

# The Middle Ages

The Middle Ages was a period of European history that began in the 5th century and lasted until the 15th. The Middle Ages consists of three parts: the Early Middle Ages, the High Middle Ages, and the Late Middle Ages.

## Nobles

During this time, knights, lords, and ladies were at the top of society. These people were known as nobles.

**Lords** had nearly total authority within their fiefs. Lords were the judge and jury whenever a dispute needed to be settled

**Ladies** were the wives of lords. Though they were considered nobility, they had few rights during the Middle Ages, as they were considered the property of their husbands. They were expected to do little else than bear children and take care of the household. Noblewomen were not allowed to choose their own husbands; their fathers chose a husband for them.

**Knights** achieved their noble titles through special agreement and years of training. There were many steps to achieving knighthood, which started with training as a page and then training under a current knight until he was deemed ready to be made one himself. Once knighted, knights could be granted their own fief in exchange for military service.



## Fiefs

During the Middle Ages, the Catholic church ruled daily life. Sermons were given daily by parish priests in small rooms called chapels. Prayer was a big part of every day. The church had to approve what people did and how they behaved. If citizens did not follow the church's rules, they could be punished, sometimes with their life.

## The Church

Land in the Middle Ages was broken up into fiefs. A fief was more like a trust than an ownership: your oldest son could inherit the fief, but you could not sell it. However, a fief was more than just land: each included at least one village, huts for the serfs, a manor or castle, and areas for growing food, hunting, and raising livestock.

1. What was land broken up into? \_\_\_\_\_
2. The Middle Ages was broken up into three parts. What were they called? \_\_\_\_\_  
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3. During the Middle Ages, what institution ruled daily life? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What was the first step toward Knighthood? \_\_\_\_\_