

In the City

You could be an artisan...

Medieval London

“When passing along the water of Thames, we have beheld dung and lay stools and other filth accumulated in diverse places within the city, and have also perceived the fumes and other abominable stenchs arising therefrom, from the corruption of which great peril to persons dwelling within the said city will, it is feared, ensue.”

Complaint by King Edward III (1312-1377) appearing on the Channel 4 History site (www.channel4.com/history)

What is an artisan?

Below are two examples:

Blacksmith

“Blacksmiths were very important in the Middle Ages. They made weapons, armor, decoration for the ‘modern’ medieval household, keys, chains [...], and many other tools that were needed in an average town. [...] Anyone who wanted to become a blacksmith had to be prepared for a long, hard, sooty apprenticeship mostly spent next to a blazing fire.”

Source: www.mcatmaster.com/guilds/Blacksmiths.htm

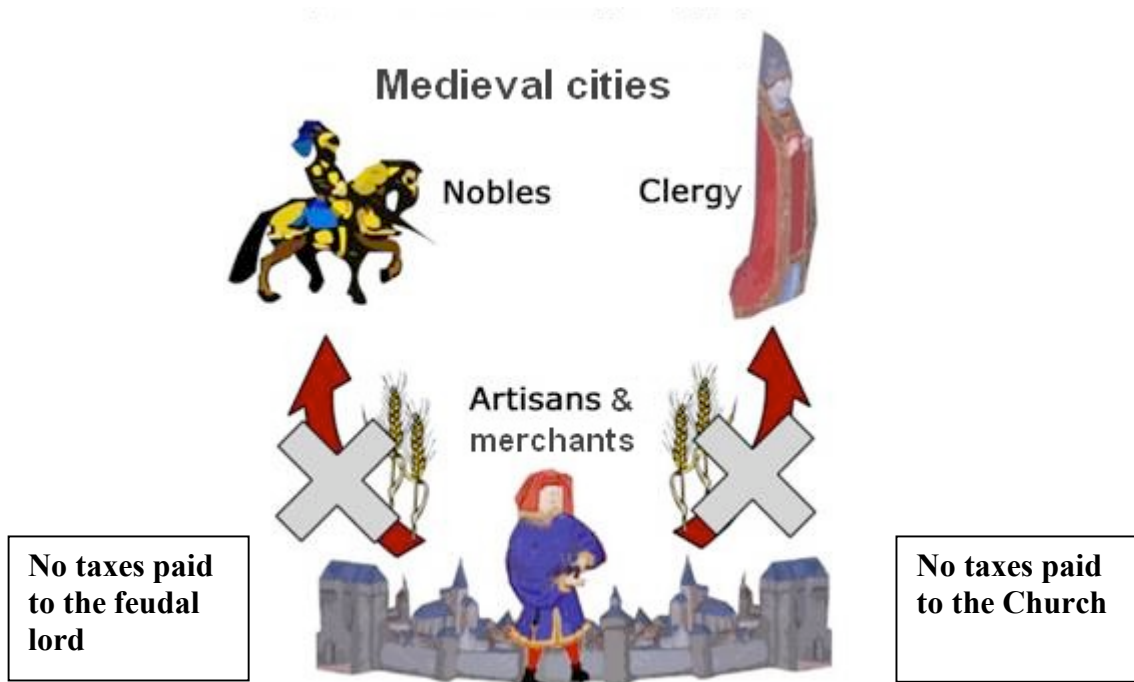
Weavers

“The textile industry harbored such diverse crafts as broggers (wool-sellers), cappers, carders, drapers, dyers, embroiderers, fullers, hatters, hosiers, knitters, listers, mercers, shearmen, spinners, tailors, tapiters, vestmentmakers, and weavers. It is evident that women played a critical role in the skilled workforce of the textile industry.

[...]

Weavers wove cloth, either from wool or flax (linen). Combing, carding, and spinning to prepare wool for weaving was done almost exclusively by women. Although many women undoubtedly worked as weavers, [they] usually [worked] for their husbands or male relatives. [...] The poorer women who carded and spun were paid piece-rates, either by the pound of yarn produced or by the pound of wool delivered to be spun. Many of them had to rent spinning wheels, as they could not afford to own one themselves.”

Source: www.virtualworldlets.net/Papers/Hosted/WomenMed.php



Excerpt from the Charter for the Town of St. Omer, 1127

“I, William, by the grace of God, Count of Flanders, [...] grant [the citizens of St. Omer] the laws written below, and command that those laws remain inviolate.

[...]

First that to every man I will show peace, and I will protect and defend them with good will just as I do my other men. And I grant that justice be done to all of them by my bailiffs, and I wish that they do justice to me also. [...]

[...]

