

Things that would Get you Killed in the Dark Ages

Alternative titles:

- *Seven Unusual Ways to Die in the Dark Ages*

Notes:

1) Bits / skits that start with '*visual:*' are not meant to be used as cutaways. Although they could be, "visual" refers to an animation playing on the screen while the narration/storyline is ongoing. Upon revision, intended cutaways will be prefaced with '*Cutaway:*'.

2) Likewise, quotes will be differentiated through the means of "underlines and italics", to make this writing piece more coherent and organized.

3) All my skits are just suggestions / concepts. Please note that for some of them, I only kept them in because they might be useful for inspiring the animators, or giving them concepts or ideas for derivative (and hopefully much funnier) skits or visuals.

Intro: Everyone knows the most common things that would have gotten you killed in the Dark Ages- mainly the Black Death and the multitudes of lethal diseases that plagued the era. But in this video, I'm going to talk about all the ways to die in the dark ages that most people don't think about. Number one-

Bad eyesight. For most of history, eyeglasses weren't a luxury that most people had. And considering glasses only became more commonly used in the 14th Century, even then it was only affordable for the wealthy. Similarly, the dark ages weren't much different. In this time period, if you were born with bad eyesight, you'd better hope that you were wealthy- as having money would determine whether your eyesight was only a minor inconvenience, or something that could potentially be deadly.

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Editor Note : No VO for this is needed so just cut the VO and edit this in.

Visual: Brodie looks at a medieval sight chart, consisting of funny images in some type of pyramid scheme (like perhaps the king is at the top of the eye chart and at the bottom is witches), his view then shows a blurry chart, he shrugs like he doesn't care and then comedically walks into a tree.

How did being born rich help you if you were born with bad eyesight? Well, for starters, rich people didn't really need to use their eyes as much as peasants, –which might sound ridiculous today– but considering literacy rates were only 5% back then, wealthy people didn't need good eyesight as much as they do now.

And for those at the top of the social hierarchy, poor eyesight was even seen as being beneficial to how others perceived her. For example–

We know that Queen Elizabeth 1 was short-sighted, as an Author named John Howard, wrote in “the Annals of Queen Elizabeth 1” that

“She was a lady, upon whom nature had bestowed, and well placed, many of her fairest favors... [...] her eyes- lively and sweet; but short-sighted..”

Despite this, people are said to have admired her eagerness to be close and personal with her people, which ironically, she only did because she couldn't physically see them until they were close enough to smell.

And despite what you might have expected, it wasn't just royalty who got away fine with bad eyesight. In fact, in the middle ages, most of the civilians with bad eyesight in the upper class would just hire a servant to follow them around all day and explain what they were looking at, like they were the V1 prototype of the humane AI pin. (Funny animation potential here).

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Cutaway:

Rich guy: "Bartholomew, what is that?" *pointing*.

Bartholomew: "that's a stick".

Walks for a second, (Stops).

Rich guy: "Bartholomew, and what is that?"

Bartholomew: That's a smaller stick. (annoyed).

**Starts walking again for a minute) (Stops)*.

Rich guy: Bartholomew, what is this?

Bartholomew: (Groans) "That's Oliver".

Rich guy: (Pauses), "What is an Oliver?"

Bartholomew: "Oliver is.. a peasant".

(Rich guy continues walking). *Chuckling* "Good heavens, a peasan..."

Camera zoom out

Walks off a cliff

But.. we're talking about royalty here. In the Dark Ages, not everyone was born into this type of luxury. As a medieval peasant, doing manual labor such as plowing a field while being almost legally blind didn't exactly guarantee your odds at survival.

(**Visual:** a man is riding a horse on a dirt road with a speed limit sign on it, *Squints*, [It shows his POV of a blurry speed limit sign, he shrugs and continues on, only to immediately drive off a cliff]).

Cutaway:

Two serfs are standing on a field harvesting crops

Guy 1: "Arthur, is that a boar?"

Guy 2: *squints*,

(Shows his point of view, which makes the wild boar a brown blob).

