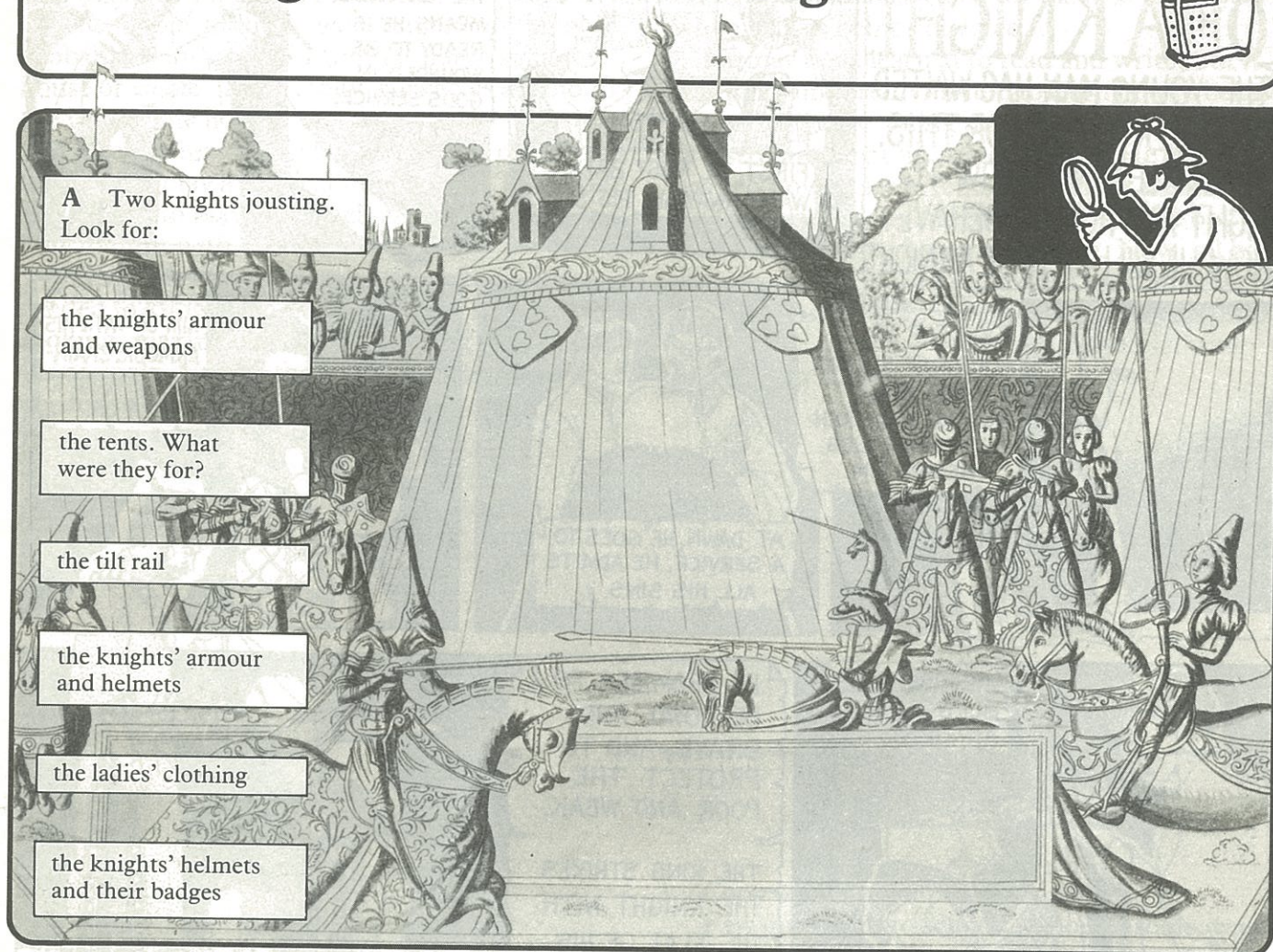


23 'Knights were Born to Fight'



A Two knights jousting.
Look for:

the knights' armour
and weapons

the tents. What
were they for?

the tilt rail

the knights' armour
and helmets

the ladies' clothing

the knights' helmets
and their badges



joust ransom tournament

The first knights were just servants on horseback. That is what the word 'knight' means. But soon the knights came to be landowners themselves. Their land was given as a reward for fighting in the king's army.

In return for the land, a knight had to find men to fight for the king. And he had to spend forty days himself serving in the king's army. He had to bring his own horse and weapons.