All who dwell within the walls of St. Omer, or who dwell there in the future, I make free from *cavagium*, i.e., from head-tax, and from suit of court.

[...]

As I wish the citizens [...] to be free henceforward from all customs, I shall require from them no *scot*, or *taille*, or forced loan.

The thirty pounds a year I had from St. Omer and whatever I ought to have from there, I grant for the restoration of their damaged property, and for the maintenance of their gild. The burgesses shall see to it that there is good and stable coinage during my life whereby the town may be improved.”

Source: [Medieval Sourcebook](#)

[\[www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/1127stomer.html\]](http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/1127stomer.html)

In the Country

You could be a peasant...

Peasant life in the Middle Ages

“According to the law, [peasants] did not belong to themselves. They and all their belongings, their house, clothes and even their food [were] owned by the lord of the manor. Known as serfs or villeins, peasants were bound to work for their lord, who allowed them to farm their own piece of land in return. Their lives were ones of constant toil. Most struggled to produce enough food for their own families as well as fulfilling their duties to the lord of the manor. [...]

Peasants worked hard every day of their lives except for Sundays and holy days. Bad weather and a typically poor diet meant that most European peasants died before they reached [the age of] 27.”

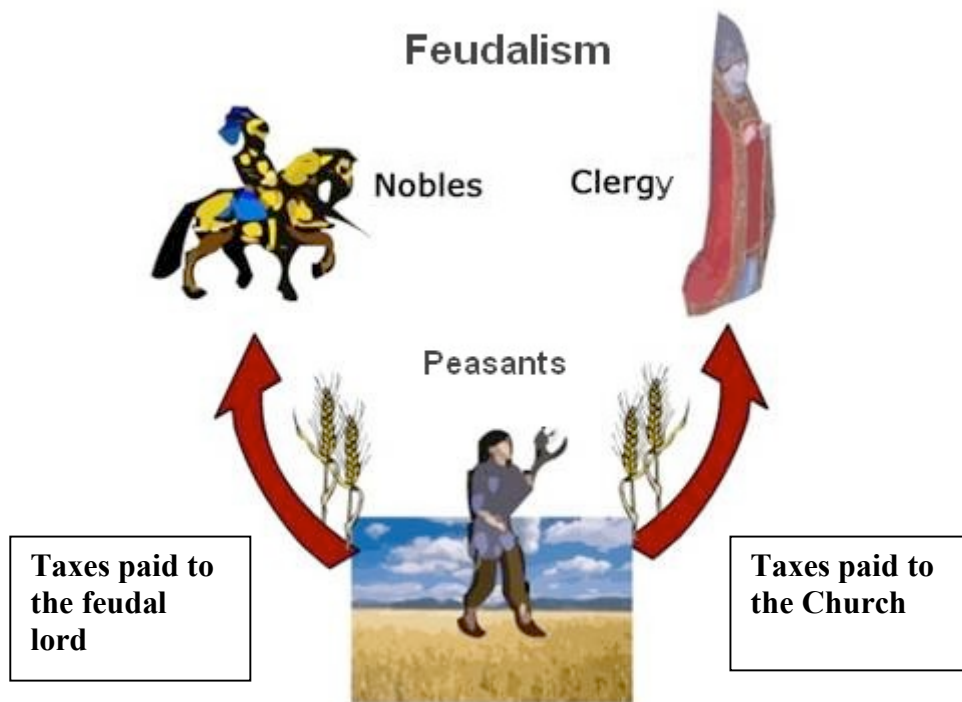
Source: Camelot Village (www.camelotintl.com)

Children in the peasant household

“In the peasant household, children provided valuable assistance to the family as early as age five or six. This assistance took the form of simple chores and [...] included fetching water, herding geese, sheep or goats, gathering fruit, nuts, or firewood, walking and watering horses, and fishing. Older children were often enlisted to care for or at least watch over their younger siblings.

At the house, girls would help their mothers with tending a vegetable or herb garden, making or mending clothes, churning butter, brewing beer and performing simple tasks to help with the cooking. In the fields, a boy no younger than 9, and usually 12 or older, might assist his father by goading the ox while his father handled the plow.”

Source: The Medieval Child, Part 6 (<http://historymedren.about.com>)



Peasants and lords

“Besides working on the lord’s land, usually three days a week, the peasants were expected to do repair work around the manor on roads and bridges. They were excused from military service except in time of siege. They paid taxes in the form of products or in coin when it became common. Fees were collected by the lord on a number of occasions, such as when a daughter married off of the manor, when a son inherited his father’s land, or when peasants used the lord’s oven, winepress, or mill. There were fees paid for marriages, at death and, of course, to the Church.”

Source: [Medieval Life: Squires, Maidens and Peasants](http://www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/1986/3/86.03.03.x.html)

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