

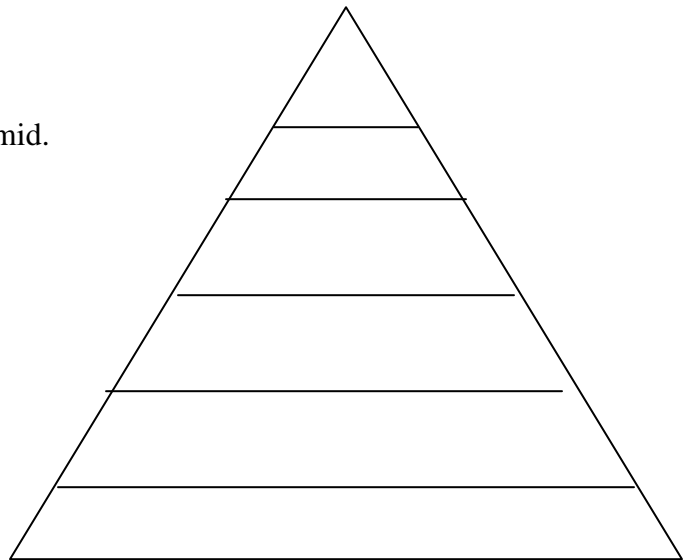
Feudalism

As the Roman Empire crumbled, and Charlemagne's empire was weakening German, Viking and Magyar tribes overran homes and farms throughout Europe. Emperors granted land to nobles in exchange for their loyalty. This system known as Feudalism was a system of loyalties and protections during the Middle Ages and was most common in Great Britain and France.

A king, queen or lord would grant a fief, or land estates to their supporters in return for money, goods, and service in war. These supporters are known as vassals. Vassals were required to attend the lord at his court, help administer justice, and contribute money if needed. He must answer a summons to battle, bringing an agreed upon number of soldiers, equipment and provisions. They were also required to pay ransom for a kidnapped lord, pay taxes to the lord and provide accommodations when the lord visited. In return the lord was obliged to protect the vassal, give military aid, and guard his children.

At the bottom of the feudal society were the serfs. Although not technically a slave, a serf was bound to a lord for life. He could own no property and needed the lord's permission to marry. Serfs would often have to work three or four days a week for the lord as rent. They would spend the rest of their week growing crops to feed their families. Other serfs worked as sharecroppers. A sharecropper would be required to turn over most of what he grew in order to be able to live on the land. However, the serf did have rights. He could not be displaced if the manor changed hands. He could not be required to fight, and he was entitled to the protection of the lord.

1. Why was feudalism created?
2. How did it work? Fill in the feudal pyramid.



3. Describe the life of a serf.
4. Is a feudalist society in any way like our society today? Why or why not?

Manorialism

Manorialism, otherwise known as the Manorial System, is the political, economic, and social system by which peasants of medieval Europe were made dependent on their land and on their lord. Its basic unit was the manor, a self-sufficient estate that was under the control of a lord who enjoyed variety of rights over it and the peasants attached to it. The manorial system was the most convenient device for organizing the estates of the aristocracy and the clergy in the European Middle Ages, and it made feudalism possible.