- "Rest assured William, 'tis but a tame and innocuous Oxen" –

(He says confidently and goes back to harvesting).

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Guy 1: Oh.. sweet”.

Zooms out

Guy 1: “Arthur?” (Arthur is missing with only his hat on the ground).

And if you didn’t die from getting run over by your own oxen, or walking at night, or working in a metal factory, or falling in a ditch as a legally blind medieval peasant, or just plain getting lost in the woods and not being able to see landmarks, or being terrible at jousting, then fighting in an eventual war would have probably delt you the finishing blow.

(**Visual:** Brodie is in a medieval war, squinting, and walks backwards to sit down for a second. The camera zooms out, and turns out that the thing he sat on was actually a *catapult bucket*. Then, he gets launched from the catapult [Accidentally] with some type of comedic timing).

Number 2...

Being born. Life isn’t fair, but In the Medieval Ages, life was even less fair. With an Infant mortality rate anywhere between 300 to 500 infant deaths per 1,000 births, your chances of getting spawn killed by the grim reaper was only a little better than a coin flip with Anton Chigur. To give you some perspective, as of 2024, the current infant mortality rate for the U.S. is only 5.342 deaths per 1000 births. Surprisingly, in the Medieval ages, if you lived past childhood, odds were good that you'd die in your 60s, 70's or even later. The idea that people only lived into their 30s is because the high infant mortality rate made the average life expectancy far lower.

(**Visual:** a graphic of the grim reaper hanging out in orbit above the earth in a space station [labeled “Grim Headquarters”] somewhere playing “Earth simulator” on his N64, he tries spawn camping at the hospital in the game and then he gets kicked with a red error message that says “spawn camping is not allowed”. He then rage quits and throws his controller out the window, down towards the earth.

Note: Don’t use this! This is my dumbest sketch ever! Maybe it will inspire you though... so I’ll keep it here.

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To give you even more perspective on just how bad this infant mortality rate was, even if you were born in Afghanistan– which as of 2024 has the highest infant mortality rate in the world at 43 deaths per 1000 births– you’d still have a ten times higher chance of survival than if you were born in Medieval Europe.

(**Visual:** Some dude in an office cubicle- looking dismayed. His boss is next to him saying (Chat bubble) “Well.. at least you weren’t born in Afghanistan..”. Then there is an Afghani sheep herder sitting down dismayed on a rock wall, and a sheep sitting next to him like a human saying (Chat bubble) “At least you weren’t born in the medieval era”.)

But, to add insult to injury, this number also affected women giving birth in equally dastardly numbers. For example, In 1420s Florence, giving birth was responsible for about one in five of all deaths of married women. One of the main factors that contributed to this maternal mortality rate was infection. It is well documented in medieval history that a major cause of infection for a birthing mother was the retention of the placenta. Basically, back then, they didn’t really have the medical equipment and knowledge to make childbirth safe for mothers. To make matters even more bleak, after her birth, the mother was ordered to remain within the birthing chamber for four to six weeks for a period of confinement to, as medieval priests put it, quote on quote “cleanse” herself, as it was commonly believed by the uneducated commoners and religious leaders that the mother’s body was made quote on quote “impure” by childbirth.

(Visual: A man and a Priest pointing at a woman giving birth and saying “Cooties!”)

Visual: (In the far background of this graphic, you see the boar running around wildly and throwing people up in the air like a raging bull [This is going to be an ongoing callback joke throughout the video]).

[Break]

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Cutaway:

Pregnant woman: [in a castle birthing room] “Did you hear something?
(Referencing the wild boar)”

Midwife: “Get some rest, dear”

Priest: *Walks in.* “This woman is absolutely mad!”

Boar: *Comes in from the left and rams the priest, who then falls out of the castle window into the moat.*

[Falling will be a running joke in this video too]

Priest: “Well that wasn’t so bad, I’m alive!”

The priest looks up only to see the pig falling on him from the castle window.

Number 3...

