




# Distribution of Wealth in Medieval Western Europe

This lesson plan will introduce students to the distribution of wealth and privilege in medieval Western European society. Through role-play, students will explore financial literacy concepts such as income and expense, as well as gain an understanding that wealth is not evenly distributed across everyone in society. Complete each section by following the instructions below.

 Teacher Led	 Requires Computer OR Mobile Device	 Requires <a href="#">Spaces</a>
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## Spaces Prep


Create your Activity in Spaces before the lesson. Not sure how to create an Activity? Check out this [short video tutorial](#) on assigning and managing Activities.

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## Learning Goals

1. Students will learn financial literacy concepts such as distribution of wealth and privilege, as well as gain an understanding of income and expense
2. Students will explore and review the social hierarchy of medieval Western Europe
3. Students will practice adding and subtracting money amounts up to \$100 using manipulatives

## Materials

 Student Handouts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• HANDOUT [A]: Market Shopping List</li></ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HANDOUT [B]: Medieval Role Play - Graphic Organizer (<i>Optional Extension Activity</i>)</li> </ul>
 <b>Technology Requirements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internet</li> <li>Mobile device, tablet, or laptop</li> </ul>
 <b>Additional Materials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chalkboard, whiteboard, or Smart Board</li> <li>Money manipulatives</li> <li>Role-play cards</li> <li>Three props labelled with price tags \$10, \$30, and \$50 (Ex. Apples, bread, silk/fabric)</li> </ul>

## Instructions

### Introducing the Lesson

*\*Teacher’s Note: Ensure students have previous knowledge of early societies as students will achieve greater success when this lesson is used as a continuation of their learning on medieval society, rather than an introduction to medieval society*

- Engage students in a whole-class discussion to review medieval **social hierarchy** in Western Europe. Take the opportunity to discuss the term “social hierarchy”, meaning the organization of people at different ranks depending on their status, power, and wealth. You may wish to ask the following guiding questions:
  - What do you think of when you hear the term “social hierarchy”?
  - Who do you think had the most power in medieval society?
  - Who do you think had the least power in medieval society?
- As you review, centre the discussion by visually organizing the social hierarchy on the board (e.g., king/queen, knights, lords/ladies, merchants, farmers, peasants). You may wish to include visuals (i.e., pictures) of the roles in the social hierarchy
- Tell students that they will be engaged in a role-play to explore how some medieval societies decide who has power and money and who doesn’t. Address that sometimes it is random and sometimes it is unfair
- Randomly give out **role play cards** to students and ask students to take a moment to read the card quietly to themselves. Be careful not to favour one gender, race, or ability



5. **Set the scene** for the role play. Make note of the following points:
  - Explain to students that they will be role-playing a market day in medieval England
  - Explain to students that they will have different roles. Depending on the role they have been randomly assigned, students will have different jobs to do and will earn different amounts of money. It will also affect what they can purchase at the market
  - Introduce the money system being used for the role play. Discuss that the currency in medieval England was different, but for today's role play you will be using modern currency with modern money manipulatives
  - Introduce yourself as the king/queen of the society and inform students that they are to follow along with the king/queen's rules
  
6. Before beginning the role play, ask students to keep in mind the following guiding questions:
  - How is money being earned?
  - Who is being given the most money? Who is being given the least?
  - What kinds of privileges do those with the most money have?

*\*Teacher's Note: Discuss the term "privilege" with your students, meaning a special right or advantage available to only a particular person or group of people. Ask for or provide examples of how money can give you certain privileges (e.g., eating expensive foods, dressing in fancy clothing, having more time for leisure activities instead of work).*

## Class Role Play

### Part One:

1. In the role as king/queen, improvise or read the following script to students:

#### **Script:**

(Enter the scene with your head held high, taking a seat at the centre of the space)  
*This day marks the opening of this village's local market. Merchants and farmers from across the village have prepared some of the freshest foods for our villagers, and some fine luxuries from across the world have been imported for those lucky enough to buy some. But first! Work needs to be done to prepare the market. May I have all farmers in the village rise.* (Wait for students to stand)



*Farmers, please begin your work on the fields harvesting the crops. You may use shovels and baskets to prepare the crops for the market. (Gesture for students to gather in an open space in the classroom to begin miming their work)*

*Now, lords, join me as we relax under this tree and wait for the market to begin. Please enjoy a game of cards, chat with your friends, or eat some of the finest delicacies before you. (Instruct students to follow your lead and mime playing cards, talking with friends, or eating imaginary food)*

2. Allow the role play to continue for 5-10 minutes. In the role of the king/queen, you may walk between the two groups of students. To the students roleplaying as farmers, you can commend them on their hard work. To the students roleplaying as lords, you can encourage them to try a new imaginary delicacy or continue to relax.

