

Theodore R. Durgee Junior High School
Baldwinsville, New York

FIRST FACTS
about the
MIDDLE
AGES

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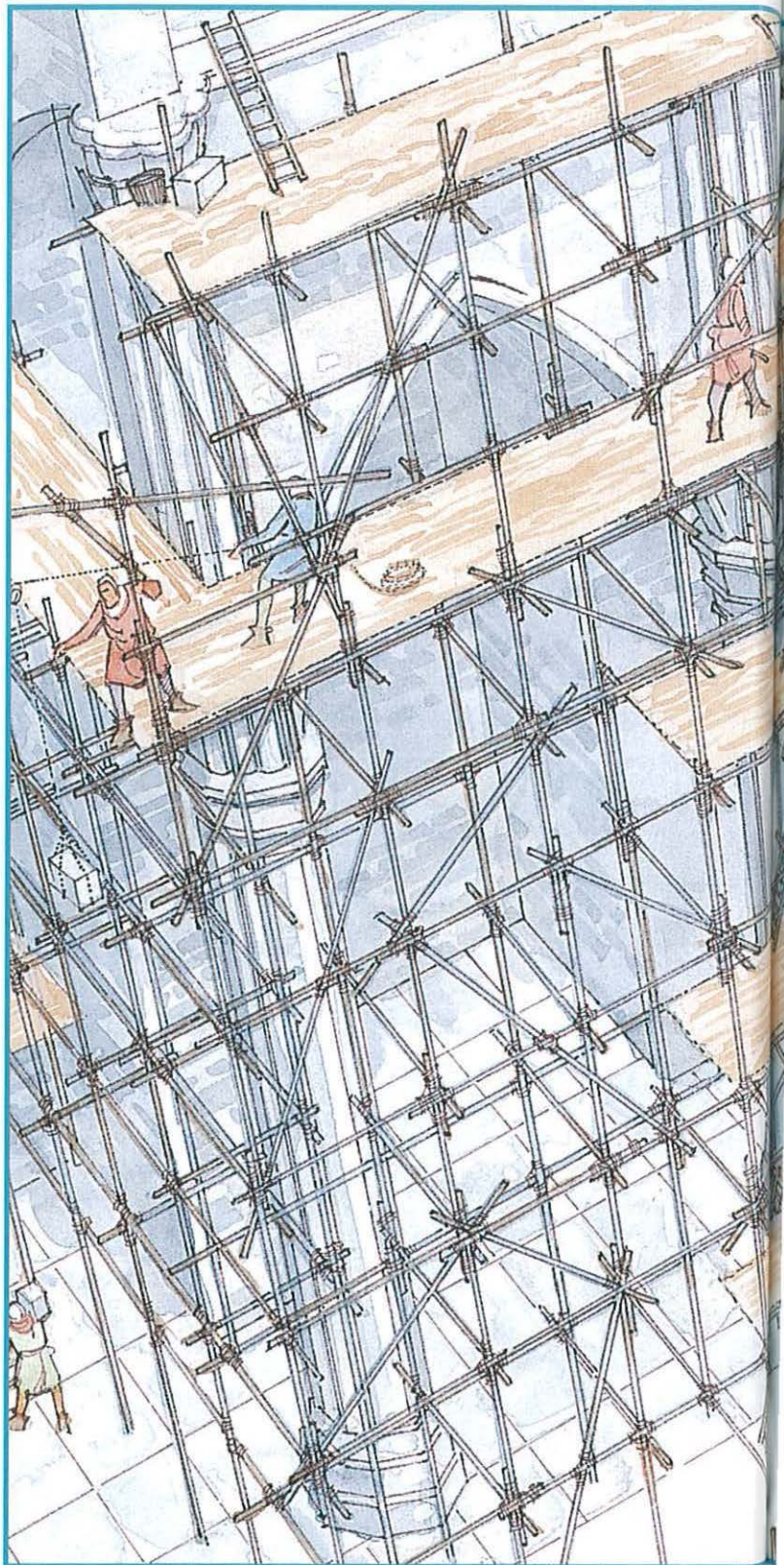
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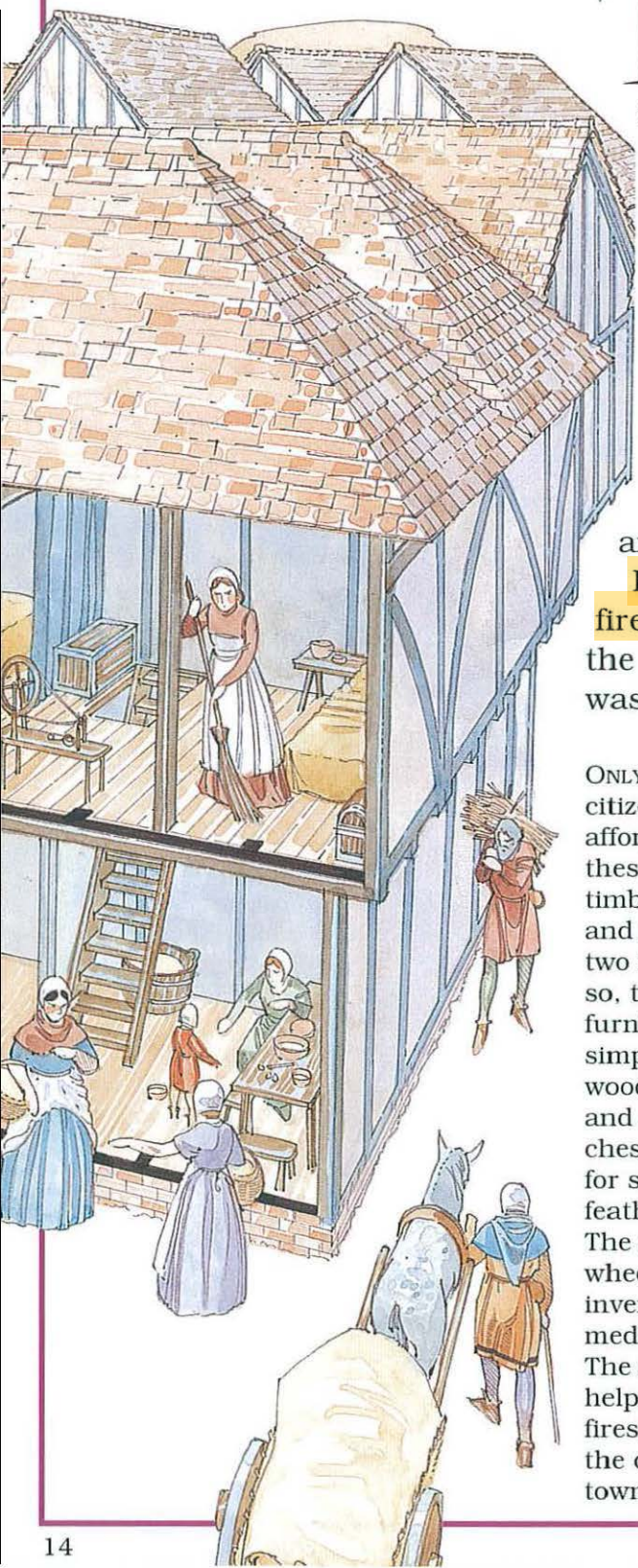
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FACT: HOMES WERE MADE OF MUD AND WOOD



