

ELA: Grade 6, Lesson 2, Middle Ages

Lesson Objective: Student will develop an understanding of the class system during the Middle Ages. Students will learn the differences between lords and serfs.

Practice Focus: Today we will apply what they learn about people in informational texts to their own narrative writing pieces.

TN Standards: 6.RI.KID.1, 6.RI.KID.3, 6.RI.CS.4, 6.W.TP.3

Teacher Video Materials:

- Serfs and Lord Chart_L2 Handout
- Board or paper to take notes on

One Page Student Practice Material:

- Paper
- Pen or pencil to write with

Vocabulary: lord, serf, privileged, and manor

Teacher Do	Student Do
<p><u>Opening</u></p> <p>Hello! Welcome to Tennessee's At Home Learning Series for literacy! Today's lesson is for all our 6th graders out there, though all children are welcome to tune in. This lesson is the second in our series.</p> <p>My name is ____ and I'm a ____ grade teacher in Tennessee schools! I'm so excited to be your teacher for this lesson! Welcome to my virtual classroom!</p> <p>Today we will continue to learn about The Middle Ages! If you didn't see our previous lesson, you can find it on The TN Department of Education's website at www.tn.gov/education. You can still tune in to today's lesson if you haven't see any of our others. But, it might be more fun if you first go back and watch our other lessons since we'll be talking about things we learned previously.</p> <p>Today, you'll need paper and something to write with.</p> <p>Ok, let's begin!</p>	
<p><u>Introduction</u></p> <p>During our first lesson, we focused on how the Roman Empire changed under Charles the Great and formed Europe during the Middle Ages. We learned that five</p>	

countries made up the new Europe: England, France, Spain, Germany and Italy.

We also began to learn about the changes that were occurring in Europe under Charles's new government system called feudalism. Feudalism focused on land ownership and how that created the rich and the poor.

Today we are going to dig deeper into the rich, called Lords, and the poor, called serfs.

Interactive Read Aloud

If you lived during the Middle Ages, your life followed one of a few set paths. If you were the child of a king and a queen or a lord and a lady, you lived a privileged life. You had enough food to eat and clothes to wear. You lived in a relatively nice house. You had servants, too. You may have been one of the few who learned to read and write. You even learned to ride a horse. If you were a boy, you learned to become a skilled swordsman. Privileged girls may have learned to embroider, to dance, and to play a musical instrument. Occasionally girls, too, learned to read. As a privileged child, you likely grew up to become a king or a queen, or a lord or a lady, yourself.

We just said lords and ladies are privileged. What were some examples that showed that they were privileged?
[Pause] **Yes, boys learned to read and write.**

What else? [Pause] **You are correct, they learned to ride a horse and play musical instruments.**

Anything else girls learned to do? [Pause] **Yes, embroider. Let's make sure that we all know what embroidering is. Embroidery looks like small stitches made on fabric to add designs.**

But most people in the Middle Ages were not privileged. In the early Middle Ages, nearly everyone in Europe worked on the land. Most farmworkers were called serfs. Serfs grew the food and tended to the livestock, or animals that fed the people. Some had more freedom than others and were called freemen. Serfs were at the bottom of the social order and had the least amount of power.

During this section, the student will focus on the opportunities that ladies and lords had and be able to use these examples as a definition for privileged. Students will answer question sets about the lifestyle of the serf, and the student will compare and contrast the serf and the lord.

Student will compare a freeman to a serf and also see the benefits a serf has in the dangerous land.

What were the poor called during the middle ages?

[Pause] Yes, serfs.

What did serfs do for a living? [Pause] Yes. They worked on the land well done.

So were most people privileged or serfs? [Pause] Serfs, correct.

Serfs usually spent their entire lives working on a landowner's or lord's estate. In return for the work they did, the lord allowed serfs to use some of the land to grow their own food. The lord lived in his castle or manor house. He owned all the land around his home and often the nearby towns and villages, too. The lord also controlled the lives of most of the people who worked for him.

What is another name for a castle used during the Middle Ages? [Pause] Correct, a manor house!

Based on our reading in this section, what is the relationship between a lord and a serf? [Pause] That is right; the lord has power over the serfs because he owned the land.

Let's read on and find out more about serfs.

Serfs were not educated. They did not learn to read or write. If serfs wanted to travel to a nearby town, they needed permission from the lord. When serfs wanted to marry, the lord had the right to approve or disapprove of the match. When serfs had children, those children usually grew up to work as serfs for the same lord.

Based on what we just read, who do you think had more power and freedom in the Middle Ages—serfs or lords? [Pause] That's right we talked about the lords having more power earlier. They have no ability to have control over their lives.

Why do the lords have more power? [Pause] Hmm. I think the serfs had to get permission from lords to do many things, such as to travel to a nearby town or to get married, but lords did not. Lords also owned and controlled the land, and often the nearby towns and

villages, but serfs did not own or control any of their own land. So the serfs did not have any ability to leave the lord's manor.

In the Middle Ages, serfs worked on farmland that was divided into strips. The serfs spent about half of their time working for the lord. The rest of the time, they worked on the strips of land where their own crops were grown. Most serfs lived in small, simple houses in or near a village. Their houses were made from wood and mud. The roofs were thatched, meaning they were made from rushes, or straw. They usually had just one room. Serfs slept on straw beds. Inside each house was a small fireplace for cooking. Smoke from the fire escaped through a hole in the roof.

