

People of the Manor

This activity was first developed in 1981 by Stuart Scott and Susan Hart when we taught a Year 7 'Integrated Humanities' class for a year. Integrated humanities are now as rare as hen's teeth, but the activity and the other materials we developed then to support medieval realms have been used subsequently in hundreds of classes. We were able at that time to draw on the research work of the ILEA Women in History group, who then went on to publish a book, which was later incorporated into the Schools History Project and which is now out of print. That is why half the characters described are women. Twenty years later we don't detect too many changes in textbooks. We haven't included page numbers, index, etc for the A5 booklet in case you change its size.

We would welcome from you any suggestions for changing the text plus any additional characters you think we ought to add. The activity is of course adaptable to any other community, so please send any new "people of" activity to the project.

This activity was last revised July 2015.

The webaddress for this activity is: <<http://www.collaborativelearning.org/peopleofthemanor.pdf>>

COLLABORATIVE LEARNING PROJECT

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Supporting a cooperative network of teaching professionals throughout the European Union to develop and disseminate accessible teaching materials in all subject areas and for all ages.

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BRIEF SUMMARY OF BASIC PRINCIPLES BEHIND OUR TEACHING ACTIVITIES:

The project is a teacher network, and a non-profit making educational trust. Our main aim is to develop and disseminate classroom tested examples of effective group strategies across all phases and subjects. We hope they will inspire you to use similar strategies in other topics and curriculum areas. We run teacher workshops, swapshops and conferences throughout the European Union. The project publishes a catalogue of activities plus lists in selected subject areas, and a newsletter available by post or internet: "PAPERCLIP".

*These activities were influenced by current thinking about the role of language in learning. They are designed to help children learn through talk and active learning in small groups. They work best in mixed classes where children in need of language or learning support are integrated. They are well suited for the development of speaking and listening. They provide teachers opportunities for assessment of speaking and listening and other formative assessment.

*They support differentiation by placing a high value on what children can offer to each other on a particular topic, and also give children the chance to respect each other's views and formulate shared opinions which they can disseminate to peers. By helping them to take ideas and abstract concepts, discuss, paraphrase and move them about physically, they help to develop thinking skills.

*They give children the opportunity to participate in their own words and language in their own time without pressure. Many activities can be tried out in mother tongue and afterwards in English. A growing number of activities are available in more than one language, not translated, but mixed, so that you may need more than one language to complete the activity.

*They encourage study skills in context, and should therefore be used with a range of appropriate information books which are preferably within reach in the classroom.

*They are generally adaptable over a wide age range because children can bring their own knowledge to an activity and refer to books at an appropriate level. The activities work like catalysts.

*All project activities were planned and developed by teachers working together, and the main reason they are disseminated is to encourage teachers to work effectively with each other inside and outside the classroom. They have made it possible for mainstream and language and learning support teachers to share an equal role in curriculum delivery. They should be adapted to local conditions. In order to help us keep pace with curriculum changes, please send any new or revised activities back to the project, so that we can add them to our lists of materials.

<http://www.collaborativelearning.org/peopleofthemanor.pdf>

'People of the Manor'

List of characters:

Day Labourer

Reeve

Widow

Carpenter

Swineherd

Nun

Lady of the Manor

Villein

Lord of the Manor

Smith

Midwife

Priest

Brewster



DAY LABOURER

You are the youngest daughter of a large villein family. There is little chance of you getting married because your family cannot afford another dowry. The best cow was given to your neighbours last month, when your sister got married to their eldest son. Nor are you rich enough to become a nun.

You could carry on working for your family in return for food and lodging, but there really isn't enough work for you. You are not skilful enough at spinning and weaving to be able to produce a lot. You decide to hire yourself out as a day labourer to help with the haymaking, thatching, weeding, sowing, reaping and binding.

If there is not enough work for you to live on the manor, you will have to travel to another part of the country. You will have to ask the lord's permission to do this.

Children 'become' the characters by drawing name cards. They work in groups of three or four to read their biographies and fill in the checklist of jobs/activities for their characters. Using the cards they sort the people into six categories on the worksheet and proceed to refine these categories for "Who's Best Off".

Hopefully, they will refer to other sources of information. "Highly or Lowly" is designed to help them summarise their information or structure further investigation.



REEVE

You used to be an ordinary villein, but now you have a special job. The lady of the manor chose you last year because you have a good knowledge of farming customs.

It is your job to make sure that the villeins work properly on the lord's land. You must provide the correct tools, and check that the villeins begin work at dawn.

You get two silver pennies a day. You live in a bigger house than the other villeins. It has two floors. Your wife is an excellent weaver. She weaves cloth to sell in the town market. You can afford better food and clothing than the others.

You are often unpopular, particularly at busy times of the year. The villeins prefer to work on their own land rather than the lord's.

WIDOW

Your husband died many years ago when your children were very young. You inherited the land your husband held from the lord. You decided to keep it. You have to farm the land and look after the livestock. Like the other villeins on the manor, you work for the lord two or three days a week and give him a share of your produce.



