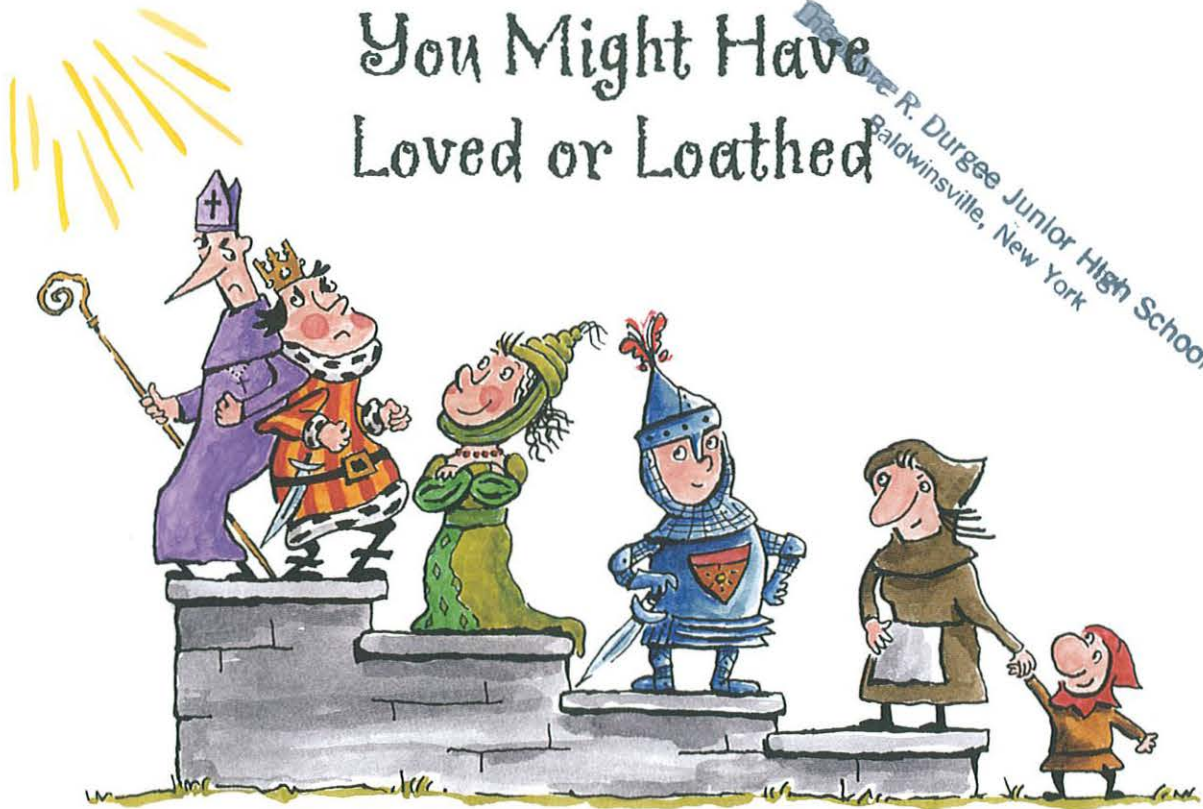


# Archers, Alchemists, and 98 Other Medieval Jobs You Might Have Loved or Loathed

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2003

Annick Press Ltd.  
Toronto • New York • Vancouver

## PEASANT

“Peasant” is an equal-opportunity job, open to men, women, and children. Do you like outdoors work and the challenge of changing weather and seasons? As a peasant farmer, you will work in the fields from dawn to dark in sun, rain, and snow. At different times of the year, you might pull a light plow, sow grain, scythe hay, trample grapes, shear sheep, herd pigs, gather firewood, or make and repair tools and huts.

You and your family may own your own small farm, but you worry about losing it. You always have to work on your lord’s land before your own. In case of storm or flood, you must save your lord’s crops first. You can hardly turn around without paying a fee to your lord—to grind grain in his mill or settle an argument in his court. You pay when his son is knighted or his daughter married or (worst of all) when he loses a fight and must be ransomed. The Church expects one-tenth of everything, your tax to God. Most peasants dig their land with a wooden hoe and spade. You try to grow two crops each year. Winters are bad. If you can’t store enough grain or a thief steals your only pig, your family may starve.

In the fall, you might earn a few coppers (pennies) picking grapes and trampling them for wine. Men are paid twice as much as women for the same work. Not fair, huh? Your home may be a two-room hut with a hole

in the roof to let out smoke, and straw-filled mattresses for beds. In winter, your pig, your sheep, and the hens move in with you. Often, you’re too tired to think. You dream of living in a house with a thatched roof, windows, and a chimney, of owning a pot and a skillet, of eating at a table and sleeping on a feather bed.

If you own a plow and a horse or an ox, you are rich. If you are very rich, you may own land, plowhorses, sheep, pigs, cattle, perhaps a boat and net for fishing, a vineyard, a woodlot. Your son may marry the daughter of a poor squire. Then your grandchildren will be born as nobles, and you will have to curtsy or bow to them!