We just learned a lot about the serfs' lifestyle. Let's make sure we captured it all. Describe the houses in which serfs lived? [Pause] Good, yes. They lived in small, simple houses in or near a village; made of wood and mud; thatched roofs; one room; beds were made of straw; small fireplace with a hole in the roof to allow the smoke to escape.

So I wonder how the lord made their money. Let's read on and find out.

The lord increased his wealth in many different ways. In addition to working the farmland for the lord, serfs paid taxes to the lord in the form of money, crops, and livestock. Sometimes the lord ran a mill and even charged his serfs a fee to grind their grain into flour.

Do we know how did a lord become even richer or wealthier through his serfs? [Pause] Right, the lord made money by taxing the serfs and requiring the serfs to pay in the form of crops and livestock, and the lord charged fees to grind flour.

If crops failed or illness struck, people during the Middle Ages struggled to survive. In times of hardship, the lord did not always come to the aid of his serfs. Even when food supplies were low, serfs were not allowed to hunt in the lord's forests. (Wow that seems really unfair and a bit cruel). However, to avoid starving, people sometimes hunted illegally. This was called poaching, and serfs who were caught poaching were severely punished.

Did I read correctly that if serfs needed to hunt to survive, they could not hunt? [Pause] Yes, that is right and the lord considered this “poaching.”

Would you consider this poaching? [Pause] No, I wouldn’t either and I cannot believe they faced severe punishment if a serf hunted the lord’s land.

Did these punishments stop serfs from hunting in the lord’s forests to avoid starving? [Pause] No you are right. I am sure they were desperate to survive.

Some farmworkers were freemen. Freemen were not under the same strict control of the lord. If a serf ran away from his home, and managed to live for a year and a day in a town without being found, he could become a freeman, too. The Middle Ages was a violent time compared to how we live today. There were frequent wars and uprisings, including rebellions against the king by rival nobles. The need for armed protection shaped medieval society. Usually, high-ranking nobles swore their loyalty to the king and lords swore their loyalty to higher-ranking nobles. Freemen and serfs had to be loyal to their lord. In exchange for their loyalty, the lord offered his protection. If the lord needed to raise an army, he would require freemen on his estates to serve as foot soldiers.

So I want to make sure we understand the difference between the serf and a freeman. What is the difference? [Pause] Yes, that is right a serf had no rights, but a freeman had more rights than a serf.

Why was medieval society organized for war? [Pause] That’s right. It was a violent time, compared to how we live today, and people needed armed protection. People were often desperate and behaved out of need.

What were the benefits for serf in this situation? [Pause] Hmm, at first I would also say no, but they did receive protection by the lord.

Who did the lord require to fight if he needed to put together an army for the king? [Pause] So the freemen did the fighting. Huh... I wonder why the serfs didn’t have to fight.

<p>Why do you think the lord did not make serfs fight? [Pause] I was wondering if the only way he could keep the serfs from running away and become freeman is if he protected them. I was also wondering who would work the farms if all the serfs were fighting. So both reasons may be why the lord needed serfs to work for him and not fight.</p>	
<p><u>Guided Practice</u> Now, we are going to compare the differences between Lords and Serfs. You will need to get out a sheet a paper and fold it half. Label one side lords and one side serfs. See my model. [Model labeling the piece of paper on a white board.]</p> <p>The categories should include <i>homes, work, clothing, food, and amount of power.</i></p> <p>For <i>homes</i>, please describe the lord’s home as the manor house (or castle) and the serf’s house as made of wood and mud with thatched roofs; It was one room with beds made of straw and a small fireplace with a hole in the roof to allow the smoke to escape.</p> <p>For <i>work</i>, discuss that the serf worked the land as a farmer and the lord managed and taxed the serf, by charging serfs for grinding flour. They also trained and led an army.</p> <p>For <i>clothing</i>, describe the lords’ clothing and the serfs’ clothing.</p> <p>Remember the power that the lords had over the serfs. The Serfs had to get permission from lords to do many things, such as to travel to a nearby town or to get married, but lords did not. Lords also owned and controlled the land, and often the nearby towns and villages, but serfs did not own or control any of their own land. So the serfs did not have any ability to leave the lord’s manor. Also consider can marriages, children, and travel based on time.</p>	<p>Student will complete a chart comparing serfs and lords based on the guidance of the teacher.</p>
<p><u>Independent Practice</u> Now that we have discussed what it was like to be a serf and a lord, you are going to a write a narrative from the perspective of either a serf or a lord.</p>	<p>Student will write a narrative by choosing the point of view of either a lord or a serf and imagining a day in the life of a lord or serf. Student should include details from the chart made from today’s lesson.</p>

<p>I want you to choose to be a serf or a lord, and you then are going to write a story titled “A Day in the Life of a ____ (serf of lord)”.</p> <p>In your story, you should show what type of home you have, what you do for work, what your wear, what you eat, and how much power you have.</p> <p>Let me write notes on the whiteboard so that you know what your independent practice is. [Rewrite the prompt and list: homes, work, clothing, food, and power for students to see]</p> <p>Great, I cannot wait to read your stories!</p>	
<p><u>Closing</u> I enjoyed learning about The Middle Ages with you today!</p> <p>Thank you for inviting me into your home. I look forward to seeing you in our next lesson in Tennessee’s At Home Learning Series. Bye!</p>	

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