

Chapter 1 : Women in Medieval Scotland - Wikipedia

Medieval women invariably had a hard time in an era when many men lived harsh lives. A few women lived comfortable lives but Medieval society was completely dominated by men and women had to know 'their place' in such a society.

Some women engaged in outdoor jobs such as hay making or reaping but compared to standard wages for men, they were paid far less. Very few opportunities existed for women in urban centres where artisan guilds typically barred the entry of the women and limited their membership to men only. Rather, women in towns were frequently engaged in activities related to textile, such as weaving at the looms. In High Middle Ages, many wealthy women from nobility successfully rose to social and political prominence. And in Late Middle Ages, many women played an instrumental role in leading theological discussions. Medieval Women Education Education was common trait of the nobility in medieval times but this privilege was rarely extended to the noblewomen. In such cases where noblewomen were educated, they were typically taught at home. Exceptions existed, such as the city of Florence, where women were allowed to attain education alongside men. The influence of Church, however, discouraged any form of education for the women except the theological. Social Status of Medieval Women Women were largely regarded as inferior to men in the medieval society. This attitude had been influenced by Church and the Biblical story of Eve leading Adam to sin. Major theological figures of the Church in the medieval ages, such as Thomas Aquinas, clearly proclaimed that women should serve men. Opportunities for women were quite limited and they usually had to look after households, and after marriage strive to furnish a male heir for their husbands. Even if they got an employment, such as a job at the loom, they were paid far less than the standard payment for male workers. Such discrimination against women was rife in most fields. Medieval Women at work in the fields Medieval Women Jobs Women were barred from holding political offices in medieval society. They were also barred from being employed to most civic jobs. Rather, women had to find employment in hay making, reaping, weaving and other activities. Reaping, hay making and milking were often unpaid jobs, considered the duty of a women as they worked alongside their husbands. Among other jobs that were open to medieval women were nursing and baking. When working on the jobs available to them, women were paid less than the male workers. Extant documents from medieval England for instance show that women were paid 5 pence for hay making while men were paid 8 pence. Similarly, hay making earned a daily wage of 4 pence for the women while the men were paid 6 pence for the same job. Medieval women in Church Barred from most fields of life and confined to the duty of marriage of child-rearing, medieval women often found Church as a worthy escape. Monasticism and being associated with a convent helped women get literacy in various arts, become well-versed in theology, enjoy a certain amount of freedom and get rid of the obligation of getting married without their consent. At convents, women were able to play a fairly significant role and many an important theological treatise in the medieval ages has been penned down by a women. Very few women rose to prominence in the medieval ages, One of the earliest of them was Hilda of Whitby Hilda of Whitby Very few women rose to prominence in the medieval ages. One of the earliest of them was Hilda of Whitby who was a notable abbess in the 7th century. She achieved high learning in Celtic monasticism and later founded the Whitby Abbey. This abbey was for both men and women who worshipped together but lived separately. She attained sainthood and was immensely revered all over England. Eleanor of Aquitaine Eleanor of Aquitaine was an unusual medieval figure who was able to attain immense influence and power in medieval ages during the 12th century. Eleanor was highly educated in subjects such as history, astronomy and arithmetic, trained in a wide variety of games, well-versed in a number of languages including Latin and had a talent for music and literature. She became the patron of a number of literary figures and remained a very influential political, social and cultural figure throughout her life. Medieval Woman Catherine of Siena was closely associated with the Papacy. Saint Catherine of Siena Saint Catherine was a notable Church figure in the 14th century who extensively wrote on theological matters and played a very active part in bridging the divide between Papal authority and political authority. During the 14th century, she was instrumental in mitigating the influence of the anti-Papal league. She had correspondence with various religious and political figures of her times, acted

as ambassador in many matters of critical political significant and remained a very active figure. She was closely associated with Papacy and her writings on mystical topics are considered among the most important in the whole of Christendom. Julian of Norwich Julian of Norwich was another influential 14th century women in medieval times. She was a vocal proponent of the spiritual aspect of Christianity and gained immense prestige as a religious figure. Her teachings are remarkable for stressing on the maternal aspect of Christian theology. Isabella I of Castile Among female political figures of the medieval ages, Isabella I was perhaps the most influential. They were mostly confined to household jobs and were expected to marry soon. After marriage, their primary duty was considered to serve the husband rear their children. However, women had a way of escaping this fate by joining monasteries and convents where they could become literate, write on theology and rise to significant influence. Some women, such as Eleanor of Aquitaine and Isabella I also rose to exceptional political influence in medieval times.

