

Name: _____
Date: _____

PRIMOGENITURE

Primogeniture is a system of inheritance where all property is handed down to the first-born son. During the Middle Ages in Western Europe, the oldest son the Lord of the Manor would become the Lord himself upon the death of his father, much in the same way that the oldest son of a king would gain the crown. The younger sons would have to find other careers.

The military was an option for many sons. A knight began his training as a young boy and advanced to the rank of squire at about the age of fifteen. When the overlord considered the young squire worthy, he was proclaimed a knight, and was entitled to the honorific title "Sir." Knights were expected to be chivalrous. Chivalry was a set of rules for honorable behavior followed by the knights. The term chivalry now refers to aristocratic display and public ceremony rather than good manners.

A third option was to acquire a trade. There

were no trade schools in the Middle Ages. A father would pay a master to teach his son a trade. The boy would become an apprentice and often live with the family of the master tradesman. After a period of about seven years, the boy became a journeyman. He could now work in his trade and be paid for his work. If a journeyman were an expert in his trade, he might create a masterpiece and become a master himself, able to employ apprentices of his own.

A young woman might look toward marriage in her future. A dowry was a present of money, goods, or sometimes land given by a bride's father to her husband. The dowry, however, was for his use, not hers. A dowry was thought to make a young girl more attractive to a potential husband. A large dowry might make it possible for a young lady to attract a rich landholder. Many girls entered the clergy as nuns, while others worked as servants at the manor house.

Answer in complete sentences

**1. Is primogeniture a fair system of inheritance? Defend your answer.

*2. Describe at least two chivalrous customs used in present day society.

3. What is a dowry?

*4. If you were the second child of a nobleman during the Middle Ages, and your father valued your opinion, what option would you choose? Explain your reasons.

*This is a higher order learning question. You will earn credit for any reasonable answer.