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Historical Inquiry: Who has the Power? Using Film to Introduce Students to Medieval Social Class Structures


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Illinois Council of Social Studies

Historical Inquiry: Who has the Power?

Using Film to Introduce Students to Medieval Social Class Structures

Using film in the classroom to teach history has long been endorsed as an effective pedagogical method when the lessons' purposes and goals are clearly supported with facts. Lately, several academic books and research studies have focused on using films as legitimate resources (see: Gunn, 2010; Kaka, 2022; Marcus, Metzger, Paxton, & Stoddard, 2018; Roberts & Elfer, 2018, 2021). One reason for the upsurge is because technology access in schools has tremendously improved. For example, it is unnecessary to show full two-hour movies when relevant clips are easily available on the internet, thus teachers may carefully select brief clips that highlight a specific topic for discussion. When choosing a film that might be rated PG or PG-13, teachers take care to share short, concise clips that accent the topic while omitting parts that cause rating concerns. Another option is to send parent/guardian permission forms, if necessary. Innumerable forms, already being used for this purpose, are located on internet teaching sites.

Hollywood films are produced for entertainment, so incorporating fiction into a storyline to generate more excitement is expected; however, without historical background knowledge or contextualization, students are bound to consider commercial media as fact. Social studies education specialist, Scott Metzker (2017), emphasizes that teachers must align lesson goals, subject matter, and class activities with a proper film choice for real learning to occur.

In most U.S. states, teachers begin their plans with *curriculum content* standards designed by each state's department of education, thus historical content is typically expected to remain consistent and chronological from grade to grade. Standards regulate lessons' overall purposes, goals, and objectives. Regarding *skills*, students and the general public are likely to access historical information from a television program, film, or video game, so film clips coupled with teacher scaffolding should equip students with skills to view historical representation critically (Aberth, 2003; Attreed & Powers, 1997; Stoddard & Marcus, 2010; Woelders, 2007). Scaffolding, in this context, means that teachers facilitate activities that help students build on prior knowledge and skills. Activities may include expert modeling, student collaboration, breaking lessons into chunks and/or mini-projects, discussion, student reflections, and use of tools such as graphic organizers. Scaffolds support students' construction of critical thinking skills. Instructors should encourage students to engage their newly developed critical thinking skills while concurrently providing individualized feedback to students as often as possible (Browne, Hough, Schwab, 2009).

Films can further serve as compelling methods for communicating information about another society and culture. Most students lack deep cultural and geographical awareness concerning world historical topics and societies (Attreed & Powers, 1997). Explicit connections to people and places of long ago are less comparable to students' own experiences, which conceivably impacts their interest in learning (Roberts & Elfer, 2021).

When that antiquated world society is Medieval Europe, films become a useful tool for students who find the distant European past difficult to envision (Attreed & Powers, 1997). Helmsing and Vardas-Doane (2019) suggest that teachers explaining medievalism might engage students in discussions about how the period is perceived in modern culture (e.g., representations such as art, music, icons, concepts, fantasy). When students understand principles of comparison and symbolism, they may begin to realize that many issues in contemporary life have their roots in medieval history. Additionally, students may acquire context, which is a blend of the recognizable and remote—ways in which medieval peoples' perceptions and actions are like and different from ours (Attreed & Powers, 1997; Dawson, 2020). Films serve as supplementary resources to motivate student learning, help teach remote and unreachable historical content, and invoke critical thinking.

Selecting the Appropriate Film to Supplement Lessons

The overall purpose of the article is to better understand the use of film to teach history. It includes an inquiry-based lesson plan targeted for educators who aspire to introduce students to *basic* European medieval history, specifically focused on social class hierarchies. Medieval history is listed in many U.S. state curriculum standards and international teaching benchmarks; thus, this lesson contributes a world history *teaching-ready* source that familiarizes students with historical concepts, geographies, and politics (i.e., power structures).

We selected movie clips from 2001's *A Knight's Tale* (Helgeland, 2001). Though the film is framed in a semi-modern setting, it incorporates some historical accuracy. *A Knight's Tale* is a medieval adventure film with its name derived from one of the many stories in Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* (c. 1400). The plot is about a young, lower-social status man named William Thatcher as he endeavors to "change his stars." William, along with two other squires, discover their master, a knight, has died before he is about to compete in a jousting tournament. Though only men of noble birth are allowed to compete, William decides to impersonate his master and dons his armor to compete in the joust.

One major reason for selecting this movie is that the story includes characters representing various social classes such as a young writer named Geoffrey Chaucer, squires, a noble lady, a female blacksmith, a count, Prince

Edward III (The Black Prince), and a huge assembly of peasants. Scenes present images of historical social class activities and people's behaviors. These may be used to stimulate rich classroom discussion and critical interpretation. Questions might be— who's experiences are misrepresented by the film? what does the film accurately reveal about medieval classes?

A Knight's Tale is interpreting modern research on social mobility in the late middle-ages and translating it into a story that audiences understand. The use of *anachronism* in *A Knight's Tale* is not by mistake. The writer/director used anachronism to convey to the modern audience the different social hierarchies represented in the movie. For example, one of the very first scenes in the movie is that of a crowd of ordinary folk preparing to watch a joust. The soundtrack? Queen's "We Will Rock You." (Sulewski, 2011, para. 3).

We believe the phrase "modern audience" in the quote above is another key reason for selecting *A Knight's Tale* for the lesson. Incorporating clips from this contemporary movie should actively engage students in comparison [past and present] to develop context. For instance, the iconic rock anthem, "We will Rock You" must be quite familiar to most students, as it has been played to energize sports fans across the world for decades (Broadcast Music, Inc. (BMI), 2009). This is one example of a blend of the recognizable and remote (Attreed & Powers, 1997; Dawson, 2020).

