

ANSWERS: The Feudal System and the Life of Peasants

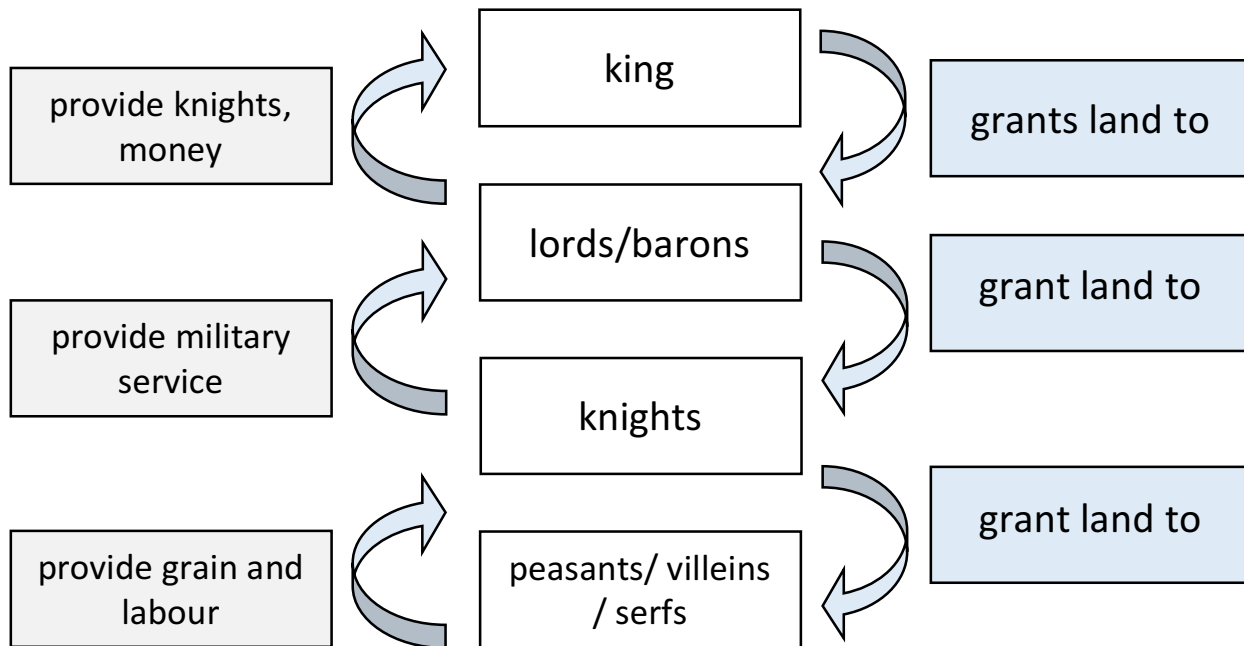
[LINK 1](#) – BBC Bitesize • [LINK 2](#) – The Feudal System • [LINK 3](#) – Making a Peasant Cottage

1 The Feudal System

a Fill in the simple diagram below to summarise the feudal system.

Use the elements provided. See also the diagram at [Link 2](#) above.

- lords/barons
- grant(s) land to (x3)
- peasants/villeins
- provide grain and labour
- knights
- king
- provide military service
- provide knights, money



b Use the diagram above and the description provided at both links to write a short description of the feudal system in the scroll below. Here are some sentence starters:

- The feudal system was a hierarchy or ranking system in which...
- Each group in the society...
- The role of the lords/knights/peasants was to...

The feudal system was a medieval hierarchy or ranking system in which each class or group in society had both rights and duties. Each class received land from the class above and in return provided labour, taxes or military service. While each group knew its role, which may have reduced conflict and increased social stability, there was very little social mobility. If you were born a peasant, for instance, whatever your talents or skills, you were likely to remain one. The bonded peasants, known as serfs, lived from hand to mouth and faced the threat of starvation. For them, this system provided only limited protection.

2 The Life of Peasants

Read through the text at [Link 1](#) and fill in the details below, using the words that fit into each space. You will have to piece together some details yourself.

~~back-breaking~~ • ~~daub~~ • ~~dawn~~ • ~~hard~~ • ~~harvesting~~ • ~~honey~~ •
~~one-third~~ • ~~potatoes~~ • ~~ploughing~~ • ~~sowing~~ • ~~tomatoes~~ • ~~wattle~~



a The work of a medieval peasant was **hard** and **backbreaking**.

b The day's work began at **dawn**. The work was based on the seasons, with the **ploughing** being done in autumn, the **sowing** in spring and **harvesting** in August.

c Peasant huts were made of **wattle**, a bendable wooden weaving frame, and **daub**, constructed from straw and animal dung.

d About **one-third** of a peasant's cottage was devoted to space for stabling the animals.

e Peasants mainly ate vegetables and rough flat bread. Their vegetables included leeks, carrots and peas – but NOT **potatoes** and **tomatoes**. These plant foods are native to the Americas.

f **Honey** was a rare luxury and highly valued for its sweetness.

3 Peasant Housing

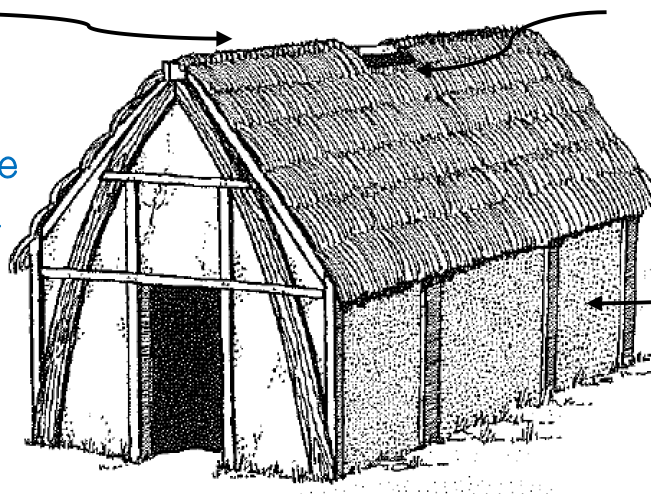
After you have read [Link 1](#) and watched the short video at [Link 3](#), write at least 6 pieces of information on the picture of a "cruck house" below:
e.g. comments relating to construction, materials, inner layout, cooking, advantages and limitations as a place to live.



Roof made of thatch –
problematic because it was
easy for it to catch fire.

Hearth within allowed
peasants to cook but made
the atmosphere smoky.

About one-third of cottage
set aside to stable animals.



Walls made of bent
willow (wattle)
reinforced by cow
dung and straw.

No windows, any holes in
the building were covered
with cloth, not glass.

Advantage: quick to
build, easy to repair