Chapter 2 : Medieval Women - History Learning Site

Interpretations of women's place in medieval society have to strike a balance between exceptional individuals, who by dint of their wealth, status and achievements are often relatively well documented, and the experience of ordinary women, whose lives tended to leave few traces on the historical record.

Historians of the Middle Ages have been exploring issues related to sex and sexuality. Here are some of the more interesting pieces of research we have uncovered about sex in the Middle Ages. In the Middle Ages, everyone noticed the eyes first. For the medieval man and woman, the eyes and their gazes were an important part of sexuality. The very act of looking could stimulate desire in the observer and the observed. Where can you have sex in the medieval village? Medieval homes and communities often lacked privacy, and it might have been difficult for a couple to find a place they could be intimate. The character Hysminias was describing where he was kissing and fondling his partner. An unspeakable, inexpressible, incomparable passion took control of me. I then experienced "by Eros" what I had never experienced before. Sexy fruits. By the end of the Middle Ages, several fruits became associated with love. Michel Pastoureau explains that cherries were a symbol of love, as was red apples, if given by a man. In the same vein, the pear, no matter what color, could symbolize male genitals. There were also three lengthy periods of abstinence "during Lent, which could last between 47 to 62 days; before Christmas, which could be at least 35 days; and around the Feast of Pentecost, which could range from between 40 to 60 days. Also, many Feast days for particular Saints would be considered no-sex days as well. Here is a helpful chart: During the Early Middle Ages, Penitentials, books that set out church rules and the penance done for breaking them, were popular works. Amid the many different sins they noted were those that dealt with sexual practices. The seventh-century Irish penitential of Cummean, for example, banned oral, anal and inter-formal sex, as masturbation and bestiality. The Anglo-Saxon Canons of Theodore, meanwhile, includes these punishments: Whoever fornicates with an effeminate male or with another man or with an animal must fast for 10 years. Elsewhere it says that whoever fornicates with an animal must fast 15 years and sodomites must fast for 7 years. If he defiles himself masturbates, he is to abstain from meat for four days. He who desires to fornicate with himself i. If he is a boy and does it often, either he is to fast 20 days or one is to whip him. Whoever ejaculates seed into the mouth, that is the worst evil. From someone it was judged that they repent this up to the end of their lives. While it was permitted to have sex with your spouse, only one type of position "the Missionary" was allowed, on the basis that this provided the least pleasure for the couple. Penitentials gradually fell out of favour during the Middle Ages, and were rarely produced after the twelfth-century. What kind of man did a woman prefer? She too will court the man who is uncircumcised in the flesh and lie against his breast with great passion, for he thrusts inside her a long time because of the foreskin, which is a barrier against ejaculation in intercourse. Thus she feels pleasure and reaches an orgasm first. They are united without separating, and he makes love twice and three times in one night, yet the appetite is not filled. Medieval riddles, such as this one found in the Exeter Book, often seem to have double-entendre meanings: It is pierced through in the front; it is stiff and hard and it has a good standing-place. When the man pulls up his own robe above his knee, he means to poke with the head of his hanging thing that familiar hole of matching length which he has often filled before. These were comic stories that frequently included wives and other women in sexual escapades with a variety of men. Some regulations of prostitution still survive, such as Regulations concerning Prostitutes Dwelling in Brothels, which was part of the Nuremberg city ordinances from about 1527. Also, the brothel keeper, man and woman, must provide the women living in their house with chambers, bed linens, and decent food, and they must feed them two meals a day and at every meal two decent dishes; and for such expenses each common woman living in the brothel must give the brothel keeper separately the sum of forty-two pence weekly, whether she uses the food or not. Click here to read more about Prostitution in the Middle Ages Names for a Penis The Perfumed Garden of Sensual Delight is one of several books written in the medieval Arabic world that deals with sex and sexuality. Written in Tunisia in the early 15th-century, it offered candid advice on lovemaking between a man and his wife. In one chapter, the author lists the many names a penis could be

called: We take a look at the prescriptions offered in one of the most popular medical textbooks from the Middle Ages. However, in late medieval London there were at least 13 cases of women accused of doing just that.