Inquiry-based Learning Pedagogy and the C3 Framework

Inquiry learning is the primary pedagogy employed in this lesson plan because it is student-centered and encourages in-depth investigation, evidence-based research, and critical thinking. This inquiry model borrows from the National Council for Social Studies (NCSS) *College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards: Guidance for Enhancing the Rigor of K-12 Civics, Economics, Geography, and History*. While the ultimate purpose of this article is to better understand ways to use film to teach history, particularly medieval power structures, we believe it is also necessary to provide a general overview of the C3 framework.

In summary, "the C3 framework highlights four dimensions that center on the use of questions to spark curiosity, guide instruction, deepen investigations, acquire rigorous content, and apply knowledge and ideas in real world settings..." (NCSS, n.d., para. 3). Dimension 1 emphasizes that compelling and supporting questions, created by students and/or teachers, are necessary to connect a broad array of concepts, facts, and generalizations surrounding the topic. While a compelling question is typically meant to be profoundly thought provoking, supporting questions may serve as sources to help students gain background

knowledge before responding to the compelling question. With questions in hand, Dimension 2 focuses on disciplinary content. Students learn how to work with sources and fill knowledge gaps. Dimension 3 stresses helping students cultivate the ability to gather and evaluate appropriate, reliable sources on the topic and then glean evidence from the resources to apply in developing claims and counterclaims. The Historical Thinking Project (n.d.), originally directed by Dr. Peter Seixas of the University of British Columbia, explains, “historically literate citizens can assess the legitimacy of claims, have thoughtful ways to tackle these debates, can interrogate historical sources, and they know that a historical film can look “realistic” without being accurate” (para. 4).

Dimension 4 involves students reaching final decisions and/or solving problems and communicating their newfound knowledge to others. This framework emphasizes taking informed action, which encourages students to become active participants in society, perhaps pushing themselves to share newly constructed knowledge in public, outside the classroom. We maintain this framework is an appropriate strategy because the lesson includes questions, research sources to help students reach conclusions, provide evidence to support their claims, perhaps engage in argumentation, and communicate their knowledge to others.

This article’s subsequent pages primarily focus on the lesson plan and include these sections (a) *Lesson Plan Discussion*, (b) *Movie Clips’ Descriptions and Purposes*, (c) *Brief Overview of Topics Students Research in the Lesson*, (d) *Who has the Power? Lesson Plan*, (e) *Conclusion*, (f) *References*, and (g) *Appendices*. Our lesson plan is structured on the *IDM Blueprint Template* (Grant, Lee, & Swan, 2014), which adheres to the C3 inquiry model.

Lesson Plan Discussion: Who Has the Power?

To begin, we offer several curriculum standards that represent four randomly selected U.S. states, because curriculum standards are the foundation for planning educational goals. The *compelling question* asks students to think about all gathered information [from in-class student research groups], analyze, compare, prioritize, and explain their responses. The question: who do you believe had more or fewer (1) rights, (2) freedoms, or (3) fair treatment during the medieval period? Compare, prioritize social class people and groups from most to least, and then explain why you believe that. Three *supporting questions* with accompanying activities are simply meant to help students construct their own background knowledge about medieval socio-political power structures.

Procedures

First, to introduce the lesson (or unit) teachers are asked to create a SlideShare or other type presentation to display authentic pictures of medieval life and ask students to compare their observations to today's lifestyles. One question might be: what can you see in these pictures that might remind you of ordinary, day-to-day, life in today's world? To scaffold, teachers model the activity and perhaps suggest such ideas as sports competitions, entertainment, people in power (class systems), food production, money, jobs, health/disease, wealth and poverty, people's behaviors, and others. Students work with discussion partners or small groups to locate hints in the pictures and then share with the class. Example sources for teachers to retrieve pictures are provided in the lesson plan template. The purpose is for students to think of medieval individuals as real people (e.g., no dragons, magic, or fantasy as seen in video games). The ability to compare past and present people's habits, behaviors, and folkways, more deeply than surface level, takes critical and creative thinking.

Second, students are asked to read a brief passage (Appendix A), to understand the basic hierarchical system, and then create hierarchical maps with their discussion groups. This is intended to help students discern the societal context of the period in Britain (around 1300-1400s).

Third, students research resources selected for them (see Appendix B) to generally think about power structures, human rights, and equity. Each group focuses on a different topic using the jigsaw strategy. Student groups are provided pre-selected websites to research a few topics and discuss their connections with one another: (a) Medieval Society/Rural and Town Life, (b) Knights and Jousting, (c) Women's Roles, (d) The Black Death/Plague, (e) Peasants' Revolt, (f) Hundred Years War, (g) King Edward III (the Black Prince), and (h) Geoffrey Chaucer. Additionally, Appendix B includes 10 *Suggested Guiding (higher order) Inquiry Questions about Power Dynamics (Equity)* as needed, a list of *Concepts to Know* for each research topic, and *Extra Background Information for Teachers*. According to class prerequisites, teachers may need to provide familiarization activities for content area concepts before the lesson (or unit) begins. Examples of student-centered concept study include interactive word-walls (graffiti), contextualized vocabulary instruction, word analogy, semantic maps, vocabulary self-collection strategy, concept circles, concept card and/or online games, dramatizations, introducing new concepts with pictures, Pictionary, Quizlet, graphic organizers such as the Frayer Model, and others.