Pirates. Well, Sorta. Although the golden age of piracy is considered to be between 1650 and 1720, pirates have been shameless menaces to society for most of recorded human history. What’s worse is that towards the end of the dark ages, governments on both sides of war actually *incentivized* pirates, funding their crews in order to use them as ravaging machines of war.

(**Visual:** A group of medieval leaders are sitting down at a table, and a pirate is pointing at a pie chart of the budget proposal [The pie chart is silly, decorated in child-like smiley-face emojis, with 80% being beer, 10% being weapons, and 10% saying “allowance”. It would be funny if the “allowance” category was represented by a drawing of a lollipop or something similarly harmless looking])

(I’m going for the same style of humor as the bowler hat guy’s “evil lair” being a unicorn restaurant in *Meet the Robinsons* [[Reference](#)] and tough vikings in *Tangled* going to a bar called “The Snuggly Duck [[Reference](#)]).

Back then, the Governments fighting each-other were more like the real pirates, and the pirates themselves were like the Kraken.

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(**Visual:** Government officials saying “Release the pirates!”)

So.. yeah. They pretty much just gave the pirates everything they needed and said “welp, stuart, don’t spend it all in one place now!”

(**Visual:** Government officials sitting down eating luxurious food while pirates are seen in the background burning palm trees and capturing people as slaves).

These state-funded pirates were called privateers. And because of these privateers, at the end of the middle ages, you probably wouldn’t have wanted to be a sailor. That’s because most of the time, if you got captured by the pirates and you weren’t needed as a slave, they’d most likely just throw you overboard. But if you were lucky enough to not die immediately Well, you’re in for a real treat because this asshat named Barbarossa only used galleys to get around, which is a smart-person word for “really big row boat”. And who’s gonna be rowing this boat but your sorry ass because you didn’t realize that this Sea-Menace named Hayreddin Barbarossa, or as some called him, redbear, was gonna capture you and your boy Amicus from your merchant vessel and turn you into a full-time paddling technician. I mean seriously, imagine getting captured by *this* fat ginger dude– and then being forced to spend the rest of your days rowing around an oversized row boat like a damn oompa loompa in Charlie and the Chocolate factory. That being said, if you were lucky enough to become a rowboat technician, you’d still need to keep yourself from some sort of disease on the crew, which, based on pirate living conditions, was practically impossible. Oftentimes, the chains they put around your ankle would dig into your skin, opening up your body to infection. Needless to say, it’s a good thing this guy wasn’t alive to play Sea of Thieves, because he would have been an absolute menace.

Cutaway: [This one is very long and probably won’t be used]

Guy 1: *Playing Sea of Thieves*. “You know what, dude? This server isn’t even that bad since Redbeard was banned”.

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Guy 2: *Over mic*, “Hey.. is that redbear again?”

A ship is seen in the distance. Boss music intensifies

Guy 1: “Damn it...”

Redbeard over proximity chat (Got any treasure, boys?) (I imagine a Mr Krabs-style voice), (Show Redbeard playing on wooden gamecube on a pirate ship with a headset, while it's chaotic outside his ship window, with people yelling, war ongoing, and people flying overboard, and cannons going through his wall. He is completely unphased and focusing on his video game, as if this is how it is every day. In his room, there are slaves on a bunch of wooden stationary bikes who run away from the cannon.)

Redbeard: Hey! Keep biking, skallywags! you're ruining me game! (The bikes power his PS5 and TV). (They don't come back and his game shuts down). “Damn it!” *Pause* *Shrugs*, walks outside to the captured boat, in a scenario that looks just like the game he was just in, and says “Got any treasure, boys?”

Number 4...

Obscure laws. From the mid-12th century onward, the King began to play a larger role in the administration of justice in England. Before this, the maintenance of law and order was largely the responsibility of lords and local communities. But in the 13th century, local courts became more common. Before the Pope banned it in 1215, trial by ordeal was a common method of justice.