Chapter 3 : Medieval Women: Love, Marriage, Family, and Livelihoods | Owlcation

Medieval Women. Women in medieval times were largely limited to household chores. Some women engaged in outdoor jobs such as hay making or reaping but compared to standard wages for men, they were paid far less.

Female artisans in some cities were, like their male equivalents, organized in guilds. She will ponder long and hard whether she can do something always preserving the honour of her husband to prevent this war. According to canon law, the law of the Catholic Church, marriage was a concrete exclusive bond between husband and wife; giving the husband all power and control in the relationship. Marriage could be proclaimed in secret by the mutually consenting couple, or arranged between families as long as the man and woman were not forced and consented freely; but by the 12th century in western canon law, consent whether in mutual secrecy or in a public sphere between the couple was imperative. This was according to Bennett who investigated the marriage of Henry Kroyl Jr. Bennett details how Kroyl Jr. However, widows could inherit property when they had minor sons, or if provisions were made for them to inherit. Through court rolls, he found that many widows in this area independently held land successfully. He argued that some widows may have remarried due to keeping up with their tenure and financial difficulties of holding their inherited land, or community pressures for the said widow to remarry if she had a male servant living in her home. Remarriage would put the widow back under the thumb and control of her new husband. Even young widows, who would have had an easier time remarrying, remained independent and unmarried. Franklin considers the lives of widows to have been "liberating" because women had more autonomous control over their lives and property; they were able to "argu[e] their own cases in court, hir[e] labour, and cultivat[e] and manag[e] holdings successfully". Marxist historian Chris Middleton indicated that this type of patriarchal control was assumed. Ideally, women were to fall under male control regardless of class. English peasant women generally could not hold lands for long, rarely learnt any craft occupation and rarely advanced past the position of assistants, and could not become officials. Peasant women had numerous restrictions placed on their behaviour by their lords. If a woman was pregnant, and not married, or had sex outside of marriage, the lord was entitled to compensation. The control of peasant women was a function of financial benefits to the lords. Also during this period, sexual activity was not regulated, with couples simply living together outside a formal ceremony, provided they had permission by their lord. Even without a feudal lord involved with her life, a woman still had supervision by their father, brothers or other male members of the family. Women had little control over their own lives. English peasant women, on their own behalf, could plead in manorial courts; some female freeholders enjoyed immunities from male peers and landlords; and some trades such as ale-brewing, provided female workers with independence. Still, Middleton viewed these as exceptions which required historians only to modify, rather than revise, "the essential model of female subservience. Ninety percent of the European population lived in the countryside or in small towns. In fact, although peasant women worked as hard as peasant men, they suffered many disadvantages such as fewer landholdings, occupational exclusions, and lower wages. Primogeniture prevailed in England, Normandy, and the Basque region: In the Basque region, the eldest child -regardless of sex- inherited all lands. In Normandy, only sons could inherit lands. In England, the eldest son usually inherited all properties, but sometimes sons inherited jointly, daughters would inherit only if there were no sons. In northern France, Brittany, and the Holy Roman Empire, sons and daughters enjoyed partible inheritance: Even though up the year female landownership had been increasing, afterwards female landownership began to decline. Rural historian Jane Whittle described this gender division of labor thus: Some activities were restricted to either men or women; other activities were preferred to be performed by one gender over the other: Generally, women were required to have male guardians who would assume legal liability for them in legal and economic matters: Women of different classes performed different activities: These inventions favoured commercial cloth-making and brewing dominated by male workers who had more time, wealth, and access to credit and political influence and who produced goods for sale instead of for direct consumption. Meanwhile, women were increasingly relegated to low-paying tasks like spinning. Like their independent rural workers, rural wage-labourers performed