Teachers should adapt this lesson, including students' research topics, to fit their needs. Working with only the research they gather on one topic; each group shares their findings and then engages in the Harvard Graduate School of Education's (2022) thinking routine entitled *What Makes You Say That?* The What Makes You Say That Thinking Routine helps students describe what they see or know and asks them to build explanations. It promotes evidential reasoning

and because it invites students to share their interpretations, students are encouraged to ponder alternatives and multiple perspectives about equality within and among various medieval groups (see Appendix C for graphic organizer). The graphic organizer task, modeled by the teacher, is a beneficial scaffolding strategy to help students organize their thoughts and develop concrete thinking from abstract ideas.

Again, the last supporting question is intended to help students construct their own background knowledge: what do you think was the most important indicator of power? was it money, land, or birthright? why? This question requires students to think, recognize connections between topics their classmates discussed after the jigsaw research, reach conclusions, and make a case to support their stance. While money, land, and birthright are all viable responses, students' critical thinking comes into play when deciding on the "most important" indicator and explaining why. Perhaps this question could further lead to skills-based lessons focused on debate rules and practices.

Next, students create presentations, which highlight researched medieval social class groups and power dynamics. In our lesson, student groups receive one or all questions per group. Within their presentations, groups respond to optional questions with yes/no answers and then provide researched evidence for their responses. For example, "Group 3: In the end, the Black Death plague helped peasants who lived through it." The response here is yes. The plague took a huge death toll on Europeans, especially peasants with few resources. In the end, though, this resulted in a shortage of labor, so peasants had more freedoms. They were paid for their labor. They could pick and choose where they wished to work, contract for high salaries, and leave landowners if they received better offers.

As working conditions and salaries improved, so did the lifestyles of the peasants. Goods and activities that had only been available to those with money were suddenly being taken up by peasants and other members of the lower classes. They used their newfound wealth to buy fancier clothes, eat nicer food, and take up leisure activities like hunting (Walton, 2022, section 5).

Movie Clips' Descriptions and Purposes

In the movie, *A Knight's Tale*, the peasant William Thatcher wanted to "change his stars". After viewing the video clips, students are asked to consider the realistic possibilities for upward mobility. Questions might include the following: what do you think is real and/or fiction in this movie? realistically, in what situations do you think peasants might have become knights? in what situations do you think a woman could become an independent blacksmith like the character in this movie? what makes you say that? how do you believe power is achieved, secured, established, and/or changed in today's world?

All resources for teachers and students are provided, and suggestions for digital tools are inserted throughout the lesson plan. Movie Clip 1 is intended to show students a brief overview of the film; Movie Clip 2 illustrates how the movie uses *anachronism* to compare jousting competition fan behaviors to those of today's sports fans. Anachronism is an act of attributing a custom, event, or object to a period to which it does not belong. Teachers should follow the clip by explaining *anachronism* and how it is applied in this movie. Clip 3 is an analysis of Chaucer's tournament speech, which uses anachronism to embellish his showmanship. He speaks to the nobles, which was traditional; however, he also speaks to the crowd of peasant fans, in which he includes them in the festivities and discreetly points out unequal social status. As a sidenote, if interested, teachers might explain that this gesture compares to John Lennon's introduction to the Beatles' last song at the 1963 Royal Command Performance by acknowledging the people in the cheap seats and telling the upper classes in the better seats to just "rattle their jewelry" (Denninger, 2016; Whatley, 2019). Clip 4 provides a happy ending in which William is knighted, thus "changing his stars." This lesson is suggested for upper elementary and middle school grades (see example curriculum standards in the lesson template), though it can be adapted for different grade levels, according to students' readiness, including social studies pre-service teacher education.

Brief Overview of Topics Students Research in the Lesson

Medieval society and Peasants' Revolt. The movie takes place during 14th century Europe, which is considered the Late Middle Ages. During this period, lasting from about 1250–1500 CE, society was based on a feudal system, a cultural, societal, and political hierarchy. "In time, peasants [lower status] revolted in response to the injustice of feudalism, just as many strikes of contemporary times are a response to capitalism" (Ferrillo, 2021, para. 3). The first rebellion, the Peasants' Revolt, took place in 1381. The revolt was triggered by hostility regarding the Poll Tax, a special tax imposed to cover the cost of the Hundred Years War (1337–1453 England vs. France). Socio-economic and political strains related to the Black Death in the 1340's caused further upheaval

Knights and jousting. Knights were also part of the feudal hierarchy of the time. In exchange for food, shelter, and protection, knights provided military service to their lords. Knights were typically sons of noblemen or of other knights and worked their way up from page to squire before becoming a knight. For jousting tournaments, knights mounted horses and charged at each other attempting to strike their opponent with a lance, an 8-10-foot-long piece of wood. The objective of jousting was to hit an opponent in the chest, throat, helmet, or knock them off their horse (Cartwright, 2018).

Women’s roles. Women’s role in 14th century society was primarily domestic and “most women, even those in privileged circumstances, had little control over the direction their lives took” (Bovey, 2015, para. 7). Their responsibilities included caring for children, making food and preparing meals, sewing/constructing textiles, and sometimes tending livestock and crops. Women’s actions were often dictated by biblical texts, particularly by the writings of apostle Paul, which emphasized men's authority over women.

The Black Death/Plague and the Great Famine. The Black Death, or Black Plague, was an epidemic of bubonic plague that spread throughout Europe and Asia in the mid 1300’s. It was brought by sailors from the Black Sea; their ship docked in Messina, Italy. This plague was not the first disaster to strike during the 14th century. The Great Famine lasted from 1315-1317 CE and spread throughout almost all Northern Europe. A rise in the price for food made it accessible only to nobles or people with money to spare. Peasants could not afford the price of wheat to make bread and were unable to grow it due to poor weather conditions. People had become weakened by various diseases and much of their stock had been eaten, thus, the food supply chain did not return to normal until 1325 CE.

