

Day 29 Knights During Feudal Times

Knights were the mounted soldiers of the medieval world. In general, knights had to have some wealth, as a full suit of armor and a horse cost a small fortune. Knights were usually **vassals** of more powerful lords.

Being a knight was more than a profession. It was a way of life. Knights lived by a strong code of behavior called **chivalry**. (Chivalry comes from the French word cheval, meaning “horse.”) Knights were expected to be loyal to their church and their lord, to be just and fair, and to protect the helpless. They performed acts of **gallantry**, or respect paid to women. From these acts, we get the modern idea of chivalry as traditional forms of courtesy and kindness toward women.

Jousts and tournaments were a major part of a knight's life. In a joust, two armed knights on horseback galloped at each other with their lances held straight out. The idea was to unseat the opponent from his horse. Jousts could be done as a sport, for exercise, or as a serious battle. A tournament involved a team of knights in one-on-one battle.

Knights fought wearing heavy suits of **armor**. In the 11th century, armor was made of metal rings linked together. By the 14th century, plate armor was more common and offered better protection.

The institution of knighthood lasted until about the 17th century, when warfare changed with the growing use of gunpowder and cannons. Knights, who fought one-to-one on horseback, were no longer effective.

What were the knight's primary responsibilities?

What was chivalry?