

## Basic Facts of Life in Early Modern Europe: 1500-1800

Society: The nobility-those connected to the Lord or Knightly class are still on top, but the road to maintaining power is through education-in the New Learning of the Renaissance-combined with dance training, sword training, and military training.

The middle class: UPPER: any man in the Church, merchants, lawyers, doctors, and ministers of the crown-they often move into the lower nobility. (This class is much smaller in Eastern Europe)

The lower middle class: craftsmen of all kinds, traders, printers, apothecaries, shopkeepers.

Peasantry: Those who still work on the land but are FREE-that is free to move around most of the time. (In Eastern Europe they remain serfs until 1860.)

Workers in the city: A new but growing class-those who work as unskilled labor anywhere in society.

The nobility, the upper class, and the lower middle class read-everyone now wants to read the Bible in their own languages.

WOMEN: Women are NOT educated except in the nobility or the upper middle class.

Life expectancy: 45 for men, 35 for women-but women who survive childbearing years live an average of ten years longer than men.

1/3 to 1/2 of all babies born will die before the age of five. Survivors are very strong, but all families expect to lose about half of all their children.

The killers: ALL infectious diseases, contaminated water, and raw sewage in the streets when combined with a wet, damp, cold continental climate in the north, and a semi tropical wet climate in the south. Malaria is a problem in Spain, Italy, and Greece.

The other killer: war, war, and more war, in France, Germany and Russia.

Women:

Women have NO legal rights anywhere. In law, a woman is the property of her father until marriage and the property of her husband after marriage. Only single unmarried fatherless women, and widows have independent legal rights. A man can kill his wife at any time if he suspects her of infidelity WITH IMPUNITY. A woman's virginity is highly prized and a woman who loses her virginity before marriage and DOES not tell her husband to be risks death as well. The wedding night consummation of a marriage is a public event. Until the husband accepts his wife as virtuous on the wedding night; she is not legally married.

Clothing: Until the textile revolution: All people have a maximum of two sets: one for work and one for church on Sunday.

Medicine: It is the four humours theory-accompanied by bleeding, cupping, emetics, and leeches until the Scientific Revolution slowly changes this picture in the late 1700's. The medicine can be worse than any disease.

Diet: Peasants eat cheese and meat when available, and vegetables in summer.

Nobility and upper classes eat meat year round.

EVERYONE lives on wine, beer and ale-often a defense against bad water.

Hardly anyone bathes more than one every few weeks-MAXIMUM. The lower classes hardly bathe at all.

Swordsmen wander around having duels everywhere. If one is in the way that is just too bad.

Children:

Children have NO legal rights anywhere. They are dressed and treated as little adults at all times. They can also be punished as adults legally at any time.

Average age of marriage: about 25 for both sexes in any class except the nobility who marry much younger to keep property in the family.