Hundred Years War. The Hundred Years’ War has been used by historians since the beginning of the nineteenth century to describe the long conflict between the kings and kingdoms of France and England against each other from 1337 to 1453. It began with a dispute over which king should rule France, the most powerful country in Europe at the time.

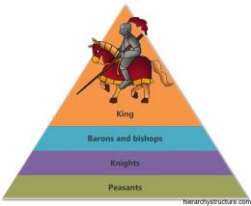
Who Has the Power? Lesson Plan

Inquiry Design Model (IDM) Blueprint™	
Compelling Question	Who do you believe had more or fewer (1) rights, (2) freedoms, or (3) fair treatment during the medieval period? Compare, prioritize medieval people and/or groups from most to least, and then explain why you believe that.
Standards and Practices	<p>Various State Examples:</p> <p>Connecticut</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · HIST 5.2 Compare life in specific historical periods to life today. · HIST 5.4 Explain why individuals and groups during the same historical period differed in their perspectives. · HIST 5.5 Explain connections among historical contexts and people’s perspectives at the time. · HIST 8.1 Analyze connections among events and developments in historical contexts. · HIST 8.3 Analyze multiple factors that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras. · HIST 8.4 Explain how and why perspectives of people have changed over time (e.g., American

	<p>Revolution, slavery, labor, the role of women).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · HIST 8.5 Analyze how people’s perspectives influenced what information is available in the historical sources they created. <p>Michigan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · I.2.3. Select conditions in various parts of the world and describe how they have been shaped by events from the past. · I.2.4. Use historical biographies to explain how events from the past affected the lives of individuals and how some individuals influenced the course of history. · II.1.1. Locate and describe the diverse places, cultures, and communities of major world regions. · II.1.2. Describe and compare characteristics of major world cultures including language, religion, belief systems, gender roles, and traditions. · II.1.3. Explain why people live and work as they do in different regions. · II.3.1. Locate and describe major economic activities and occupations of major world regions and explain the reasons for their locations. · II.3.2. Explain how governments have divided land and sea areas into different regions. <p>New Jersey</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 6.2.8.HistoryCC.3. a: Determine the extent to which religion, economic issues, and conflict shaped the values and decisions of the classical civilizations. · 6.2.8.HistoryUP.3.a: Compare and contrast social hierarchies in classical civilizations as they relate to power, wealth, and equality. · 6.2.8.HistoryUP.3.b: Compare the status of groups in the Ancient World to those of people today and evaluate how individuals perceived the principles of liberty and equality then and now (i.e., political, economic, and social). · 6.2.8.HistoryCC.4.c: Assess the demographic, economic, and religious impact of the plague on Europe. · 6.2.8.CivicsHR.3.a: Compare and contrast the rights and responsibilities of free men, women, slaves, and foreigners in the political, economic, and social structures of classical civilizations. <p>Pennsylvania</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 8.1.7.B: Identify and use primary and secondary sources to analyze multiple points of view for historical events. · 8.1.8.A: Compare and contrast events over time and how continuity and change over time influenced those events. · 8.4.8.A: Compare the role groups and individuals played in the social, political, cultural, and economic development throughout world history.
<p>Staging the Question</p>	<p>Engage students with the compelling question by showing them a series of pictures. Cultural representations such as clothing, food, and shelter are interesting; however, students should be encouraged to observe the images, think deeply, and collect clues and guesses (hypotheses) about lifestyles. Tell students that there are no right or wrong responses.</p> <p>Ask, “What can you see in these pictures that might remind you of ordinary, day-to-day, life in today’s world?” Consider such ideas as sports competitions, entertainment, people in power (class systems), food production, money, jobs, wealth, poverty, people’s behaviors, and others. Students work in small discussion groups to locate hints in the pictures and then share their ideas with the class.</p> <p>Before starting the lesson, collect pictures, to create a SlideShare from these <i>example sites</i> and others.</p> <p>Google (2022). <i>How to use Google slides</i>. How to use Google Slides - Computer - Google Docs Editors</p>

<p>Help</p> <p>Galdiz, C. (2013). <i>What do we really know about Medieval women?</i> https://www.medievalists.net/2013/09/what-do-we-really-know-about-medieval-women/</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Picture of a group of women <p>History Extra (2022). Medieval history extra. <i>BBC History Magazine and BBC History Revealed</i>. HTTPs MedievalBritain (n.d.). <i>Medieval occupations and jobs</i>. Medieval Life: Medieval Occupations and Jobs, their Guilds and More (medievalbritain.com)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Butcher, Wheelwright, Shoemaker, Shipwright, Stablemaster, Groom, Cook, Servant, Miner, Baker, Stone Carver, Farmer, Scribe <p>Medieval Histories (2011). <i>Medieval women</i>. Medieval Women — Medieval Histories</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wealthy woman <p>Medievalist.com (2022). Hunting in the Middle Ages: Articles and Theses - Medievalists.net Medievalist.com (2022). <i>We all eat white bread because of 7th-century missionaries to England</i>. https://www.medievalists.net/2022/05/white-bread-england/</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture – wheat production <p>Wikipedia Commons (2018). <i>Category: Medieval art</i>. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Medieval_art</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various Medieval art images <p>Show Clip 1: Movieclips Classic Trailers (2017). <i>A Knight's Tale</i>. (Video) YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KzsTKqTq1M (Overall Story) <i>Note: last scene may be offensive.</i></p> <p>Show Clip 2: <i>A Knight's Tale - We will rock you</i> (2021). (Video) YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rr9roMoMT1Y</p>		
Supporting Question 1	Supporting Question 2	Supporting Question 3
<p>What is a social class system?</p> <p>What was the <i>basic</i> social class system of Medieval Europe?</p>	<p>Generally speaking, what equal and/or unequal treatment existed for people during the medieval period?</p> <p>What makes you say that?</p>	<p>What do you think was the most important indicator of power? Was it money, land, or birthright? Why?</p> <p>Could people really “change their stars”? Why or why not?</p>
Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task
<p>Students Read: Appendix A</p> <p>Students create a “<i>basic</i>” hierarchical pyramid map of the Medieval “power”</p>	<p>Show Movie Clip 3:</p> <p>Barber, Z. (2017). <i>A Knight's Tale</i> scene analysis: Chaucer's speech. (Video). YouTube. <i>Note: one profane word.</i> A Knight's Tale Scene Analysis: Chaucer's Speech</p>	<p>Show Movie Clip 4:</p> <p>Elliott, M. (n.d.) <i>A Knights Tale - Chaucer's Plea in front of Pillory</i>. (Video) YouTube. A Knights Tale - Chaucer's Plea in</p>

