

Teaching Resources to Accompany Zany Zia's Hats to Where: An All Knight Adventure

This document contains several links to independent resources to help you teach your students about the middle ages.

Great link on just about everything—peasants, knights, arrows, bows, women of the time, etc.: <http://www.themiddleages.net/> - The definitions below can be found on this site.

Lord Martin was a knight. Just what was a knight in this time period?

Knight is a term to refer to a warrior or nobleman in former times, or today to refer to a person who has been given a royal recognition. The female form of the latter is usually Dame.

Although the roots of the word knight are connected to the Old English cniht, meaning page boy, or simply boy, or German knecht, or servant, the ideas of knighthood are arguably more closely tied to the Roman equites.

During the middle ages, the term knight referred to a mounted and armored soldier. Originally, knights were warriors on horse-back, but the title became increasingly connected to nobility and social status, most likely because of the cost of equipping oneself in the cavalry. Knighthood eventually became a formal title bestowed on those noblemen trained for active war duty.

In theory, knighthood could be bestowed on a man by any knight, but it was generally considered honorable to be dubbed knight by the hand of a monarch. By about the late 13th century, partly in conjunction with the focus on courtly behavior, a code of conduct and uniformity of dress for knights began to evolve. Knights were eligible to wear a white belt and golden spurs as signs of their status. Moreover, knights were also often required to swear allegiance to a liege lord.

A knight was to follow a strict set of rules of conduct. These were the knightly virtues. (Original knights had few of these qualities. When the church deemed knights too bloodthirsty and unruly, they intervened and began stressing the importance of virtues until the church became an integrated part of knighthood and chivalry.) The virtues included:

- * Mercy (Towards the poor and oppressed. They were supposed to be harsh with evil-doers.)
- * Humility
- * Honor
- * Sacrifice
- * Fear of God
- * Faithfulness
- * Courage
- * Utmost graciousness and courtesy to ladies

As the bow is most frequently mentioned in the book, we have a description of period bows here adapted from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_longbow

The **English longbow**, also called the **Welsh longbow**, is a powerful type of medieval longbow (a tall bow for archery) that was about 6 ft (1.83 m) long used by the English and Welsh for hunting and as a weapon .

The preferred material to make the longbow was yew, although ash, elm and other woods were also used. Bow strings were (and still are) made of hemp, flax, or silk and attached to the wood via horn "nocks" that fit onto the end of the bow.

Besides the bow, the knight's chief weapon was his sword.

At the beginning of the Middle Ages it was a double edged slashing sword, but toward the middle of the Middle Ages, it had evolved into a stronger, stiffer, diamond-shaped sword that could thrust between the rings of chain mail more easily. Knights also used daggers, axes, falchions (a weapon like a butcher's cleaver), lances, and other pointed weapons. The plate armor and chain mail gave very good protection so daggers were used to thrust up through mailed armpits or through the vision slits of helmets.

Another good one site covering multiple topics is <http://www.learner.org/interactives/middleages/feudal.html>.

Religion: a couple of times Lord Martin prays in the story. What about religion in the Middle Ages?

“The Catholic Church was the only church in Europe during the Middle Ages, and it had its own laws and large coffers. Church leaders such as bishops and archbishops sat on the king's council and played leading roles in government. Bishops, who were often wealthy and came from noble families, ruled over groups of parishes called "diocese." Parish priests, on the other hand, came from humbler backgrounds and often had little education. The village priest tended to the sick and indigent and, if he was able, taught Latin and the Bible to the youth of the village.”

For a more in-depth look at religion in this era, see <http://www.camelotintl.com/village/street.html>.

What about the homes of the villagers?

“Most medieval homes were cold, damp, and dark. Sometimes it was warmer and lighter outside the home than within its walls. For security purposes, windows, when they were present, were very small openings with wooden shutters that were closed at night or in bad weather. The small size of the windows allowed those inside to see out, but kept outsiders from looking in.

“Many peasant families ate, slept, and spent time together in very small quarters, rarely more than one or two rooms. The houses had thatched roofs and were easily destroyed.”

