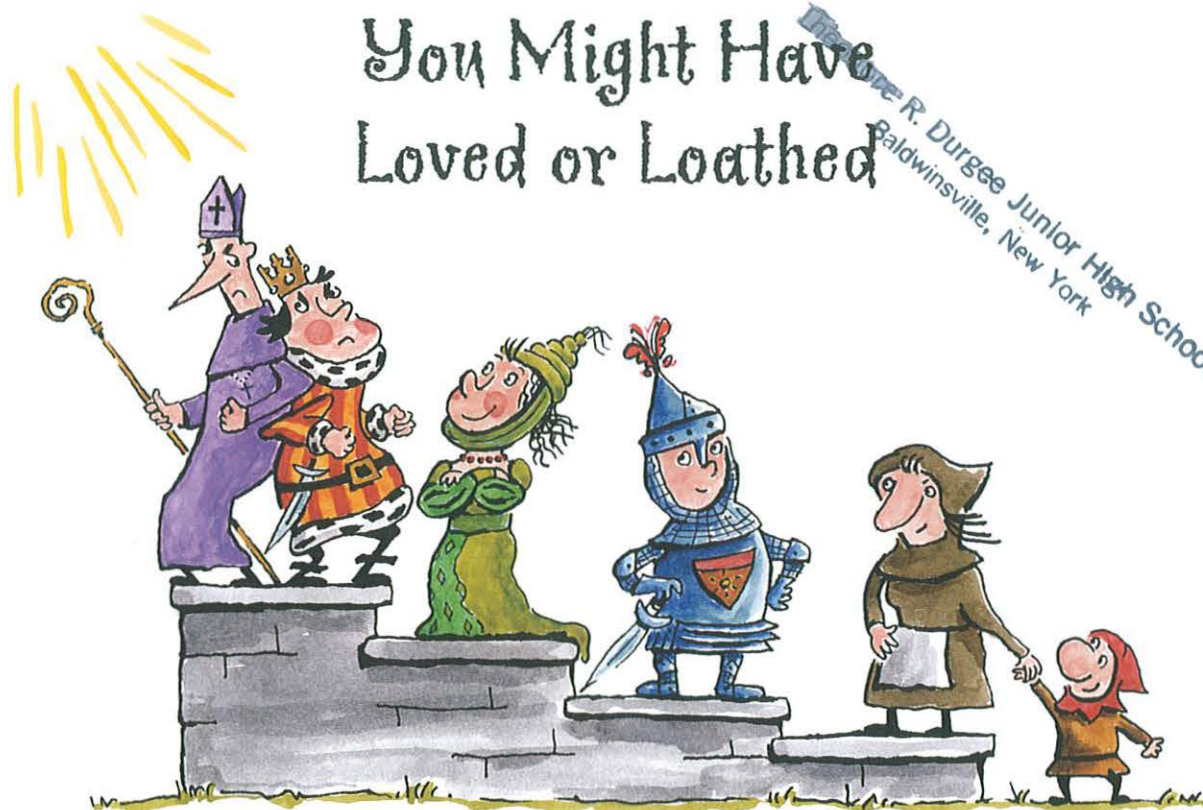


Archers, Alchemists, and 98 Other Medieval Jobs You Might Have Loved or Loathed

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2003

Annick Press Ltd.
Toronto • New York • Vancouver

KNIGHT

You rule your lands and administer justice. However, fighting in battles or tournaments is your main work.

You are proud of your strength and endurance, which allow you to ride all day, sleep on the ground, then fight in blazing sun or snowstorms without much food or water. At a gallop, fully armed, you can hit a small moving target with a lance as long as a full-size car. You can ride and fight wearing 25 kilograms (55 pounds) of armor, a two-handed sword hanging from your belt on one side and a long dagger on the other, and a battle-ax, longer sword, or club-headed mace attached to your saddle. You and your warhorse are a medieval one-horsepower tank.

At home, you and your lady wife go hunting and hawking, and entertain your neighbors with feasts. You hold court, mete out justice, buy a second warhorse, admire the new baby (a son), and order armor, the new style with plate instead of a chain-mail shirt. Maybe you fight in a tournament or two, or plan a daughter's marriage to enlarge your estates. Soon, however, you fret for war. Perhaps you will join a crusade to the Holy Land.



From the highest nobility to the lowest, knights loved fighting; they spent their lives training to fight, then fighting in tournaments or war. They must have been very strong to ride and fight in their armor of chain-mail or plate, covering chest, arms, and legs: a chain-mail skirt over a chain-mail shirt and padded tunic, chain-mail or heavy leather gauntlets on their hands, and a dark, stuffy helmet weighing three to five kilograms (six to eleven pounds), on their heads. Over everything, they wore a tunic embroidered with their coat of arms.

Knights rode with very long stirrups, almost standing up. They had amazing control of their horses and weapons. Three great lords served the royal dinner at the coronation of King Charles VI of France while riding prancing horses and balancing the plates of food on the end of their lances!

From watching television, you might think a knight spent his working days knocking down other knights in tournaments, fighting battles, or rescuing lovely ladies. Those were the ideals of chivalry: honor, protecting the weak, keeping your word, battling to the death in a good cause. In real life, battle armor rusted in the rain, tournament helmets cut off vision, and a knight did not hesitate to besiege an enemy castle because ladies lived in it, or to take them prisoner if the castle fell.