<p>system as they understand it.</p> <p>Students may work individually, with partners, or within small groups.</p> <p>[At the end of the entire lesson or unit, students revisit the map and add these groups and individuals to the map]: serfs, vassals, gentry, landed aristocrats, counts, Roman Catholic Pope, cardinals, priests, freemen, women.</p> <p>Whole class discussion.</p>	<p>- YouTube</p> <p>In small groups, students research selected websites on Appendix B to write summarized content knowledge and responses to the supporting question. What makes you say that? Each group contributes content on a different, though, connected topic.</p> <p><i>The What Makes You Say That Thinking Routine</i> helps students describe what they see or know and asks them to build explanations. It promotes evidential reasoning (evidence-based reasoning) and because it invites students to share their interpretations, it encourages students to understand alternatives and multiple perspectives</p> <p>Harvard University Graduate School of Education (2022). <i>Project Zero Thinking Routines</i>.</p> <p>What Makes You Say That? Project Zero (harvard.edu)</p>	<p>front of Pillory - YouTube</p> <p>Student Groups create presentations.</p> <p>Example Guiding Questions for Presentations (option). Within the presentations, groups respond to one or all the optional questions below with a yes/no answer, and then provide researched evidence for their responses.</p> <p>Group 1: People in medieval town life and rural life had the same social status.</p> <p>Group 2: Ordinary women (excluding nobility) were treated as equals in society.</p> <p>Group 3: In the end, the Black Death plague helped peasants who lived through it.</p> <p>Group 4: Did ordinary people benefit from the Hundred Years War?</p> <p>Group 5: When lower status medieval people revolted against perceived abuses of higher-class people, were changes made in the system? What was the significance of the Peasants' Revolt of 1381?</p> <p>Groups 6 & 7: The ending movie clip in <i>A Knight's Tale</i> shows a peasant (William Thatcher) being ordained as a knight by the prince. Do you think this could have really happened to a peasant?</p> <p>Group 8: The Black Prince lost his kingdom in the Hundred Years War and became a peasant.</p> <p>Group 9: Geoffrey Chaucer was a wealthy landowner (lord) with extravagant privileges.</p>
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Featured Sources		Featured Sources	Featured Sources
<p>Appendix A – Student Reading</p> <p>Computers to create pyramid maps. If computers are unavailable, students may create maps with butcher paper and markers.</p> <p>European Feudal Hierarchy</p>  <p>Example Source: Creative Commons</p> <p>Lucid (2022). <i>Lucidchart. Pyramid Chart with Descriptions Lucid for Education</i> (free technology)</p>		<p>Appendix B – Graphic Organizer</p> <p>Optional: Make Appendix B into a fillable form.</p> <p>Compton, M. (2021, February 21). <i>How to make a fillable form in Microsoft Word.</i> https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RjoCyWq7LJ8</p> <p>Movie Clip 3</p>	<p>Possible Free Presentation Tools:</p> <p>Canva (2022). <i>Design powerful and engaging presentation</i> https://www.canva.com/create/presentations/</p> <p>Canva (2022). <i>Canva for education and Flipgrid partner to unlock student creativity.</i> https://www.canva.com/learn/flipgrid-integration/</p> <p>Mattison, O. (2022, May 6). <i>10+ best video editing apps for kids. 10 Best Video Editing Apps for Kids [FREE & PAID] (wondershare.com)</i></p> <p>Movie Clip 4</p>
Summative Performance Task	Argument	After watching classmates’ presentations, construct a final argument to answer the compelling question: who do you believe had rights, freedom, and fair treatment during the medieval period? Prioritize medieval people and groups from most to least and then explain why you believe that.	
	Extension	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Using current events, extensively compare everyday life in medieval times to our lives today. Consider such ideas as sports competitions, communication, entertainment, people in power (class systems), war, food production, food scarcity, food supply chain, money, jobs, wealth, poverty, disease/pandemics, taxes, attitudes about land ownership, freedom, people’s behaviors, human rights, civil rights, women’s rights, protests/revolts/rebellions, and others. Read more about Medieval England and take the 6th grade test at this site: IXL Learning (2022). <i>N.3 The Middle Ages after 1100.</i> https://www.ixl.com/social-studies/grade-6/the-middle-ages-after-1100 Review the original pyramid maps students designed. Student discussion groups add serfs, vassals, gentry, landed aristocrats, counts, Roman Catholic Pope, cardinals, priests, freemen, and women where they believe those groups fit within the power hierarchy. Note that in the lesson plan, religion and/or the church’s power were not researched. As an extension, students might focus further inquiries on the role/power of religion in the 	