complementary tasks based on a gendered division of labour. Women were paid only half as much as men even though both sexes performed similar tasks. Whittle stated that the debate has not yet been settled. Women attendants assisted in childbirth and passed their experiences to one another. In 12th-century Salerno, Italy, Trotula, a woman, wrote one of the Trotula texts on diseases of women. The book was a compilation of three original texts and quickly became the basis for the treatment of women. Hildegard was one of the most well known of medieval medical authors. Also included are investigations of metals and jewels. Hildegard also explored such issues as laughter, tears, and sneezing, on the one hand, and poisons and aphrodisiacs, on the other. Medieval peasants subsisted upon grain-heavy, protein-poor and iron-poor diets, eating breads of wheat, barley, and rye dipped in broth, and rarely enjoying nutritious supplements like cheese, eggs, and wine. As the human body better absorbs iron from liver, iron salts, and meat than from grains and vegetables, the grain-heavy medieval diet commonly resulted in iron deficiency and, by extension, general anemia for medieval women. However, anemia was not the leading cause of death for women; rather anemia, which lessens the amount of hemoglobin in blood, would further aggravate such other diseases as pneumonia, bronchitis, emphysema, and heart diseases. Herring could be more effectively salted, and pork, cheese, and eggs were increasingly consumed throughout Europe, even by the lower classes. According to Salic Law, crimes and determined punishments were usually orated; however as their contact with literate Romans increased, their laws became codified and developed into written language and text. Peasants, slaves, and maidservants were considered as property of their free-born masters. A proven seducer of a maidservant worth 15 or 25 solidi, and who is himself worth 25 solidi, would be fined 72 solidi plus the value of the maidservant. The proven abductor of a boy or girl domestic servant will be fined the value of the servant 25 or 35 solidi plus an additional amount for lost time of use. She will also have her property taken away from her and will be proclaimed an outlaw. A free-born man who marries a slave or maidservant shall also lose his freedom and privilege as a free-born man. If anyone fornicates with a maidservant of the king and proven to do so, the fine would be 30 solidi. Free peasant women, unlike their male counterparts, could not become officers such as manorial jurors, constables, and reeves. Conditions of serfdom applied to both genders. A serf woman would pass her serfdom status to her children; in contrast, children would inherit gentry status from their father. The first fine upon a female serf getting married was known as *merchet*, to be paid by her father to their lord; the rationale was that the lord had lost a worker and her children. Lords could even force female serfs into involuntary marriages to ensure that the female serfs would be able to pro-create a new generation of workers.

Chapter 4 : Women in the Middle Ages - Wikipedia

This has led to many different views of medieval women. Some writers emphasize the Romantic aspects of medieval life. Others have painted a grim picture of plagues, famines, witch hunts and servitude to lords and masters.