What is trial by ordeal, you ask? Basically they gave you an impossible task and assumed that if you were innocent, God would perform a miracle in order for you to not die. There were plenty of methods to go about doing this. For example, in a trial by fire, a supposed criminal was asked to walk over 10 feet of red-hot coals, and if their feet weren't burning at the end of it, they were deemed innocent by the priest. In witch hunts in Europe, a supposed witch was lowered into water by a rope, and if she sank, she was

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deemed innocent and if she floated, she was deemed guilty.

After this administration of justice, however, laws and trials became more commonplace. Because the King wrote whatever laws he wanted, some of them were pretty random and had harsh sentences. For example, in 1198, one law ordered blinding and castration as punishment for anyone caught hunting venison in the royal forest. This definitely had a chance of getting you killed, since preventing infection was not an easy task in the 13th century.

In 1209, court records note that a man named Hugh was accused of doing just this. Petrified, Hugh fled to a church, where he remained for a month until he escaped by disguising himself as a woman.

Another obscure law that could get you killed had to do with bread. Yes, bread. To reduce competition amongst bakers, in 1266 a law was enacted to ensure all bakers sold their bread at the same weight. Because breaking this law had potentially serious consequences, most bakers gave their customers extra bread just in-case. If someone was found baking underweight bread they would be fined, and if they continued to do it they would be pilloried. The pillory could get you killed as the crowd's behavior towards you was unpredictable. Typically, criminals in a pillory would get rotten eggs, mud, filth, dead animals, or animal crap thrown at them, but if you caught the crowd on a bad day, or said something that pissed them off, they would become violent, hurling stones and bricks at you, which often lead to death. That wasn't always the case, though, as the crowd's reaction to you often depended on the context of your crime. For example, in 1703 Daniel Defoe was sentenced to the pillory for seditious libel, but was regarded as a hero by the crowd and pelted with flowers.

Another obscure law was the banning of football in Medieval England in 1388, which brings us to our next point-

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Number 5...

Medieval football. Nowadays, people seem to think Rugby is a rough sport. Well, what I'm about to tell you about next makes rugby look like a relaxing evening at your nana's knitting club.

Medieval football, which originally started in around the 14th century, was also known as "mob football"-- And mob football is exactly what it sounds like. See, this wasn't like modern football where there are rules, or a field, a specified amount of players, or even a referee. These games were played in medieval towns and villages, with an *unlimited* number of players on either team. The rules were simple: get an inflated pig's bladder to your team's side of town by any means possible-- and when they said any means, they really meant any means. In fact, the only rules of the game regarding actually getting the pig's bladder to the other side of town were that you couldn't commit manslaughter or murder.

(**Visual:** The Boar from earlier is either playing with them or beating up the whole crowd)

However, because of this lack of rules, and mob mentality, things could easily get crazy,

(**Visual:** a mischievous kid puts the end zone marker on the other side of a cliff, and points at it the marker to the crowd. Then he throws the pig's bladder at the marker and the whole crowd runs off of the cliff chasing after it. He sits there laughing until [running joke] boar comes right out of left field and hits him off the cliff too)

Although a succession of royal statutes in the 14th century tried to ban it, calling it a "common, undignified, and worthless" game, peasants just didn't care and kept playing anyway. At the time, the nobility was trying to promote a more civilized sport, archery, which benefited the king because it was also a useful skill in times of war; but mob football was simply put- far too much fun. It was a concerningly common occurrence to die from the

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game, either from being accidentally trampled by your own team, or from other accidents. For example, in 1321 it was recorded that one player died from a wound sustained after accidentally running onto a sheathed knife. Regardless, however, mob football was a spectator sport, gathering big crowds to watch the games.

Number 6...

Witchcraft. Well, specifically *practicing Witchcraft*.

In the middle ages, people often think of witches when they think of witchcraft. But there is another term, too. Men who practiced witchcraft were considered sorcerers and were called Malefici, Wicca, or Warlocks. This comes from the Latin legal term maleficium, which was considered to be sorcery or witchcraft that were conducted with the intention of causing harm.