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Women of the Middle Ages: The story talks about Mariana, Silvia, and, of course, Zany Zia. But what was life like for women back then? It was VERY different, as this article shows:

“Women were seen by many to be inferior to men during the middle ages. The church taught them that they should be meek and obedient to their fathers and husbands. In reality however very few of the women could stay quietly at home because most had to work for a living in the fields beside their husbands and fathers while at the same time feeding and clothing their families. The wives and daughters of craftsmen were frequently employed and operated as tradeswomen in their own right. In the towns, women worked in a variety of occupations. They might be shopkeepers, spinners, bakers or ‘alewives’ who brewed ale. Both married and unmarried women were expected to work for a living. Often they would combine several jobs as they were paid less than men.

Young single women often wore their hair loose but married women were expected to keep their hair covered at all times in a linen ‘wimple’ as a sign of modesty. Single women often earned a living from spinning cotton, using hand held spindles (the spinning wheel didn't arrive from India until the 13th Century). They subsequently became known as spinsters and this name has stuck over the years to mean unmarried woman. Many unmarried women entered convents and nunneries where they lived their lives in a similar way to a monk. Nunneries offered women the opportunity to lead a devout life and also to obtain an education and take on responsibilities denied to them in the outside world.

As local landowners and employers, many abbesses were important figures in the community. In fact landowners, be they male or female, were powerful figures in medieval society, and an unmarried woman of property had an equal right to men. She could make a will and sign documents with her own seal. However, when a woman married she forfeit all her land and rights to her husband. On his death she was entitled to one third of his land upon which to support herself.

From: <http://www.camelotintl.com/village/women.html>.

Another resource that links to pages on a number of related topics:

http://www.teacheroz.com/Middle_Ages.htm

Food and Drink: this link has everything from types of food and drink common to the time, to how they were cooked, served, and eaten: <http://www.godecookery.com/mtales/mtales14.htm>

Meat preservation was by salting or smoking, or, most commonly and simply, by keeping the meat alive till needed. Salting was done by two methods. Dry-salting meant burying the meat in a bed of salt pounded to a powder with mortar and pestle. Brine-curing consisted of immersing the meat in a strong solution of salt and water. Before cooking, the salted meat had to be soaked

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and rinsed.

In addition to roasting and stewing, meat might be pounded to a paste, mixed with other ingredients, and served as a kind of custard. A dish of this kind was blankmanger, consisting of a paste of chicken blended with rice boiled in almond milk, seasoned with sugar, cooked until very thick, and garnished with fried almonds and anise. Another was mortrews, fish or meat that was pounded, mixed with bread crumbs, stock, and eggs, and poached, producing a kind of *quenelle*, or dumpling. Both meat and fish were also made into pies, pasties, and fritters.

Sauces were made from herbs from the castle garden that were ground to a paste, mixed with wine, verjuice (the juice of unripe grapes), vinegar, onions, ginger, pepper, saffron, cloves, and cinnamon. Mustard, a favorite ingredient, was used by the gallon.

The most common vegetables, besides onions and garlic, were peas and beans. Staples of the diet of the poor, for the rich they might be served with onions and saffron. Honey, commonly used for sweetening, came from castle or manor bees; fruit from the castle orchard - apples, pears, plums, and peaches - was supplemented by wild fruits and nuts from the lord's wood. In addition to these local products, there were imported luxuries such as sugar (including a special kind made with roses and violets), rice, almonds, figs, dates, raisins, oranges, and pomegranates, purchased in town or at the fairs. Ordinary sugar was bought by the loaf and had to be pounded; powdered white sugar was more expensive.

In the story, Evan kills a boar and brings it back to the keep. Boar was prized as a dish, as this webpage shows. <http://www.middle-ages.org.uk/middle-ages-food-meat.htm>

Pork made up much of the domestic banquets. There was no great feast at which hams, sausages, and black puddings were not served in profusion on all the tables; and as Easter Day, which brought to a close the prolonged fasting of Lent, was one of the great feasts, pork formed the most important dish on that occasion.

The most common question we get from our young readers is: Were dragons real?