One who did so was Hilda of Whitby , whose abbey became famous for its learning and libraries. Five future bishops were trained in her community, and kings and rulers sought her advice. Many women joined the Crusades. Christian women often corresponded with and gave advice to the most prominent leaders of their day. Heloise better known for her relationship with famous philosopher Peter Abelard maintained a significant exchange with Peter the Venerable, the influential abbot of Cluny. The two discussed theology and spirituality at length. Anselm, later Archbishop of Canterbury , corresponded with Queen Matilda on matters of religion. Of all the recognized saints between and , about 15 percent were women. Some Anglo-Saxon queens appointed bishops. Queen Emma of Normandy, one of the most powerful people in England in the early eleventh century, clearly did so. Brigid of Ireland was said to have been consecrated a bishop. Brigid, who was born in the late s, founded the first nunnery in Ireland and served as an abbess. Hrotsvit, a German Christian woman who lived in the tenth century, wrote verse, history, and, in fact, the only dramas composed in all of Europe from the fourth to the eleventh centuries. Only their failure to do so allowed her to grow up, and at age 17 save France from military destruction. Her alleged reign for almost three years ended when she gave birth while riding in procession. The story was so widely held that a bust of Pope Joan was placed in Siena cathedral in about , and John Hus spoke of her while on trial shortly before his death. Not until the mids was the story repudiated. In the later Middle Ages, some Christian women chose lives of prayer and solitary confinement in their pursuit of holiness. These anchoresses, as they were known, often lived in a small room attached to a church. Windows allowed them to look into the sanctuary, to view the services there, and to look out into the village, to be able to buy food and necessary supplies. The first known morality play, an important form of drama in the late medieval period, was written by a woman Hildegard of Bingen, the twelfth-century German abbess. Holy women so valued their virginity that in some extreme cases they cut or disfigured themselves so they would not be molested by marauding invaders of their monasteries. One who did so was Ebba the Younger, abbess of a remote monastery in Scotland during the wave of Danish invasions in the late ninth century. Fara, a saint in the late s, founded a joint community of men and women in the north of France, where she ruled as abbess and assumed priestly and episcopal powers, hearing confessions and excommunicating members. Abbesses continued to hold considerable authority; as late as the thirteenth century, certain abbesses had to be halted from hearing confessions of their nuns. Anna Comnena, daughter of Byzantine emperor Alexius I, wrote the most detailed history of the church of her time. Women made extensive pilgrimages often with small retinues to the Holy Land. One such pilgrim was Margery Kempe, who traveled without her husband first in England and then to Rome and Jerusalem. Eleanor of Aquitaine the twelfth-century queen of England and France, and generous supporter of Fontevault Abbey wore the color of mourning white to her wedding. She thus set a precedent for brides in all centuries since. Angell is a doctoral candidate in history and liturgics at the School of Theology, Boston University. Next articles Despite countless books, conferences, and theological debates, the role of women in the church is far from settled.

Chapter 5 : Daily Life for Peasant Women in the Middle Ages

Women in the Medieval Church: From the Editor's "In the Middle (Ages) of a Debate. Despite countless books, conferences, and theological debates, the role of women in the church is far from settled.

Who Matters in Medieval History? Some believe we should only study famous and powerful historical figures. In pre-democratic times, especially, it was the leaders of a society who mostly determined where it was going and what important events occurred. For others, the lives of ordinary people are just as interesting and just as important. This article contains an overview of the lives of ordinary women in medieval Europe -- particularly England. How to Make Sense of the Many Representations of Medieval Women Understanding the lives of medieval women is less easy than you might think. There is not a lot of evidence to base an understanding on. Often, the only evidence of their existence is church records with birth, marriage, and death faithfully recorded. The evidence that goes beyond those simple facts has been interpreted by historians in significantly different ways. It has also been gleefully exploited by novelists and painters to provide entertaining but factually inaccurate narratives. Sometimes the facts have been bent to offer moral and political instruction. This has led to many different views of medieval women. Some writers emphasize the Romantic aspects of medieval life. Others have painted a grim picture of plagues, famines, witch hunts and servitude to lords and masters. More recently, many historians especially American historians have focused on the positive aspects of being a woman in the Middle Ages, emphasizing that some, at least, led independent and influential lives. It is interesting to explore each of these cultural strands and important to clear out some of the cultural clutter before trying to get a clear picture of medieval women. Merry, or not so merry England? This may seem a strange question but how people chose to see the past is important if you want to understand any historical subject. When the Industrial Revolution began to transform England in late 18th century, many writers and painters were appalled by the pollution created by industry, the unregulated growth of modern cities and the equally unregulated behavior of their new inhabitants. Thomas Carlyle criticized the newly developed and highly mechanized factory system in words that sum up this attitude perfectly: They have lost faith in individual endeavour, and in natural force This reinvention of the Middle Ages to suit the needs of the time even spawned a movement: Medieval motifs were widely adopted in architecture, paintings, and works of fiction. Being aware of how Medievalism has skewed our perception of the Middle Ages is important for anyone interested in the true history of the period. Pre-Raphaelite Conceptions of Medieval Women The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood began with the intention of returning painting to the virtues of the Renaissance but many members of the movement were also dedicated medievalists. Their works still color our perceptions of the Middle Ages, today. It is based on the well-known poem constructed by Alfred Lord Tennyson which includes supernatural curses, doomed maidens, heroic knights and an unattainable paradise in this case Camelot. Detail from "God Speed! The mixture of piety and decorum can be seen as part of the backlash against the reeking factories and riotous gin shops of Victorian England. Tristan and Isolde is an old and tragic story of adulterous love that has both titillated and instructed many generations of educated Europeans. Modern Echoes of Medievalism Hollywood loves the myths and legends of the medieval period as much as it loves the myths and legends of the Wild West. More Progressive Views While many artists and painters longed for a return to a time that seemed simpler, more orderly and purer, others saw the industrial revolution and its attendant social upheaval as offering many new possibilities. These artists and writers were more likely to see the Middle Ages as a time of ignorance and poverty with excessive control of the individual by church and state. John Stuart Mill was an especially influential 19th Century philosopher and thinker who championed the view that the new cities of Victorian England were centers of great enterprise and individual opportunity. His successors would write histories with more progressive views, and these color academic explorations of the period, today. Marriage Marriages were carefully considered transactions in the medieval period. Romantic love was less important than securing a sound economic base for a secure relationship where children could be raised. A bad marriage could mean the dilution of the power and wealth of a family- if a woman married below her status, the exchange of goods and land, common at the time, would be