The lord wants you to remarry. He thinks you might not be able to do your work properly. On one occasion you had to appear before the manor court. Your cattle had strayed on the lord's land. You were fined three silver pennies.

You cannot see why you should marry again. Whenever anyone on the manor gets married they have to pay a fee to the lord.

You are doing as well as the other villeins on the manor, and will farm the land until your son is old enough to take over and look after you.



CARPENTER

Your job is to make things out of wood for the people of the manor. You make chests and stools for the lord. You also help to build barns to store grain and the big carts that carry the lord's goods to market in the town. In return, your family pays a low rent for your cottage. You also get some silver pennies for your work.

Your wife works with you and you have an apprentice. He is called an 'underdog' because he has to stand in a hole under the log, when you cut it into planks with your big saw.



SWINEHERD

Your job is to look after the pigs. Pigs are an important source of food, especially in the winter months. You and all your family watch over the pigs, while they roam about the woods and on waste ground searching for food. It is your job to make a pigsty in a marsh or in the woods. You have to make sure that the pigs do not go near the crops. You and your wife kill the pigs, salt and smoke them.

You are paid 3p a week by the steward and get some food. You live in a small one roomed house with a straw roof and have a small garden around it. You and your wife grow leeks, greens and parsnips there.

NUN



The lord of the manor is your brother. You wanted to continue studying Latin, so you entered a nunnery near the manor. Your family had to pay the nunnery a dowry. When you entered the nunnery you had to bring your habit, a bed and any other furniture that you needed.

You have to say seven services a day. The first service begins at 2 o'clock in the morning. After the service you return to bed for about three hours until the next service at 6 o'clock. Some nuns take their pets into the service even though it is forbidden. You spend much of the day studying. You also help the abbess, who is in charge of the nunnery, to run the land.

You are not allowed to speak at mealtimes. You use sign language if you want anything. For the dish of fish you wag your hand from side to side like a fish tail. To get the mustard you rub your nose with your right hand.

LADY OF THE MANOR

You spend about eight months of the year looking after the manor. The lord of the manor, your husband, is often away visiting other manors, or on business in London.

You have to manage all the workers and help to sort out any arguments between them. You know a great deal about animals, and it is your job to buy and sell animals for the manor. You have to see that all the houses on the manor are repaired. You visit the sick and give them medicines made from herbs collected by you and your servants.

You run the manor house and all its servants.

Sometimes there are more than a hundred people, relatives, visitors, friends of the family and their servants who have to be entertained, fed and put up in the manor house. At harvest time you give all the villagers a boon feast.

On one occasion two years ago, you had to defend the manor house from an attack by a neighbour's servants armed with poleaxes and spears.

You have three daughters and two sons. You have to arrange their marriages and try to find rich families for them to marry.

In your spare time you read and write letters, play board games and hunt in the forest. You can shoot a bow and arrow better than anyone else in your family.



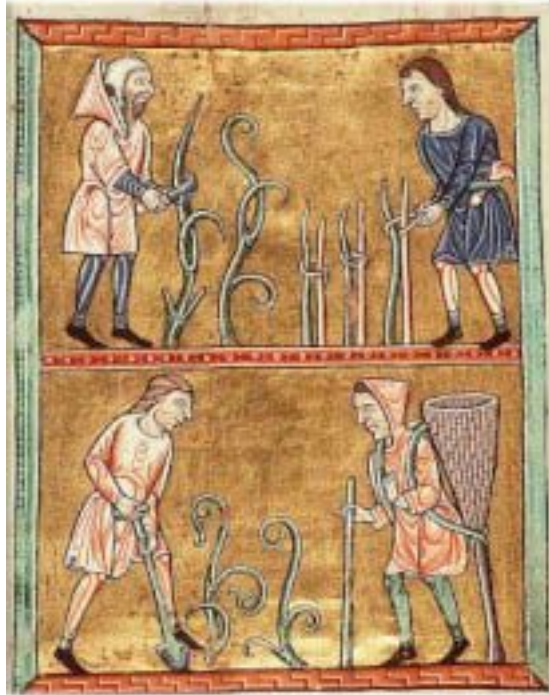
VILLEIN

You are not free. You do not own any land or even your own home. You cannot leave the manor without permission.

You farm the strips of land that the lord has given to you. In return you work for the lord two or three days a week, and you also have to give him some of your produce. You work long hours from daybreak to sunset. You could not manage this work without the help of your wife. She works alongside you, ploughing, sowing and reaping. She also makes all the family's food and clothes from raw materials. She sells some of the cloth she weaves.

Your home is a small, thatched hut made of wood, twigs and mud. You have a small garden around your home where you can grow leeks and salad plants and keep chickens and ducks.

Your life is very hard and often you do not have enough to eat.



LORD OF THE MANOR

You rent all the land directly from the king. You have control of all the houses and most of the people on the manor. The king gave them to you. In return, you must provide the king with armed soldiers when he needs them or pay him scutage money instead. You made a good marriage, and your wealth increased because of your wife's dowry.