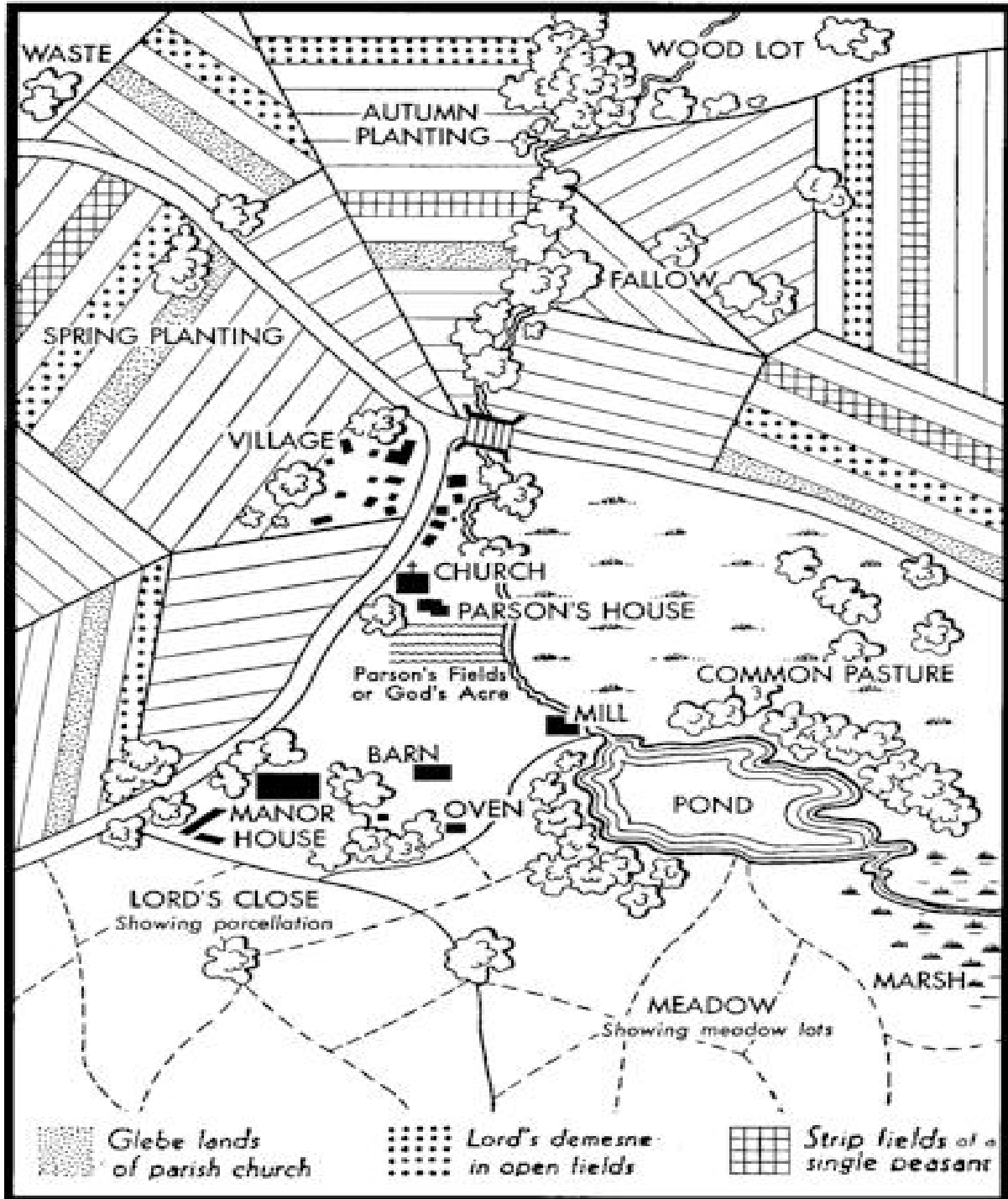
Manorialism had its origins in the late Roman Empire, when large landowners had to consolidate their hold over both their lands and the laborers who worked them. This was a necessity in the midst of the civil disorders, enfeebled governments, and barbarian invasions that wracked Europe in the 5th and 6th centuries AD. In such conditions, small farmers and landless laborers exchanged their land or their freedom and pledged their services in exchange for the protection of powerful landowners who had the military strength to defend them. In this manner, the poor, defenseless, landless, and weak were ensured permanent access to plots of land which they could work in return for economic service to the lord who held that land. This arrangement developed into the manorial system, which in turn supported the feudal aristocracy of kings, lords, and vassals.

The typical western European manner in the 13th century consisted partly of the cottages, huts, and barns and gardens of its peasants or serfs, which were usually clustered together to form a small village. There might also be a church, a mill, and a wine or oil press in the village. Close by was the fortified dwelling, or manor house, of the lord. The village was surrounded by the arable land that was divided into three large fields that were farmed in rotation, with one allowed to lie fallow each year. There were also usually meadows for supplying hay, pastures for livestock, pools for steaming fish, and forests and wastelands for wood gathering and foraging.

The Manorial System provided stability in those ancient and dark times where the only safety was behind the thick impenetrable walls of a mighty manor, or even more effective, castle.

1. What is Manorialism?
2. What caused the start of Manorialism?
3. What are some things you might find in a manor?

The manor, the self-contained economic unit of early medieval life, operated on a system of reciprocal rights and obligations based on custom. In return for protection, strips of arable land, and the right to use the nonarable common land, the peasant paid dues and worked on the lord's demesne. Under the three-field system, one-third of the land lay fallow so that intensive cultivation did not exhaust the soil.



Women in Medieval Thought

Whether a nun or the wife of an aristocrat, townsmen, or peasant; a woman in the Middle Ages was considered to be inferior to a man and subject to a man's authority. Although there are a number of examples of strong women who ignored such attitudes, church teachings also reinforced these notions. These two excerpts below offer a look at how women were viewed during the Middle Ages.

Document #1

Women should be subject to their men. The natural order for mankind is that women should serve men and children their parents, for it is just that the lesser serve the greater.

The image of God is in man and it is one. Women were drawn from man, who had God's jurisdiction as if he were God's vicar, because he has the image of one God. Therefore woman is not made in God's image.

Woman's authority is nil; let her in all things be subject to the rule of man...And neither can she teach, nor be a witness, nor give a guarantee, nor sit in judgment.

Adam was beguiled by Eve, not she by him. It is right that he whom woman led into wrongdoing should have her under his direction, so that he may not fail a second time through female levity.

Source: Gratian, *Decretum*

1. Give an example of bias in this article.
2. What additional document should be supplied to further understand a woman's role in medieval society?