disadvantageous. In the worse case, it could mean a life of poverty for the newlyweds. Family, friends, and church would all take a role in deciding what marriage would bring most benefits to the families and the community. Among the very poor, property was less of an issue, and there was more freedom to choose based on personal preference -- although sometimes marriage and children might not have been affordable at all. Terry Jones takes a look at relationships in the Middle Ages Marriageable Age There is a myth that, in the medieval period, many girls were married before they even reached their teenage years. Amongst rich and powerful families, very young children could be promised in marriage as a way of cementing alliances. Sometimes, actual marriage ceremonies of children would take place, but the couple would not live together until they were considered adults. The Church also allowed the betrothed the right to renounce these child marriages when they came of age. Recent research suggests that the marriageable age for ordinary people was little different in the medieval period than it was a hundred years ago. In Italy, the average age for marriage was 17; in France 16 years old; and in England and Germany 18 years old. Illustration of the tragic end of Pyramus and Thisbe. Romantic Love in the Medieval Period Marriages may have been arranged, but people still fell in love. Some of the most popular stories of the time concern young lovers who were kept apart by their families. Medieval poets writing about love often have very recognizable woes: Since the lives of ordinary people were not well documented, Aries was obliged to make inferences from the few sources of information that were available, like church records. Aries concluded from his study that from the age of 7, people were no longer children in medieval Europe. They were grown ups who were expected to work in the fields or other business of their family. This has prompted some people to believe that medieval parents did not care deeply about their children. More recently, new views have emerged as a result of the study of physical remains including skeletons, toys, and pictorial records, as well as archival material. The video below reviews the evidence that childhood involved as much play as hard labor and that parents cared about their children as much as we do today. An Elizabethan witch burning. Scholars are still arguing about what caused the outbreak of this form of terror, but it was widely associated with social upheaval. In England, witch hunts were at their peak during the English Civil War and almost ceased when central authority was restored. Did marriage hem women in? How Free were Medieval Women? The dominant force regulating marriage and personal behavior in the Middle Ages was the Catholic Church -- an institution that has always been dominated by men. Then, as now, it took a strong interest in anything that related to the production of children. It was also very concerned with keeping strong passions from tearing communities apart. Both families and communities needed to be united to prosper, given the many perils of the period. Mostly, the Church and respectable society in general, tried to instill respect for the sanctity of marriage but the Church also set the stage for the careful control of women. Women who were mistreated could not testify against their husbands in court, on any issue, in the UK until the Criminal Evidence Act of Of course, the realities of family life could easily mean that a woman with a strong personality and superior intelligence could rule the roost. Many women were the power behind the throne in noble families too. There is plenty of evidence that many marriages were genuine partnerships with respect on both sides. Also, some women bent the gender rules profoundly, just as they do today. The majority of women worked in the fields or as spinners of wool. Brew wife beer brewer was an important occupation where women could run their own enterprise. On the downside, women were excluded from many professions. They could not practice medicine, though they could be midwives. They could not be apothecaries, but they could be herbalists in some periods this practice could result in accusations of witchcraft. They could not hold a political office like mayor, or become a magistrate. Many of these restrictions have only been lifted during the last one hundred years in Western countries. Herrad of Landsberg, was one woman who was certainly able to use her talents. Although women could not train as painters, nuns like Herrad could be illustrators of manuscripts. Successful Medieval Women Medieval Woman as Mistresses of Their own Fate Women often came into their own when the powerful men in their lives had died. There are many documented accounts of women who took powerful positions by inheriting property or businesses from fathers or husbands. This tells us that women could be accepted in such roles and that they had the protection of the law and custom. Women could also take on the most powerful role in a kingdom -- that of Queen. Some women ruled as queens in their own right. Some ruled through a male relative