		<p>medieval period and/or periods of unrest over religion.</p>
<p>Taking Informed Action</p>	<p>Students share their presentations through virtual exhibitions and/or student-led academic conferences.</p> <p>“Share Your Learning is a national movement to transform schools into places where students can communicate, collaborate and contribute. Educators across the globe committed to include exhibitions, student-led conferences, or presentations of learning in their teaching practice to empower students to have agency over their learning and to know that they matter.”</p> <p>See examples and resources here: Share Your Learning (n.d.). https://shareyourlearning.org/</p>	

Conclusion

There is growing emphasis on incorporating films as a resource in history lessons. In this article, we named several reasons for using movie clips as reliable content and skills-teaching sources. Films provide information about other societies and cultures, especially past societies, which cannot be experienced or ever totally known. Students can become familiar with verbal and non-verbal exchanges more effectively. For example, films about the middle-ages show how language was used in ancient times— accents, pronunciations, facial expressions, verbal tones, and body language (thedigitalteachers, 2021). Michael Livingston (2020), Professor of Medieval Culture at The Citadel, reiterates that film can capture realistic historical truth and truth of historical relationship. In other words, there is a difference in knowing history and feeling the emotion of it (2020).

In this article we maintain that lessons, incorporating carefully selected film clips, motivate student learning, help teach remote and unreachable historical content, and invoke critical thinking. This lesson's historical content introduces students to human power structures, which dictated Medieval European social class systems. Power and class systems are major foundational concepts encountered across distance, cultures, and time. Consequently, these concepts influence thinking about how one fits into a society and the ethical issues, such as equity, which are innately entrenched within power structures.

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Appendix A

Student Reading: The Basic European Feudal System Hierarchy
Working within small groups, students read and discuss this brief synopsis of basic European feudal system hierarchy. Afterwards, each group creates a hierarchy model.

This reading is directly quoted from the following sources:

Cole, L. (2019, December 29). *What is social class, and why does it matter? How sociologists define and study the concept.*

<https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-social-class-and-why-does-it-matter-3026375> (text under CC).

HierarchyStructure (2022). *European feudal hierarchy.*

<https://www.hierarchystructure.com/european-feudal-hierarchy/>

Under the feudal system, all the people were divided into a well-defined structure in which each category or **class** of people had certain duties to perform, and, in return, they were rewarded with land. The feudal system **hierarchy** was divided into four categories, where each category represented a certain **class** of people.

Every higher level in the hierarchy had greater privileges, power, and land than the lower class following them.

1. King

All the land in the kingdom belonged to king and hence king was on the top of the hierarchical structure. King kept about a quarter of his royal estates for his personal usage and divided the rest of the kingdom among his noble men – Barons and Bishops.

2. Barons and Bishops

These were known as **tenant-in-chief** who received land from the king. The tenants-in-chief were required to perform certain ceremonies of homage (i.e., service, respect, tribute) before the king would hand over the land to them. They were required to take oath that they would serve the kingdom and the king faithfully and perform their due services throughout their life. The kings required tenants-in-chiefs to always be ready to fight for the king, and they were also expected to bring along certain number of **knights** depending on the size of the war. To arrange knights for the war, **bishops and barons** did the same as the king. They subletted (i.e., leased) their lands to **knights** in return for military services

3. Knights

Knights were the fighters in wars and were also known as **under tenants** as per the European feudal hierarchy. They also gave some parts of their land to **peasants** for services, and in this way, they became able to support and sustain themselves. The under tenants paid homage to his **lord**, just as the lord had done

to the king. The king's fighting strength always depended on the good supply of trained knights.

4. Peasants

After knights, came the lowest category or **class** of people in the feudal system – the peasants. The responsibility of peasants was to farm the land and provide food supplies to the whole kingdom. In return for land, they were either required to serve the **knight** or pay **rent** for the land.

In this way each category had certain duties to perform and people of every type existed in the European feudal system.

Why Does Class Matter?

Class, economic class, socio-economic class, social class. What's the difference? Each refers to how people are sorted into groups—specifically ranked hierarchies—in society. There are, in fact, important differences among them. It matters to sociologists because the fact that it exists reflects unequal access to rights, resources, and power in society. As such, it has a strong effect on the access an individual has to education, the quality of that education, and how high a level he or she can reach. It also affects who one knows socially and the extent to which those people can provide advantageous economic and employment opportunities, political participation, and power, and even health and life expectancy, among many other things.

Appendix B

Suggested Guiding Inquiry Questions about Power Dynamics (Equity):

1. How did rural life and town life compare?
2. Explain the medieval socio-economical class system.
3. Who benefited from feudalism? In what ways?
4. What accepted ideas about women's roles in medieval society encouraged their subservience?
5. What were ordinary women's choices? Why?
6. How and why did the Bubonic Plague change social power structures?
7. Who benefited from the Hundred Years War? In what ways?
8. How did geography and the ability or inability to grow grapes change people's lives? Who benefitted?
9. What was the significance of the Peasants' Revolt of 1381?
10. Do you think Salic law acceptable? Why or why not?

Student Groups' Research Resources

Student Group 1: Medieval Life: Background

Concepts and Facts to Know: social hierarchy, serf, freeman, vassal, gentry, peasant, landed aristocrats. CE is an abbreviation for Common Era, BCE is short for Before Common Era. The Common Era begins with year 1 in the Gregorian calendar. The Gregorian calendar, the calendar system we use today, was first introduced in 1582. It was created to make up for the inaccuracies of its predecessor, the Julian calendar. The introduction of the Gregorian calendar allowed for the realignment with events like the Vernal equinox and Winter solstice.