#### **Part Two:**

1. In the role as king/queen, improvise or read the following script to students:

#### **Script:**

(Ring a bell or clap hands to get the students attention)

*Enough work has been done for today and our market is now ready. Before the market begins, I will hand everyone in the village their pay for their hard-earned work. (Walk towards the group of students roleplaying as farmers)*

*Thank you for preparing the crops for our market. For your hard work, each of you have earned \$30. (Hand each student money manipulatives to equal \$30 and then walk to the students roleplaying as lords)*

*For your service to the king/queen, each of you have earned \$100. (Hand each student money manipulatives to equal \$100) Now that everyone has been given their wages, let us see what fine goods are for sale at the market. (Gesture to the market items on display, ex. apples for \$10, bread \$30, silk \$50)*

*Please explore the market, see what goods are for sale and what items you can purchase.*

2. Allow the role play to continue for 10 minutes. In the role of king/queen, encourage students to share what items they think they can purchase with the tokens they have earned
3. Students should write the items they would buy on **HANDOUT [A]: Market Shopping List** worksheet. Challenge students to think of various combinations they can buy with the money they have earned (e.g., \$30 would allow students to buy 3 apples or 1 loaf of bread)

## Documenting the Activity in Spaces

**Teacher Tip!**

This lesson has been created as an Activity in Spaces, but you can easily adapt the instructions if you'd prefer for your students to post directly into the Class Space or their Individual Space.

1. **Think-Pair-Share:** After the role play, gather students as a whole class to debrief their role-playing experience. Use the following questions to guide the discussion:
  - How was money being earned?
  - Who was given the most money? Who was given the least?
  - What kinds of privileges did those with the most money have?
  - Was this system fair? Why or why not?
2. Explain to students that they will complete an Activity in Spaces. Their activity will include:
  - Media entry (Camera): HANDOUT [A]: Market Shopping List
  - Description: Written reflection of their experience from the role play. Students can answer one or more of the following questions:
    - What was your role? How much did you earn?
    - What items were you able to purchase at the market?
    - How did you decide what items to purchase?
    - Who do you think had the most power in the role play? Was this system fair or unfair?
    - How was money being earned?
    - What kind of privileges did those with the most money have?
3. Students will complete the Activity in Spaces by following these guidelines:
  - Click **Activities** > Choose today's activity
  - Read the Activity and Click **✓ Start Activity**



- Media > Choose **Camera** or **File** > add a picture of HANDOUT [A]: Market Shopping List
- Add a title > “Wealth in Medieval Western Europe”
- Post Description > This is where students should answer one or more of the reflection questions outlined above
- ✓ **Submit** > Click **Yes, Submit**

## Extension: Letter to the King or Queen

1. Inform students that they will write a letter to the king/queen. In their letter, students will state if they found the system fair or unfair and pose suggestions for an alternate system. Students should use **HANDOUT [B]: Medieval Role Play - Graphic Organizer** to plan their paragraph before writing it in Spaces. The questions that should be addressed in their letter includes:
  - Who should control the community’s money? Why?
  - How can people earn money?
  - Who should get the most money? Who should get the least?
  - Should there be rules about what people can spend money on?
2. Students should locate their post in the **Class Space** or their **Individual Space**.
3. In the **Add reflection** box, students should reference their graphic organizer when writing their letter to the king or queen. Alternatively, students could also deliver this as a speech using the **Add Audio** option
  - a. In addition to their letter, students should add HANDOUT [B]: Medieval Role Play - Graphic Organizer by selecting **Add Photo** to take a photo of their organizer.

## Role Play Cards

### **Lord**

I am part of the king's nobility.

I am given a piece of land from the king. I am in charge of that land.

### **Farmer**

I am a farmer. I grow crops and raise livestock to feed my family.

I take extra crops and animals to barter or sell at markets and fairs.

## HANDOUT [A]: Market Shopping List

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

What is your role? \_\_\_\_\_ How much did you earn? \_\_\_\_\_

*In the chart below, record the items you can purchase at the market. How many different combinations of items can you purchase?*

<b>Combination #1</b>		
Items	Prices	Total
<b>Combination #2</b>		
Items	Prices	Total
<b>Combination #3</b>		
Items	Prices	Total



**HANDOUT [B]: Medieval Role Play - Graphic Organizer**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Questions</b>	<b>Ideas/Suggestions</b>
Who should control the community's money? Why?	
How can people earn money?	
Who should get the most money? Who should get the least?	
Should there be rules about what people can spend money on?	