who was not yet of age. Elenor of Aquitaine inherited the Duchy of Aquitaine in , became queen of France in and then queen of England in , the latter two roles as a result of marriage. Christine de Pisan, a Parisian woman, became a court writer and poet after her husband died young. The money allowed her to support her family and gave her great status. Joan of Arc is an astonishing example of a woman who rose from absolute obscurity to a position of prominence, helping to lead armies, unify France and expel the English occupiers of her country.

Chapter 6 : Women in the Middle Ages--Everyday Life

Women in the Middle Ages occupied a number of different social roles. During the Middle Ages, a period of European history lasting from around the 5th century to the 15th century, women held the positions of wife, mother, peasant, artisan, and nun, as well as some important leadership roles, such as abbess or queen regnant.

The signs of chastity are as follows: Some women are so clever. Rather than being binaries of virgin and whore, women of courtly literature are divided between attainable and unattainable. The "cult" of courtly love caused a great deal of controversy when it first began to emerge in French literature during the lifetime of Eleanor of Aquitaine. The unfriendly and unsympathetic lady is most often found in the lyric poetry of courtly love, where she remains distant from the narrator, spurning all his advances and scorning his company. If the woman is indeed sympathetic to her wooer, and welcomes his advances, there may be other impediments to the union, such as an existing marriage on her part. This does not, however, always put a damper on the relationship. Literature of courtly love often encourages adultery; in I. The Roman caused a bit of controversy in its time, as it portrays albeit through allegory actions and ideas of questionable morality and truth. Many writers jumped into the intellectual fray either to condemn or praise the text see the Christine de Pizan section below. Historians examining town records have found that most towns and cities had some sort of brothel, often an official one that was actually publicly owned, though this was more common on the continent than in England. Prostitutes, while an inevitable part of urban and town life, existed in a rigorously restricted space, both in a physical sense and in less tangible but no less noticeable ways. In most places, common women were only allowed to sell their "wares" on certain streets or in certain neighborhoods, and sumptuary laws i. So why did medieval women go into prostitution? As for the actual reason, Karras makes this observation: Whereas for men prostitution sometimes substituted for marriage as a sexual outlet, for women it substituted for marriage as a means of financial support. It was difficult for a woman to support herself outside the conjugal unit. Prostitution may have been the only acceptable way for some women to support themselves in the absence of a husband who would provide for them economically. Historians must generally rely on court records that mention women accused of whoredom; very rarely do records detailing the workings of actual brothels still exist. Contributing further to the confusion in England, at least, is that for most women in the trade, prostitution was not their sole occupation. Therefore, prostitution may have even been, for many women, a cyclical income source undertaken during whatever was the "off" season for their regular occupations Karras, Real Women of the Middle Ages Despite the disparity in the ways in which medieval women were depicted, actual medieval women inhabited a fairly continuous range that not only included the extremes of virgin and whore but also spanned the gap between the two. In between the two margins were found visionaries, queens, scholars, and warriors. Hildegard of Bingen Hildegard was a twelfth-century Benedictine nun who not only established herself as a notable mystic and prophet but also as a writer, scientist, composer, and linguist. She was very prolific during her lifetime, writing not only on health and medicine, but also recording religious visions complete with detailed descriptions for illuminators , composing hymns, and creating her own language known as the Ignota Lingua. Her immense talent gained her enough respect in her own time that her sometimes unorthodox and disobedient behavior never garnered any sort of permanent punishment excepting, possibly, a refusal by the Catholic church to canonize her. A notable episode occurred near the end of her life, when Hildegard and her monastery were placed under interdict for allowing the Christian burial of an excommunicate. She even went so far as to reproach the bishop of Mainz for greed and un-Christian behavior. Eleanor of Aquitaine Eleanor was one of the more unusual queens in English history. She began her public life as the Queen of Louis VII of France, but their marriage was an unhappy one that produced only two daughters. Very soon after obtaining an annulment of the marriage, Eleanor married Henry, the young Duke of Normandy and heir to the English throne. Between the two of them, they controlled a much greater portion of France than did Louis himself, a fact that caused much strife between them and Louis. As Queen of England, Eleanor was quite prolific in the most important way: She herself outlived not only her younger husband, but also all her sons excepting John. She was strong-willed,