Rural and Town Life in Medieval Times

Bovy, A. (2015, April 30). Peasants and their role in rural life. *British Library*. <https://www.bl.uk/the-middle-ages/articles/peasants-and-their-role-in-rural-life>

Bovy, A. (2015, April 30). Inside the walls: Exploring medieval towns. *British Library*. <https://www.bl.uk/the-middle-ages/articles/inside-the-walls-exploring-towns-in-the-middle-ages>

Time period: Medieval 974-1485

Curriculum topics: Medieval Life

Suggested inquiry question: What were some of the "basic" differences between town life and rural life during medieval times? How did these geographical differences affect how people were separated into low to high social class systems? People with power vs. people without power? People in poverty vs. wealth? How did

food, money, labor, land, taxes, war, inequality, and other daily living conditions contribute to the Peasants' Revolt?
Simple History (2021). *Life in a medieval village*. (Video). YouTube.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yq3q7KMIvw0>

Student Group 2: Women's Roles in Medieval Times

Concepts to Know: plague, pandemic, Black Death, quarantine, distancing, common people, peasants, revolt, tax, famine, North Sea, English Channel, Salic Law, Crecy, Flanders, upper-class, nobility, counts, vassal, food preservation, triangular trade, Eleanor of Aquitaine, Henry II of England, abbess, abbey, monastery, priest, bishop, deacon, merchant, queen regnant, royalty, distaff, urban, monk, aristocratic.

Bovey, A. (2015, April 30). Women in medieval society. *British Library*.
<https://www.bl.uk/the-middle-ages/articles/women-in-medieval-society#>

Worldhistoryonline (2012). *Women in the middle ages*.
<http://www.heeve.com/middle-ages-history/women-in-the-middle-ages.html>

Student Group 3: The Black Death – Bubonic Plague (1348-1350) Pandemic

Concepts to Know: plague, quarantine, Central Asia, China, Black Sea, Middle East, Europe, heightened religiosity, Scientific Revolution, contagion, quarantine, plague-infested fleas, trade routes, epidemic, fleet, exile, Eurasia, sub-Saharan Africa, wild rodent communities, genetic signature of the plague.

BBC (2022). *Causes and effects of the Black Death*.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/zqjwxnb/articles/zdkssk7?course=zysttrd>

Brooke, J.L. (2020, June 2). The Black Death and its aftermath. *Origins: Current Events in Historical Perspective: Ohio State University*. (Video) (YouTube).

<https://origins.osu.edu/connecting-history/covid-black-death-plague-lessons>

Student Group 4: The Hundred Years' War (1336-1453)

Concepts to Know: Flanders, Flemish, cloth manufacturers, wool, fleece, market, import, preservation of food, counts, vassals, monarch, middle class, Eleanor of Aquitaine, Henry II of England, King Philip IV, Isabelle, King Edward II, King Edward III, Salic Law, Philip of Valois, fortified channel port, stuys, archers, pikemen, ranks, infantry, Calvary, mercenaries, feudal warfare, maritime.

Nelson, L.H. (2001, January 1). The Hundred Years' War, 1336-1453. *Lectures in medieval history*.

http://www.vlib.us/medieval/lectures/hundred_years_war.html

Thehistorysquad (2021, January 21). What sparked the Hundred Years War? | *Part 1 /Medieval history series*. (Video) (YouTube).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BDugcgtGmxQ>

Student Group 5: The Peasants' Revolt of 1381

Concepts to Know: revolution, rebellion, yokels, tax, One Hundred Years War, poll tax, shortfall, official, registers, commissioners, Thomas Baker, riot, John the Guant, King Richard II, serfdom, Thames River, peasants, legacy, politics, oppressive regime.

BBC (2022). *The Peasants' Revolt*.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/z93txbk>

History Hub (2017, October 23). *What was the significance of the Peasants' Revolt? | 3-minute history*. (Video) (YouTube).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9mdW1tT5vxx&t=44s>

Timeline - World History Documentaries (2018, March 4). *The Peasants' Revolt of 1381*. (Video) (YouTube).

<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/sessions-and-resources/?time-period=medieval>

Tony Robinson explores the major uprising across large parts of England in 1381, its origins, motives, and aftermath.

Student Group 6: Knights

Concepts to Know: medieval tournament, European knights, pageantry, heraldry, honor, chivalry, River Thames, abbey, cartographer, falconry, shield, lance, armor, dagger, battle axe, mace, bow, crossbow, page, squire, lords, Knights Templar, baron, besieged castle, noble lineage, medieval socio-economical class system, high status, rank, papal command, fiefs, minstrel, pilgrim, spurred, summoner, pardoner.

Cartwright, M. (2018, June 8). How to become a medieval knight. *Ancient History Encyclopedia*. <https://www.ancient.eu/article/1240/how-to-become-a-medieval-knight/>.

Cartwright (2018, November 22). The life of medieval knights: Collection. *World History Encyclopedia*.

<https://www.worldhistory.org/collection/27/the-life-of-medieval-knights/> (Creative commons text and visuals)

Topics:

- Medieval Knight: Definition (reading, listening, and Afrikaans and Portuguese translations)

- Medieval Knights: 12 of the Best (English read, listen, and French translation)
- How to Become a Medieval Knight (English read, listen, Afrikaans and Spanish translations)

English History (2015). Medieval knights and knighthood.

<https://englishhistory.net/middle-ages/medieval-knights/>

Knights in the Middle Ages were mounted soldiers who held land in exchange for military service. Originally, the title of knight could only be obtained through military achievements, and some knights came from the lower classes of mediaeval society. However, knights would eventually become only male descendants of knighted men, while knightly families were regarded as nobles. Regardless, the title of knight could not be inherited, and each noble had to go through a lengthy process before becoming a knight (para. 1).

