Feudal Society
Political Structure

Chapter 10

from: http://medievaleurope.mrdonn.org/powerpoints-feudalism.html
OBJECTIVES

Our lesson today is on the political structure of the feudal system and the importance of the relationship between lords and vassals during the Middle Ages.
Topics of Discussion

- Why was feudalism necessary?
- Relationship Between Lords and Vassals
- What is a Knight?
- Workers on the Manor
- The Feudal Contract
- Constructing the Feudal Pyramid of Power
WHY WAS FEUDALISM NECESSARY?
WHY WAS FEUDALISM NECESSARY?

- There was no centralized government at the time.
- Rooted in the people’s need for protection against invading forces from the north.
- Introduced in England by King William the Conqueror.
Relationship Between Lords and Vassals

- The relationship between lords and vassals made up a big part of the political and social structure of the feudal system.
- Vassals had certain duties to perform for the lord.
- All nobles were ultimately vassals of the king.
What is a Knight?

- Almost all nobles were knights
- Training began at age 7, as a page, under the guidance of the lady of the manor
- Became squires at age 15 and were trained by other knights
- Those deemed worthy were “dubbed” knights
There were two groups of peasant workers on the manor:

- **Freemen**: skilled workers who paid rent and could leave the manor whenever they wished. (They usually had a skill needed by others on the manor.)

- **Serfs**: workers bound to the land by contract with the nobles. (They had no freedom - they were the noble’s property.)
Feudal Contract

LORDS

GIVE
SERVICE
TO

VASSALS

GIVE
PROTECTION
TO
CONSTRUCTING THE PYRAMID OR POWER
CONSTRUCTING THE PYRAMID OF POWER

SERFS AND FREEMEN
CONSTRUCTING THE PYRAMID OF POWER

LESSER NOBLES (KNIGHTS)

SERFS AND FREEMEN

LABOR

PROTECTION
CONSTRUCTING THE PYRAMID OF POWER

POWERFUL NOBLES

LOYALTY AND MILITARY SERVICE

LESSER NOBLES (KNIGHTS)

LAND AND PROTECTION

PROTECTION

LABOR

SERFS AND FREEMEN
CONSTRUCTING THE PYRAMID OF POWER

KING

LOYALTY AND SERVICE  
LAND

POWERFUL NOBLES

LOYALTY AND MILITARY SERVICE  
LAND AND PROTECTION

LESSER NOBLES (KNIGHTS)

LABOR  
PROTECTION

SERFS AND FREEMEN
REVIEW

Let’s see how much you remember!

1) Everyone owed loyalty to the ________
2) ________ were really the most powerful. They got ________ from the king.
3) Lesser nobles (knights) gave ____________ _________ in return for land
4) ________ were bound to the land. They worked in return for ________________.
5) ____________ were skilled workers. They paid rent to the ______ and were free to move if they wanted to.
Check Your Answers

1) Everyone owed loyalty to the **king**.
2) **Nobles** were really the most powerful. They got **land** from the king.
3) Lesser nobles (knight) gave **military service** in return for land.
4) **Serfs** were bound to the land. They worked in return for **protection**.
5) **Freemen** were skilled workers. They paid rent to the **nobles** and were free to move if they wanted to.
THE END