



0. PEOPLE OF THE MIDDLE AGES - Story Preface

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Around 1515, Simon Bening (1484-1561) created this illumination which depicts peasants preparing flax for linen. The work is part of a book of hours, known as the *DaCosta Hours*, published in the town of Bruges (Belgium). Today it is owned by the Pierpont Morgan Library. Click on the image for a better view.

Families started and ended their days with the sun. Torches and candles provided light during the evening hours, but long days of hard work caused most people to sleep early.

The concept of "adolescence," as that term is understood today, did not exist in the 14th century. Teenagers were workers, just like their parents.

What kind of "individual rights" did people have? In England, the Court of Common Pleas (the civil court) not the Court of King's Bench (the criminal court) was assigned the job of enforcing the rights of peasants (farm workers). Early in the 14th century, however, the Court of Common Pleas decided it had no time "for the affairs of peasants."

Peasants, in other words, had few rights that were enforceable by law.

After the Black Death, the lot of peasants worsened. With so many people dead of the plague, fewer people had to do more work. It is said that many people in England were treated little better than animals.

"Common" people living in England also had to deal with language barriers - even within their own country. Most folks could not read and write their spoken language. (You will need QuickTime and patience for this link from Harvard University. It's worth the wait.)

After William the Conqueror, a Frenchman, conquered England in 1066, all English court documents (until 1500) were written in "Law French." Common people did not understand that language anymore than they understood Latin, the language of the Church.

Knights were part of life in the Middle Ages. When they weren't fighting wars, knights maintained their skills in fantastic jousting tournaments. Those tournaments were the equivalent of today's rock concerts.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/PEOPLE-OF-THE-MIDDLE-AGES-Knight-s-Tale-A)

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See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/PEOPLE-OF-THE-MIDDLE-AGES-Knight-s-Tale-A)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/PEOPLE-OF-THE-MIDDLE-AGES-Knight-s-Tale-A>

Peasants Preparing Flax for Linen

Around 1515, Simon Bening (1484-1561) created this illumination which depicts workers preparing flax for linen.

The work is part of a book of hours, known as the *DaCosta Hours*, published in the town of Bruges (Belgium). Today it is owned by the Pierpont Morgan Library.

The work, which was published in Bruges (Belgium) was purchased by J. Pierpont Morgan (1837-1913) in 1910 and is part of the collections at the Pierpont Morgan Library (where it is identified as M.399).

Curators at the Morgan tell us about the provenance of this illumination (and the book of hours in which it appears):

Probably made ca. 1515 for a member of the Portuguese Sa' (Saa) family of Porto, possibly Joao Rodrigues de Sa' (original arms in a blue and silver checkered pattern painted beneath the Da Costa arms on fol. 1v); owned ca. 1520 by Don Alvaro da Costa (arms on flyleaf), chamberlain of Manuel I of Portugal; passed by inheritance to the Duque de Mesquitela family; exhibited in Lisbon in 1882 (Exposicao retrospectiva de arte ornamental Portugueza e Hespanhola, cat. no. 17); perhaps sold by the Mesquitela family after 1890; sold by Quaritch (1905) to George C. Thomas of Philadelphia (cat. 1907, pp. 37-38); purchased by J. Pierpont Morgan (1837-1913) from Thomas's heirs in 1910; J.P. Morgan (1867-1924).

Click on the image for a full-page view.

Simon Bening created this illumination circa 1515. Today it is maintained by the Pierpont Morgan Library.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Peasants-Preparing-Flax-for-Linen>



William the Conqueror

Image of William the Conqueror, online courtesy "The Domesday Book."

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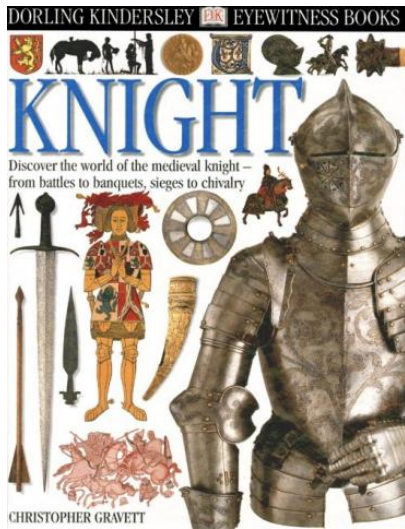
[Knight Being "Knighted"](#)

Painting, by E.B. Leighton, online courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

PD

View this asset at:

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[Knight - by Christopher Gravett](#)

Book-cover image online, courtesy Osprey and Google Books.

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Knight-by-Christopher-Gravett>



[Medieval Times - Jousting Tournaments](#)

Video online, courtesy rohanintalli's channel at YouTube.

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