Student Group 7: Jousting

Concepts to Know: sport, lance, point structure, armor, passes, opponent, “the list”, reins, knight, nobility.

History (n.d.). *Full metal jousting – The rules of the joust*. (Video)

YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FLAvtsiduA4>

Knights of Valor (2016, January 24). *Knights of Valour extreme jousting tournament*. (Video) (YouTube).

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rn_2nVXVZgc&t=182s

Medieval Jousting Mini Documentary (2012). (Video) YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=1Rtm6pWyog8&t=11s>

WKRG (2020, March 12). *Full-contact jousting: The Medieval sport that is still alive*. (Video) YouTube.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_OHpDuc_geI&t=6s

When people hear “jousting”, they likely think of the Medieval times and a sport that took place long ago.

Relevant People Highlighted for this Lesson Topic

Student Group 8: King Edward III - The Black Prince

Concepts to Know: Battle of Crecy, Prince of Wales, Joan of Kent, King Richard II.

British Broadcasting Company (BBC) (2014). *Edward, the Black Prince (1330 - 1376)*.

https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/black_prince.shtml

The Black Prince [A Knights Tale] (Video). YouTube.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A_BN_oO7nA

People Profiles (2020, August 7). *The Black Prince - England's warrior prince documentary*. (Video) YouTube.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FKgekOeftr4>
He fought his first battle at 16, won a crushing victory eight years later, and became Prince of Aquitaine not long after turning 30. Yet, the peace and plenty to follow proved to be more challenging to the Black Prince than the most ferocious enemy.

Student Group 9: Geoffrey Chaucer

British Broadcast System (BBC) (2018, August 2). *Chaucer: In our time*. (Podcast). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pO1uqSnAHSY>
Melvyn Bragg and guests discuss Geoffrey Chaucer, often called the father of English literature. Geoffrey Chaucer immortalized the medieval pilgrimage [to a sacred place] and the diversity of 14th century English society in his *Canterbury Tales*. As each pilgrim takes his, or her, turn to tell their tale on the road to Canterbury, Chaucer brings to life the voices of a knight, a miller, a wife of Bath and many more.

The Historians' Hut (2017, October 11). *The life of Geoffrey Chaucer*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jb5lhu_Awow&t=8s
The great English poet, Geoffrey Chaucer, was born in 1342. When he was around fifteen years of age, he managed to gain a position as page to the Countess of Ulster, serving mainly as a servant and messenger. Two years later, in 1359, Chaucer was sent to fight in the long-running Hundred Years War between England and France. He was quickly captured by the French near Rheims, but King Edward III (the Countess of Ulster's father-in-law) paid the poet's ransom in 1360.

Extra Background Information for Teachers

A Bit about Britain (n.d.). *Medieval timeline*.

<https://bitaboutbritain.com/medieval-timeline/>

Here is a simple timeline of events during (late) Medieval Britain, from the Norman invasion in 1066 to the Battle of Bosworth in 1485.

Bovey, A. (2015, April 30). Women in medieval society. *British Library*.

<https://www.bl.uk/the-middle-ages/articles/women-in-medieval-society>

Denninger, L. (2016, May 11). Heath is totally historic in 'A Knight's Tale'.

Bustle. <https://www.bustle.com/articles/158656-these-4-historical-facts-about-a-knights-tale-will-change-the-way-you-see-the-film>

- eChalk (2020, December 16). *The Medieval period animated timeline* (Video) YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z_iz2-DPFv4
- Galdiz, C. (2013). *What do we really know about Medieval women?* 115 Vernon (2003 - present). 26. https://digitalrepository.trincoll.edu/writing_associates/26
- History vs. Hollywood (2022). <https://www.historyvshollywood.com/>
- McIntosh, M. A. (2018, December 4). The feudal system in Medieval Europe. *Brewminate*. <https://brewminate.com/the-feudal-system-in-medieval-europe/>
- Mclaughlin, W. (2015, December 20). Historical review: *A Knight's Tale*; the good, the bad and the ugly. *War History Online*. <https://www.warhistoryonline.com/war-articles/historical-review-knights-tale-good-bad-ugly.html>
- Smallwood, C. (2015, December 15). *A Knight's Tale*: The real life of Ulrich Von Liechtenstein. *Today I found Out*. <https://www.todayifoundout.com/index.php/2015/12/knights-tale-real-life-ulrich-von-liechtenstein/>
- Sir Thomas Colville “-the illustrious Sir Thomas Colville!” [*A Knight's Tale* \(2001\)](#) clip from the 13th Century.
- UKEssays. (November 2018). *Similarities and differences between 21st century living and the medieval ages*. <https://www.ukessays.com/essays/history/similarities-and-differences-between-21st-century-living-and-the-medieval-ages.php?vref=1>
- Weird History Channel (2019, September 23). *What it was like to be a knight during medieval times*. (Video) YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UBp26Q4gmYA>
- When we think of knights during the Medieval times, we think of valiant men who chose to defend their honor in feats of jousting, chivalry, and dragon slaying. But that is not exactly how it was for the actual knights.

Appendix C: Research Results

1. First, write your research topic and your name.
2. Second, write a summary that describes your topic.
3. Third, respond to the supporting question with a generalization.
4. Fourth, provide evidence, taken from your research, to support your response.

Topic:

Name:

Summary:

Supporting Question: Generally speaking, what equal and/or unequal treatment existed for people during the Medieval period?

What makes you say that? (Evidence from Research)