His duty was to fight his lord's enemies. Not that he expected to die. If he was captured, his family or villagers would pay money to get him freed. This was called a **ransom**.

The knight was a trained fighter. As a page and as a squire, he had been prepared for a life spent fighting. His problem was to find something to do when there was no fighting to be done. It could get very dull living in a cold, damp castle. So, when there weren't any wars, the knights started a small one of their own.

They called it a **tournament**. It was just like a real battle, except that only blunt weapons were used. The knights did not try to kill each other, but these war games were dangerous. At one German tournament, sixty knights were killed. Many were trampled to death.

So the mock battles gave way to a new sport called jousting. In a **joust**, two knights rode straight at each other. Each held a lance which was about three metres long. The lance was used to try and knock the other knight off his horse.



This was a task needing great skill. If you were clever at it, you could make a good living at jousting. Any knight who was knocked off his horse had to give up his horse and armour. And he paid a ransom to the winner.

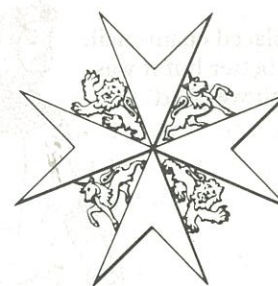
However, it was a dangerous sport so new rules were introduced to make it safer. A high fence was built to protect people who came to watch. A rail was put up to stop the knights actually riding into each other.

The great age of the knights was at the time of the Crusades. By the 14th century, many knights were no longer fighting out of duty. A new breed of knights had appeared. They would fight for anyone, if the pay was good.

Their aim was to make a living from ransom money and from theft. These armed thugs were very different from our modern idea of the brave and noble medieval knight.



- 1 Write one sentence about each of the words in the word box.
- 2 Describe in detail the tournament scene in the picture on page 78.
- 3 Read the column on the right and design a new coat of arms for your school. Make sure that it does not break the basic rule. When you have drawn it, make a large painting of it. If these are all displayed in your classroom, you could hold a vote on which is best.



- 4 This is a coat of arms of a well-known organisation which still exists today. Draw it in your book and find out the name of the people who wear it. Then, use your library to find out more about how this organisation started. A book on the Crusades would help you.



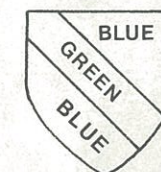
HERALDRY

Once a knight put on his armour, you could not tell who he was. So each knight had his own coat of arms which he wore on his shield and on his clothing.

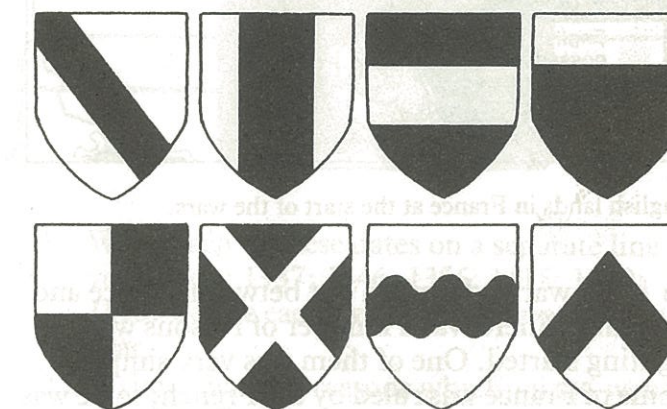
The design of the shield could use up to five colours. They were purple, red, blue, black and green. There were also gold and silver, which were called 'metals'. There was a simple basic rule. You could not put a metal on a metal, or a colour on a colour. You could have:



But not:



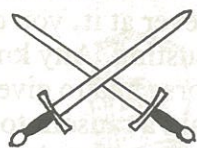
Here are some of the basic shapes used on shields:



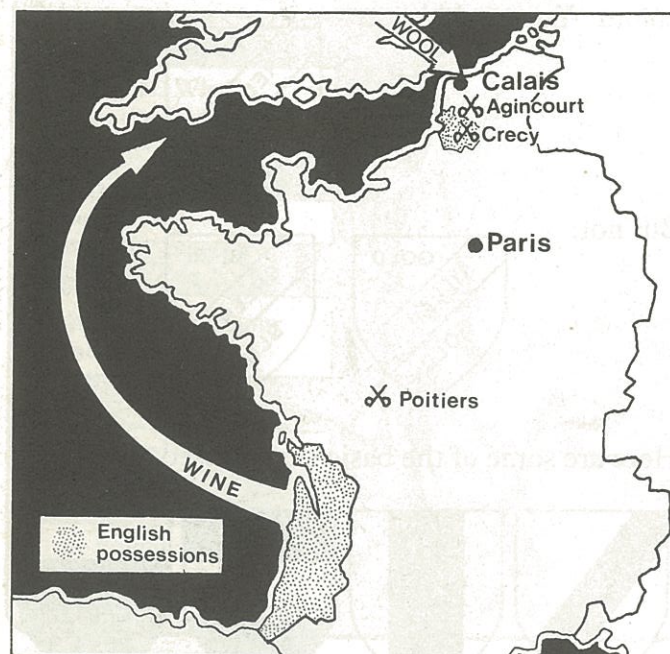
These are some of the designs which people had on their shields. (Look for others in your library.)