A lot of people don't really understand the context of witches and witchcraft in this time period. Back then, witches and sorcerers weren't like that one crazy ex from University who you broke up with because she peed your bed, and then told you that she was going to "cast a love spell on you". Witches in the medieval ages were not only highly respected, but also highly feared. When you think about the 14th century, you have to remember how much power the Church actually had. Belief in God, spirits, and demons was taken as a given, so when somebody said that they were going to cast a spell on you, or send a demon your way, that was a serious and scary threat. And because of the Catholic power structure, when you openly opposed God as a witch, you were deemed as opposing the entire state itself. Although there are different words for both genders, the common theme of both is that they were considered occultists, or sorcerers. Sorcerers were seen as someone who tried to reshape the world through the occult. Now how did they do this? Basically every once in a while someone came along who made spectacular claims about the spirit world, and they received perceived credibility by claiming that it had

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something to do with Solomon from the Bible. This happened because someone once wrote a book labeled “The Testament of Solomon”, which claimed that King Solomon from the Bible enslaved particular demons to help build his temple. The only problem with this claim is that this book was written many centuries after King Solomon from the Bible died. Another example of this is a book translated from Latin as: “The book of the offices of spirits, or the book called Empto, by Solomon, about the princes and kings of demons”. Strangely enough, this book is mostly only known through references, and neither the original copy nor the author has ever been found. Within these books, are instructions on how to work with specific demons that were actually mentioned in the Bible to carry out evil deeds on your behalf. With this context, it makes more sense why the entire medieval population hunted witches at one point. It’s because people were scared shitless of them! And to make matters worse, anything bad that happened to them was blamed on someone supposedly practicing witchcraft. For example, if something bad happened to John that could not be readily explained, and if John felt that Richard disliked him, John may have suspected Richard of harming him by occult means.

(Visual: Guy walks into a tree and falls over. *Gets up. / Pause. / Looks pissed off.* “This was *Richard*, wasn’t it?”)

(Visual: Split screen that says 2014 on one side and 1424 on another side. On one end, a person is saying “Thanks Obama” looking at the gas prices. On another side, someone is saying “*Thanks*, witch- after stepping on a board with a nail through it).

In fact, the most common suspicions that you might be a witch were livestock, crops, storms, disease, and even sexual dysfunction. So basically, if someone didn’t like you and something bad happened to them you could be proclaimed a witch. To make matters worse, in 1486, two German Monks published a book titled “*Malleus Maleficarum*”, which translates from Latin into “*Hammer of the Witches*”. Basically, this was an all-inclusive guide on “*how to identify a witch, what makes a woman more likely than a man to be a witch, how to put a witch on trial, and how to*

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punish a witch". And once this book was published you can bet your ass everyone became a witch vigilante overnight. And every village basically became a real-life *among us* server.

(**Visual:** Among us medieval peasants)

In total, tens or hundreds of thousands of people were executed, and others were imprisoned, tortured, banished, and had lands and possessions confiscated. The majority of those accused were women, though in some regions the majority were men. The hunt quickly devolved into people getting anyone they didn't like executed,-

(**Visual:** A woman points at another woman, claiming she is a witch, based on something super petty [think *Mean Girls*] [like- what whatever reason Regina George would use to accuse someone of being a witch if that movie was made in the medieval era as a play or something]).

-and In the end, many innocent people –and some of who had never even heard of the occult at all– were drowned, or burned, or murdered by the angry mobs of witch hunters.

(**Visual:** One guy speaks up and says: "how do we know she's a witch?"

The whole mob turns and looks at him

Pause..

Random mob member: "Sounds like something a witch would say!"

Crowd cheers,

(Next image)- he is tied up with her.

Number 7...