You are often away in London and at your other manors on business, and your wife is left to look after the manor and all the people who work on it.

You are a skilled horseman, and as a young knight won many tournaments. Sometimes you act as a guardian to your tenants' children. You arrange for them to marry people you like. You act as a judge in the manor court, and receive any fines that the villagers have to pay.

Sometimes the king's sheriff will visit your manor to see that you are running things properly





SMITH

Your job is to mend the manor ploughs, shoe the lord's horses and grind his scythes and shears. In return you get four acres of land which your husband farms with the rest of the family.

You also earn money by making tools of every description to sell to the villeins. You make the metal tips for all the ploughs and this has to be done every year. Many people like coming to the smithy because of your warm fire. Your youngest son works the bellows to keep the fire red hot.



MIDWIFE

You are not free. Your house and land also belong to the manor.

You help all the women in the village when they have a baby. This has always been women's work. Men do not understand what it is like to have a baby, and some women would not feel comfortable if a man was with them at this time.

You have great skills as a midwife. You learnt by working with an older midwife when you were a young woman. She taught you how to make potions from herbs to help your women in labour. You also know a lot of charms. You chant these to stop things from going wrong.

Before you began your training, the priest was asked if you were honest enough to be a midwife. The people trust you because you are confident and comforting. They also come to you for medicines when they are sick. Sometimes they give you food or firewood instead of money in payment.



PRIEST

You are the son of a villein. When you were a boy your family paid for you to leave the manor and train as a priest. You learnt to read and to say enough Latin to hold the services in church.

Your job is to hold services for the villagers on Sundays and other holy days, baptise children and bury the dead. As well, you visit people who are sick and give what you can to the poor.

You have some land called the glebe, and you farm this land and keep animals like the other villeins. You are not allowed to marry, so you pay day labourers to help you. The people like you, but they do not like paying tithe to the church. This is one tenth of their crop each year. You have to collect all of this, but the bishop takes most of it.



BREWSTER

You make the ale for the people on the manor who can afford to buy it. The miller is your husband. You carry on the trade that you learnt before your marriage. The manor does not have a spring or well so it is safer for the villagers to drink ale. It is full of goodness because it is made of the best barley and honey. You make your own malt for the ale. Many villeins start their day with a jug of your ale. When they are slow to pay you you have to bring this up at the manor court.

Last year you had to appear before the court yourself because you were accused of selling short measure. If this happens again you will have to go before the "Assize of Bread and Ale" who will fine you heavily. You are now much more careful with your measures.

THESE PEOPLE WORK ON THE LAND AND PAY RENT. THEY CAN MOVE ELSEWHERE IF THEY WANT TO

THESE PEOPLE WORK ON THE LAND FOR THEMSELVES AND FOR OTHERS. THEY ARE NOT FREE TO MOVE AWAY FROM THE MANOR.

THESE PEOPLE GET THEIR LIVING THROUGH MAKING THINGS OR GIVING SERVICES. THEY SELL THEIR GOODS TO OTHERS.

THESE PEOPLE OWN EVERYTHING, WEAR FINE CLOTHES, EAT MEAT OR FISH EVERY DAY AND ARE VERY POWERFUL.

THESE PEOPLE WORK OUTDOORS. THEY LOOK AFTER ANIMALS.

THESE PEOPLE MAKE SURE OTHERS WORK HARD. THEY ALSO MAKE CERTAIN THAT THEY BEHAVE WELL.

DAY LABOURER	REEVE	WIDOW	CARPENTER
LADY OF THE MANOR	SWINEHERD	NUN	VILLEIN
LORD OF THE MANOR	SMITH	MIDWIFE	PRIEST
BREWSTER			

HIGH AND LOWLY

1. Say who you are in the village. Say if you think you are well off or not as well off as others.

"I am..... .

I think I am

- the best off
- one of the best off
- better off than villeins
- one of the worst off
- the worst off

.....in the village"

2. HOMES Say what your home is like

made of

number of rooms

furniture

garden

other information

HIGH AND LOWLY continued

3. FOOD _____ Say what you usually eat and drink

meat or fish	
vegetables	
fruit	
other food	
drink	

4. CLOTHES _____ Say what clothes you wear

clothes	made of	who makes them

People of the Manor

Names: _____

1. Read the booklet and find out who does these jobs in the village. Tick the boxes.

Job													
grow vegetables													
look after sick people													
make carts													
mend ploughs & tools													
hold church services													
buy food for manor													
farm the land													
look after pigs													
grind corn													
catch people breaking law													
help with harvest													
judge cases in court													
prepare meals													
keep manor accounts													
give soldiers to king													
supervise villeins' work													
make clothes													

WHO'S BEST OFF?

Arrange the jobs in order, with the best off at the top and the worst off at the bottom. Give a reason for your order.

Order	Person	Reason
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		

....because he / she.....

- is not free
- is in charge of other people
- has to work for the lord
- makes good money
- owns everything
- has a special skill
- has a responsible job
- has an interesting job
- has a boring job
- is very poor

Examples of reasons to help you!