This article (excerpted below) implies they could have:
http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/1907596/could_dragons_have_existed.html?cat=58

Among all the mythical creatures and monsters in the world, the dragon is the most well known and popular of them all. Almost every known civilization and religion has its own version of the dragon. Remarkably, there are a great many similarities between the dragons of these cultures. So this raises a question: Why do so many different cultures spread across the globe have a version of the dragon? This is actually not limited to the dragon. Other creatures are present in most cultures as well. They are called animals. I realize the implications I am making sound astonishing, but the fact remains that there is a very real possibility dragons existed at one time or perhaps still exist today. This is not a notion conceived by myself. Years ago I saw a Discovery Channel program that explored the same possibilities. They only covered a limited portion of the ways a dragon could exist and still fit the legend.

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To open your minds to the concept that dragons might exist, let us now look at some of the biological aspects that would be needed to sustain the legend. First of all, fire breathing. Most legends of the dragon portray it as being able to breathe fire. This is unlikely in the animal kingdom. It could be that the dragon simply spits a corrosive venom or acid that might be described by primitive cultures as “liquid fire.” Of course, though it is unlikely, it is also possible that real dragons actually did breathe fire. It could be a chemical or venom secreted from glands in the head similar to snake’s that catch fire upon exposure to air. Or it could be a gas that, once expelled, combust when introduced to the air. Although all of these are possibilities, it is also entirely possible that dragons did not breathe fire at all, and that is simply the product of an overactive imagination from one of the natives.

Most cultures say dragons can fly, although some do not. Strange as it may seem, it's not impossible for a dragon to fly. Their bones would have to be like bird's, lightweight and hollow. They would probably have some kind of sac or bladder in them that is filled with lighter than air gases. Some birds and even some fish have this feature. Even if the dragon had wings, it's entirely possible that they didn't fly at all. Pteranodons and flying reptiles of the dinosaur era are known for their size and ability to fly. But they didn't fly at all. They glided on wind currents. Their bodies were too heavy to be supported in the open air on wings. Dragons may have employed this same technique of gliding without actually flying. A primitive man may not have been able to tell the difference between the two.

The evidence that dragons existed at one point is flimsy, but still unyielding. There seems to be a good chance that dragons existed at one point. And who knows? Much of the world is still unexplored and undiscovered. Perhaps they still do.

Consider also the Bombardier Beetle <http://www.aboundingjoy.com/beetle-fs.html> which can shoot a boiling 212 degree chemical with amazing accuracy:

"When a bombardier beetle (*Brachinus*) is threatened by a predator or an offensive invader of any kind, at the appropriate point of approach the bombardier beetle swings his tail end around in just the right direction (he never misses) and hot, noxious gases, **heated to 212°F (the boiling point of water)**, are explosively released from twin combustion tubes right into the face of his enemy. This is, of course, sufficient to discourage any further notion of an attack on the bombardier beetle. Research has revealed the fact that this beetle has a double set of apparatus. In twin storage chambers, he stores an aqueous solution of two chemicals: 10% hydroquinone (a reducing agent used in photographic developing fluids) and 23% hydrogen peroxide (a powerful oxidizing agent). Remarkably, these chemical agents do not react, the solution remaining as crystal clear as pure water. Apparently the bombardier beetle adds an inhibitor which prevents the chemicals from reacting. If these chemicals are mixed in the laboratory, the solution soon becomes discolored, as the hydrogen peroxide oxidizes the hydroquinones to quinones (in the bombardier beetle a mixture of hydroquinone and methylhydroquinone is used).

What do movies say? The movie “Reign of Fire” (2002) explained that the dragons fed on ashes and they could spout fire thanks to two sets of glands in their mouth, which excreted different chemicals. The mixture turned out to be highly flammable upon coming in contact with air—sort of a “natural napalm”. What a lot of people don’t know is that the method by which the dragons

expelled fire was inspired by two actual animals; the spitting cobra and bombardier beetle (<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0253556/>). With both of these, the toxic liquid is harmless to the creature that carries it. The bombardier beetle has a special lining in its chambers that carry the chemicals. This lining is basically “fireproof”, kind of like an inner asbestos suit. This might give answer to the question, “Wouldn’t the fire burn the dragon’s mouth?”