

## Lords and Ladies Text 2: “The Lords”

A lord’s life centered around fighting. He believed that the only honorable way to live was as a professional warrior. The lords and their knights, wearing heavy armor and riding huge war horses, fought with lances or heavy swords.

The behavior of all fighting men gradually came to be governed by a system called chivalry. Chivalry required that a man earn knighthood through long and difficult training. A knight was supposed to be courageous in battle, fight according to certain rules, keep his promises, and defend the church. Chivalry also included rules for gentlemanly conduct toward women. In peacetime, a lord and his knights entertained themselves by practicing for war. They took part in jousts (combat between two armed knights) and tournaments (combat between two groups of knights).

The lord lived in a manor house or a castle. Early castles were simple forts surrounded by fences of tree trunks. Later castles were mighty fortresses of stone. In the great hall of the castle, the lord and his knights ate, drank, played games, and gambled at the firesides.

Women were not allowed to be knights and could not participate directly in feudal government. The lord’s wife, called a lady, was trained to sew, spin, and weave. When the lord was away, at war or performing his feudal responsibilities, the lady was in charge of managing and defending the estate. She was also in charge of children in the household. But she had few rights. Decisions about whom a woman married, and what happened to her if she was widowed, were mainly in the hands of the men in her family or her feudal overlord.

"Middle Ages." World Book Online InfoFinder. World Book, 2013. Web. 21 Aug. 2013.