

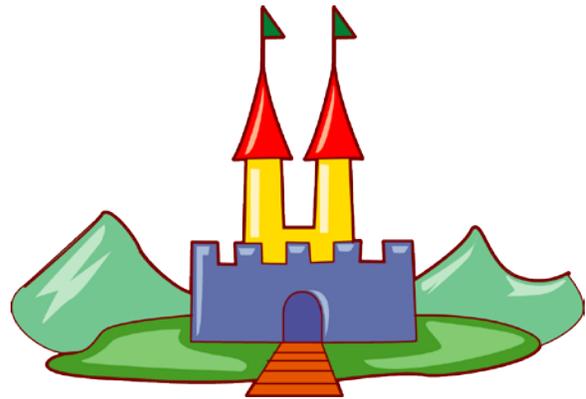
Name _____ **Feudalism**

The Feudal System

Feudalism was the social structure and style of government in Europe during the middle ages. It lasted for about a thousand years, beginning with the fall of the Roman Empire in 476 and ending in the mid 14th century at the dawn of the modern age. The social hierarchy during the time of feudalism was as follows.

The Bishop was the highest-ranking church official in a kingdom. The area managed by a Bishop was called a diocese. Bishops, like the Catholic Church, were very powerful in Medieval Europe. The church received a tithe (a tax to support the church and clergy) of 10% of what everyone in the kingdom produced.

The king was the highest authority in the land. He divided the land up among the Barons and high-ranking nobles, who in turn gave their loyalty and provided soldiers for the king. The large area of land ruled by a Baron was called a fief. Each Baron divided their fief among the



lords. All the lords served the king, and some of the lords were also the king's knights. They paid taxes to the king, and provided him with soldiers.

Communities formed around each lord. The lord lived in a manor, which was a large house or castle. Each manor was surrounded by a small village that included a church. Surrounding the village were the farms. The serfs (peasants) who lived on the land worked on the land for the lord. In return, the lord was responsible for the safety of the serfs. The lords owned everything on their land, including the many of serfs, who worked on the land like slaves. Around 90 percent of the people of the time fell into this category. Other serfs were free, and able to own businesses. These serfs made up the tradesmen, like carpenters, bakers, and blacksmiths. Life expectancy for a serf was less than thirty years.