



Terrific Trivia Tidbits

Did you know the Middle Ages lasted for about 1,000 years between approximately AD 500 and AD 1500? They were very different times than now. For instance, imagine having a falcon or squirrel as a pet or being married at age 12 or 13 (for girls) or wearing a suit of shining armor that could weigh as much as 50 pounds!

Use these fun facts (also available on the Resource USB) to start thinking about our fun theme—medieval times—as well as our spiritual theme—the armor of God. These trivia tidbits can be shared ahead of time at staff meetings with adults and teens or during the week of VBS with the kids. Use them at arrival and dismissal times or during any downtime between rotations.

PART 1: GENERAL MEDIEVAL INFORMATION

- Did you know that the word *medieval* literally means “of the Middle Ages”? This time period refers to the Middle Ages between the fall of the Roman empire and the beginning of the Renaissance period.
- Imagine a wall as thick as the width of your house! Castle walls were very thick—15 feet or more! One castle wall was even 80 feet thick!
- If you were royalty, you’d better not be in a hurry to move into your new house because it could take 10 years or more to build a castle.
- Pass the salt, please! Salt was very expensive. It was placed in the middle of a dining table with the important people (lord and lady) seated above the salt while the less important people sat below the salt.
- Castles were stinky! Castle restrooms were called a garderobe or privy chamber, usually built into the castle walls. Instead of a toilet that flushed, the garderobe had a seat or bench with a hole where waste dropped into the castle moat or a courtyard below. Pee-ew!
- Think punishments are tough nowadays? Think again! In the Middle Ages, troublemakers could be placed in the stocks (which held the feet) or pillories (which held the neck and wrists) while people threw rotten vegetables at them. They could also be strapped to a chair and paraded around town or dunked in a nearby pond.
- Here are some nifty inventions from the Middle Ages: clocks, eyeglasses, windmills, cannons, the compass, and the printing press.
- What’s the big deal about the color purple? Well, laws were passed that allowed only powerful nobles to wear purple.
- Do you like dessert? Depending on where you lived, fruit or sweets were eaten during after-dinner talks or between meal courses. Dessert as we know it wasn’t invented until later!
- LATIN WAS WRITTEN IN ALL CAPITALS AND WITH NO SPACES. Latin was the most common written language during the Middle Ages, although not many people could read at that time.
- From a young age, medieval children helped care for animals and did other household chores, but they also had time to play with toy knights, dolls, and even play dishes.
- Did you know the word *holiday* came from this time period? A special day was first called a “holy day.”
- Royalty loved to show off their wealth. They often wore velvet and silk clothing and displayed precious jewels in their necklaces, brooches, belts, and even their weapons!
- How many shirts do you own? Most working people during the Middle Ages didn’t own more than one outfit, a tunic and breeches or trousers for men and a long dress and stockings for women.
- What’s love got to do with it? The lord and lady of the castle usually married to get more land, wealth, or power—not because they loved each other.
- When medieval people had a toothache, they went to a barber surgeon who pulled teeth, cut hair, and performed minor surgery.
- Do you know what a quarrel is? In medieval times, it was a dart shot by a crossbow.
- Keep your distance! The English longbow could shoot an arrow well over 600 feet (200 meters).
- What can you get done in 60 seconds? A skilled archer could shoot 12 arrows per minute!
- No matter how you slice it, a favorite food was bread. The average person ate as much as three pounds a day!

They even used hard pieces of bread, which they called trenchers, as plates!

- Spiral staircases are common in medieval castles, and they were designed to wind clockwise to make it hard for attackers coming up the stairs to draw their swords. Plus, the narrow design meant the castle's defenders only had to face one attacker at a time.

PART 2: ARMOR/KNIGHTS INFORMATION

- Did you know knights didn't start out as knights? Boys from royal families left home to become pages at age 7. They became squires around age 14 and were finally knighted around age 21 after years of training.
- Want to dance? Page boys learned music and dancing along with how to ride horses and hunt at the castle of another nobleman. They were also taught reading, writing, and arithmetic, just like kids today!
- Squires were assigned to serve and fight alongside a lord or knight. They would care for his armor, serve him at meals, and perform other household duties. Squires trained with wooden swords and lances and played popular court games like chess, checkers, and backgammon.
- Good knight! The eve before becoming a knight, the knight-to-be took a bath. This was thought to wash away his sins.
- Wanna buy a suit of armor? Then you'd better start saving. Customized plate armor for a knight would cost up to half a million dollars in today's money.
- That's heavy! Armor could weigh as much as 50 pounds. Sometimes knights needed help getting boosted onto their horses because of the weight.
- Armor wasn't only worn by knights. Sometimes horses and dogs wore it too.
- What was a knight's most important weapon? His sword.
- Whoa! Some swords were longer than normal swords and needed to be used with both hands because they were so heavy. These two-handed "great" swords could crush heavy armor.
- At one time, knights weren't very well-behaved, so a set of rules and customs called the Code of Chivalry was created. These were rules of good behavior, such as protecting the weak, being brave, and treating ladies with respect. All squires and knights were expected to follow them.
- Did you know they had mail in the Middle Ages? It wasn't like our mail though. It was metal rings linked together that made up part of the armor called chain mail.
- Knights fought in pretend battles called tournaments to entertain people and practice their skills. They could also win riches and honor.
- Have you ever heard someone say, "Get off your high horse"? This means to stop acting proud, and it comes from medieval times. Since knights and royalty rode on tall horses, they'd have to "get off their high horse" to be on the same level as other people.
- Knights rode on special horses called destriers. These powerful horses were trained to bite and kick on command and even trample fallen enemies!
- If a knight brought disgrace on his lord or king, he could lose his status as a knight. If this happened, the knight would have his armor smashed, his spurs hacked off, and his coat of arms removed.
- How would you like to be called "Sir"? If you were a knight, you would be. Even today in England, people are still knighted and given the title of "Sir" if a man or "Dame" if a woman.
- If you were a prince, you might be given a hunting dog as a gift. Hunting with hounds was a popular sport for noblemen and ladies during the Middle Ages.
- Like to wrestle? Knights practiced their skills by wrestling, sword fighting, and throwing a javelin.
- Forty days was the typical length of time a knight was required to fight for his noble each year. If he fought well, he might get some land and a house (called a manor).