Alchemy. Alchemy started in the middle ages, and some say it is actually a precursor to modern chemistry today. At the heart of Medieval

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Alchemy is the belief that all matter was composed of four elements: earth, air, fire, and water— and with the right combination of elements, any substance on earth could be formed. Alchemists believed that the "transmutation" of one substance into another was possible, and that's how the stereotype of alchemists trying to turn lead into gold came to be. What many people don't know, however, is that Alchemists were also trying to create an all-powerful elixir to cure disease and make anyone who drinks it immortal. This required finding the "philosopher's stone," an elusive substance that was believed to quote: "make possible an elixir of immortality, and the transmutation of common substances into gold". In fact, Elias Ashmole, author of *Gloria Mundi* in (1620), claims that its history goes back to Adam, who acquired the knowledge of the stone directly from God. So why could alchemy kill you? Well the problem with alchemists is that they kind of had *no idea what they were doing*. You see, these weren't like scientists of the modern day, who have to put their medicines through clinical trials and testing. Back then, if they could make a metal drinkable, they would have probably given it to you and called it an Elixir of immortality. For example, in Chinese Alchemy, The official Twenty-Four Histories record numerous Chinese emperors, nobles, and officials who died from taking elixirs to prolong their lifespans. This was because the "elixirs of immortality" they drank contained toxic metals and minerals such as mercury and arsenic.

Visual: At some point, when talking about a very early period, there is a graphic of the wild boar drinking this immortality elixir, which explains how he is still alive in the later periods, which were discussed earlier in this video.

Flash Forward to 700, and an Iranian chemist named Abu Musa Jabir Ibn Hayyan Al-Azdi discovered how to make gold dissolve in liquid, which was later dubbed "royal water". The formula he developed was a mixture of nitric and hydrochloric acid that could dissolve pure gold and produce gold chloride. He then mixed this with water to create a drinkable form of gold. Alchemists up until the end of the Medieval Age continuously made claims of drinkable gold's incredible effects— calling it the elixir of life and the

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perfect element, claiming that consuming the drink would make the body indestructible and cure all illnesses. Despite these incredulous claims, even the newest formulas for drinkable gold elixir up until the end of the Medieval Era had the same problem: It was highly toxic, highly corrosive, caused profuse salivation, chronic urination, increased sweating, the “gold fever”, and worse of all, kidney damage.

Number 8... (Optional)

Spontaneous Human Combustion. Yes, you heard that right. Spontaneous human combustion is actually an incredibly rare- yet documented and proven phenomenon throughout history. What is it you ask? Well basically, spontaneous human combustion is death from a fire originating without an external source of ignition. It is believed that the fire starts within the body of the victim.

Despite many attempts at “debunking” it, the truth is to this day, scientists have still never been able to fully explain it. It has been hypothesized to be caused by alcohol consumption, or body fat catching fire, or an external source lighting your body on fire; but at the end of the day there are endless cases of spontaneous human combustion that have absolutely stumped investigators to this day. In ancient times, officials would often explain these occurrences with the supernatural, or God’s judgment. The weirdest part about Spontaneous Human Combustion is that it happened far more often in ancient times. The 19th Century saw the most documented cases of spontaneous human combustion, but it is theorized that it also happened in the Medieval Era but wasn’t documented enough to have records of it.

(Currently Here In VO)

Conclusion:

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Well, there you have it. Now you know about seven unusual ways to die if you were alive in the era of the Dark Ages. Whether it's medieval sports, or witchcraft, or mystical elixirs made of gold, disease— or even being born— the dark ages were not an easy time to stay alive.

To conclude this episode, I'll summarize my key points into one simple sentence:

[Note: This is a sarcastically fast finale that creates humor by presenting itself as a simple and easy takeaway for everyone but contrasts itself with the lunacy and chaotic lifestyle of medieval life].

If you ever go back to the dark ages, never go on a cruise, or a pirate ship, study every single law that is passed in your area; if someone asks you if you want to play football DON'T DO IT— don't trust witches, or alchemists, or drink elixirs (EVEN IF THE KING DRANK IT); or be a witch, or a sorcerer, or a king who *has* an alchemist. [Pause] Oh and make sure not to be born with bad eyesight, spontaneously combust into flames, or ever be born at all. Source? Trust me bro.

[Like and subscribe / call to action]

[Outro]

(Currently Here In VO)