24 The Knights Go to War: The Hundred Years War



cannon gunpowder heretic
crossbowmen heir



English lands in France at the start of the wars.

In 1337, war had broken out between France and England. There was a number of reasons why fighting started. One of them was very simple. Some of France was ruled by the French; some was ruled by the English. Each side also wanted the land owned by their enemy. And they went to war to get it.

The King of England at the time was Edward III. His mother was a French princess, so he claimed that he had a right to be King of France. The French disagreed. The English merchants supported Edward III. They were worried about their wool and wine trade with France.

In 1340, they began fighting. They continued fighting, off and on, until 1453. So the wars have become known as The Hundred Years War.

The English won some dazzling victories at the beginning. Edward himself led the English to win a battle at Crécy in 1346. His son, the Black Prince, won a fine victory at Poitiers in 1356. He even captured the French King.

But a country must do more than win a few great battles if it is to win a war. It must hold on to the land it has won. This was what the English could not do.

By this time, **gunpowder** had been discovered. **Cannon** had been invented. The French used both to capture English castles in France.

Defending them became very expensive for the English. Extra taxes had to be introduced. One of these was the tax which helped to start the Peasants' Revolt.

As the war dragged on, it got more brutal. On each side, ruthless professional soldiers formed themselves into 'companies'. These men made their living by robbery and violence.

They stole food and raided houses for valuables. It did not matter to them whether the countries were officially at war or not.

After one interval of nearly twenty years, Henry V began the war again. In 1415, he won a great victory at Agincourt and it seemed as if he was close to success. In 1420, the French accepted him as heir to the French throne. He even married a French princess.

Plate armour replaced chain-mail. It protected you better but it was heavier. A full suit weighed at least 27kg.



A Sir John Froissart described the Battle of Crécy:

A The French troops did not advance in any proper order. As soon as their king came in sight of the English, his blood began to boil, and he cried out, 'Order our Genoese crossbowmen forward and begin the battle.'

There were about 15 000 crossbowmen but they were worn out because they had marched about 26 kilometres that day, fully armed. They said they would not be able to do very much in battle. At that moment, heavy rain fell and it thundered.

Soon afterwards, it cleared up and the sun shone very brightly, but the French had it shining in their faces.

The crossbowmen got themselves roughly in order and approached the English. They shouted loudly, to frighten the English, but the English paid no attention to it. They hooted twice more and advanced further, then began to shoot.

The English archers took one step forward and shot their arrows with such force and speed that it looked as if it were snowing. These arrows cut through armour and cut the strings of the crossbows. All the crossbowmen turned round and retreated.

The English carried on shooting, and some of their arrows fell on the French knights, driving them into the crossbowmen, causing great confusion.

B This picture of the battle was made in the second half of the 14th century.



Then, it all went wrong for the English. Henry V died. His baby son, Henry, became the new king. There were quarrels between his advisers.

More important, a French peasant girl arrived on the scene. Her name was Joan of Arc. She was just seventeen when she led the French army and saved the town of Orleans from the English. The English later accused her of being a **heretic** — an enemy of God. She was found guilty and burned at the stake, but not before she had put new courage into the French army.

Within thirty years, the English were almost pushed out of France. All they had left was the port of Calais.

- 1 Write each of these dates on a separate line in your book: 1337; 1346; 1356; 1415; 1420; 1453. Beside each, write what happened in that year.
- 2 Write down two reasons why England went to war with France.
- 3 Draw the map on page 80. On your map, underline the one place which England still had at the end of the wars.
- 4 Draw a knight wearing plate armour. Write down at least one problem of wearing such heavy armour.
- 5 Read evidence A and look at evidence B. Work out whether the English are on the right or the left in the picture. Then, list as many reasons as you can why the English won.