and refused to see her husband as anything other than an equal, going so far as to join three of their four sons in rebellion against Henry in 1173. Despite this long imprisonment, she had lost none of her ability to lead, and when her son Richard, now king, went on crusade, he left Eleanor in control of all England. In addition to being one of the most politically powerful women of her time and place, Eleanor was also an important figure in the burgeoning literary and artistic movement of courtly love.

Chapter 7 : Sex in the Middle Ages

Everyday Life. These sites are in alphabetical order and do not reflect any kind of hierarchy. They are selected to complement the medieval and medieval women episodes of Dr. John Lienhard's The Engines of Our Ingenuity from the University of Houston's KUHF Public Radio station, and to assist in further research.

C N Trueman "Medieval Women" historylearningsite. The History Learning Site, 5 Mar Medieval England was not a comfortable place for most women. Medieval women invariably had a hard time in an era when many men lived harsh lives. A woman milking a cow Medieval society would have been very traditional. Women had little or no role to play within the country at large. Within towns, society would have effectively dictated what jobs a woman could do and her role in a medieval village would have been to support her husband. As well as doing her daily work, whether in a town or village, a woman would have had many responsibilities with regards to her family. Within a village, women would have done many of the tasks men did on the land. However, they were paid less for doing the same job. Documents from Medieval England relating to what the common person did are rare, but some do exist which examine what villages did. For reaping, a man could get 8 pence a day. For the same task, women would get 5 pence. For hay making, men would earn 6 pence a day while women got 4 pence. In a male dominated society, no woman would openly complain about this disparity. In medieval towns, women would have found it difficult to advance into a trade as medieval guilds frequently barred women from joining them. Therefore, a skilled job as recognised by a guild was usually out of reach for any woman living in a town. Within towns, women were usually allowed to do work that involved some form of clothes making but little else. For many women, a life as a servant for the rich was all they could hope for. Such work was demanding and poorly rewarded. The law, set by men, also greatly limited the freedom of women. Medieval society had a different outlook to children when compared to today. Many girls from poor families did not get married until they were in their twenties. Girls from richer families tended to marry earlier than girls from poor families. The poorer families needed as many working for them as was possible, so a daughter getting married at an early age would have deprived them of a worker. This was not true for a rich family. Once married, the young lady came under the control of her husband. Producing a male heir within a rich family was considered vital. So many women spent a great deal of their married life pregnant. However, childbirth was dangerous as medical care was so poor. Wives from a rich family usually did not look after their children. This was done by a wet nurse. Women from a poor family not only had to look after the children but had to continue doing her day-to-day work both in the home and on the land. Many women from poor families did not live past the age of forty.

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Daily Life for Peasant Women in the Middle Ages The daily life of lower class women in the Middle ages was hard. Women were expected to help their peasant husbands with their daily chores as well as attending to provisions and the cooking of daily meals and other duties customarily undertaken by women.

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Women engaged in criminal activity as well, including banditry. Many criminal gangs in Medieval England consisted of families, including wives with their husbands and sisters with their brothers.