TODAY, many people think that medieval cottages look pretty and quaint. But what were they like to live in? In summer, they were probably cool and airy, thanks to the thick thatched roofs and unglazed windows, though the earth floors would have been dusty. In winter, most cottages would have been cold, damp and very drafty. The wattle-and-daub walls were thin, and wind whistled through the wooden shutters covering the windows.

These houses needed constant repairs. Timber frames rotted where they rested on the damp ground, plaster walls cracked, and birds, rats and mice nested in the roofs. Families tried to warm their homes with fires, straw mattresses and thick blankets. But the fire filled the house with smoke, the straw was prickly and the blankets were rough.

ONLY well-off citizens could afford homes like these, with solid timber frames and rooms on two floors. Even so, their furniture was simple: plain wooden tables and storage chests, benches for sitting and a feather mattress. The spinning wheel was a new invention in medieval times. The clay roof tiles helped to stop fires spreading in the crowded towns.

Facts about Medieval Homes:

In some parts of Europe peasants and their animals lived together in the same building. Body-heat from cows and horses gave extra warmth in winter, but in summer they would have been very smelly, and would have attracted lots of flies.

House-building techniques and styles varied, depending on the materials available. In regions with few trees, homes were built of mud bricks or stone.

IN THE COUNTRYSIDE peasants lived in simple, single-story homes. The largest buildings in the village were the church, the windmill and the manor house. They usually all belonged to the local lord. He visited the manor house from time to time.