

The Feudal System – Read article, complete Qs & King O Activity.

For more than a thousand years the Romans controlled most of Europe and all the bordering lands on the Mediterranean Sea. From the city of Rome to the outlying provinces (countries), efficient government and just laws made for an orderly society. Eventually the Roman Empire became too big and due to financial problems, governmental corruption, high taxes and threats from barbaric tribes in Europe, Rome eventually fell.

The fall of Rome led to the development of feudalism. The word *feudal* refers to “feudalism,” the political and social system that characterized medieval Europe from about 1000 A.D to 1300 A.D. The lack of a central government led to the development of the feudal system. People in Europe liked the feudal system because it offered them protection. Feudal arrangement involved kings, powerful lords and lesser lords called nobles. Even though kings had little power, they were still kings, and on occasion they needed to raise an army, as did lords.

Lords helped a king gain power. The kings would give land or *fief* to Lords and lesser lords (vassals) in exchange for loyalty and military service. Trained warriors called *knights* lived in castles or manor houses and usually received money for their services. The knights would serve in the lord’s army and do whatever the lord or lesser lord demanded. Under the feudal system the leading lords controlled all political life. They built large castle for their own protection, often rivaling those of the king in size. They surrounded themselves with armed knights

Lesser lords or *Vassals* had to serve their lords. Vassal had to serve as judges on the lord’s court, provide for his lord the best arrangement of food and shelter when the lord visited his lands and also collected money for the lord. Vassals swore to the lord in a great ceremony that whatever happened they would serve their lord no matter what the circumstance.

Peasants were at the bottom of the feudal chain. Peasant farmers known as *serfs* gave their lord part of their harvest in return for the use of land and other services. The lord protected the serfs from attacks by outsiders. The lord had complete control over all his serfs. Serfs were bound to the land and had no voice in most matters. If the land was sold, serfs were included in the deal. Lords made sure that the peasants were too poor to leave the land.

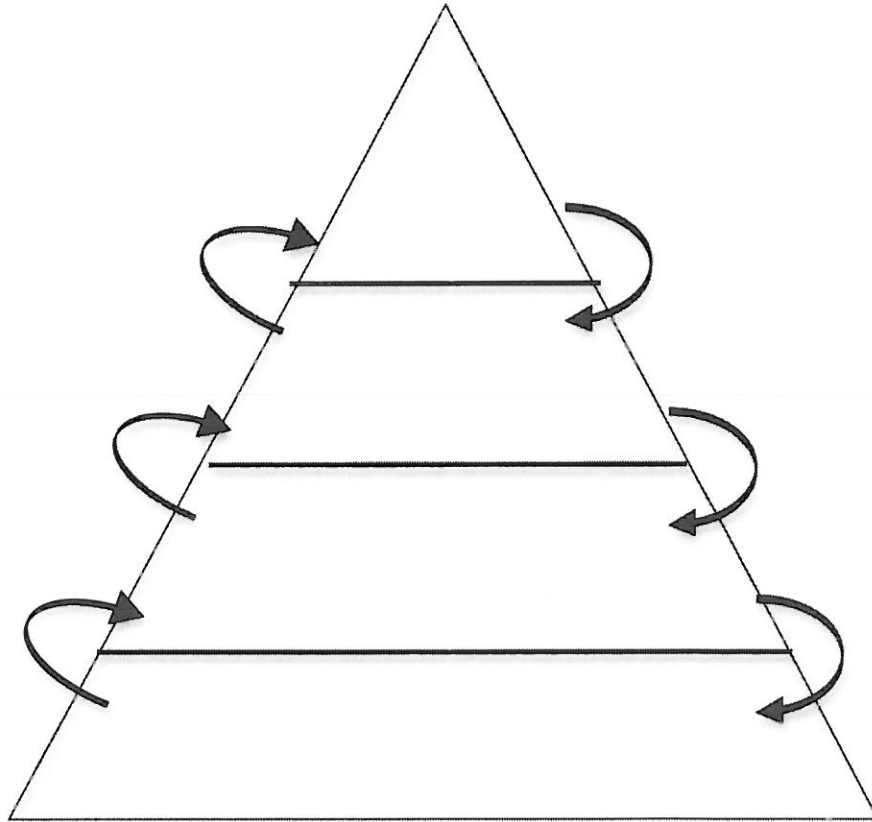
During feudalism, most people lived on manors. A *manor* consisted of the lord’s house and the *serfs* living in the surrounding territory. Manors varied in size depending on the lord’s wealth; the manors produced food, clothing and shelter. Farming was significant for manors to survive. The lifestyle of peasants on a manor was filled with work. Farmers, millers, blacksmiths, and tavern owners all played a part of the system.

Name: _____

Class Pd: _____

After reading "The Feudal System" article complete the Middle Ages Social Pyramid. Label each level of the feudal system. Then write what each social class promised and what each social class received.

MIDDLE AGES SOCIAL PYRAMID



Answer the two questions below. Use complete sentences.

1. *Explain in your own words how the feudal system operated. (Think if you were explaining to a friend or someone who knew nothing about the system.)*

2. *What are advantages and disadvantages of each social class?*

King -

Knights/Vassals -

Nobles -

Serfs -

Name: _____ Class Pd: _____

Complete the exercise below in order to examine power, status, and the role of the king (monarch) in the Middle Ages. Below is a diagram of a fictional medieval kingdom ruled by King O. Use your knowledge of feudal relationships and structure to complete this application activity.

Kingdom of Mardock, ruled by King O

	Noble X's Fief			Noble Y's Fief	Noble Z's Fief
A	1	2	3		
B	4	5	6		
C	7	8	9		
D	10	11	12		
E	13	14	15		

<-----1000 miles----->

Situation:

- King O is ruler of the whole kingdom.
- Nobles X, Y, and Z have fiefs from King O.
- Lords A, B, C, D, and E have fiefs from Noble X.
 - Knights 1, 2, and 3 have fiefs from Lord A.
 - Knights 4, 5, and 6 have fiefs from Lord B.
 - Knights 7, 8, and 9 have fiefs from Lord C.
 - Knights 10, 11, and 12 have fiefs from Lord D.
 - Knights 13, 14, and 15 have fiefs from Lord E.
- Noble Y has 10 knights that serve him.
- Noble Z has 15 knights that serve him.

Questions:

- If King O wanted to punish Noble Z, where (from who) would he get the knights to fight?

- Knights 7, 8, and 9 are vassals to whom? _____
- What duties did Lord E promise to his vassals? _____
- How much land (in miles) does King O rule? _____
- Lord A is vassal to whom? _____
- What do the vassals of Noble X pledge (promise) to him? _____
- Noble Y is vassal to whom? _____
- Who is the lord of Lord C? _____
- If King O declared war on the neighboring kingdom, Wolfenhowl, how many knights would he have total from his vassals? _____
- What gives someone power in the feudal system? _____