

Name _____



Becoming a Knight

By Sharon Fabian

When you were six years old, did you know what you wanted to be when you grew up? Most people wouldn't. However, if you lived back in the Middle Ages, it would have been time to start your training if you were going to be a knight one day.

Preparation for knighthood was a long process. It lasted more than ten years.

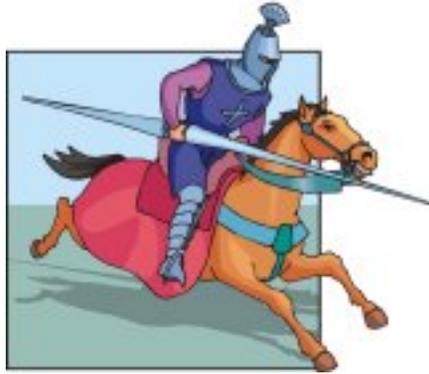
At around the age of six, young boys who were the sons of knights or other nobles were sent away from home to live at a neighboring castle where they began their training. During this first step on the path to knighthood, the boy was known as a page.

Pages dressed in their lord's colors, received training, and took on responsibilities right from the beginning. Their main duty was to help the lord. They would help him dress and help take care of his armor. They did all kinds of useful chores, like using sand to clean the armor when it got rusty. Pages also served at the table, and one important skill they learned was how to carve and serve meat.

Pages began to learn the courtesies and social skills that an adult knight was expected to know. They learned to sing and dance and maybe play a musical instrument. They learned how to treat a lady with respect.

Pages also learned to hunt and how to handle a hawk or a falcon. They played training games with wooden swords and did lots of physical exercise to build up their strength.

If a page made good progress and seemed like he would make a good knight some day, he stepped up to the rank of squire at about the age of 14. Now his training became more serious. A squire practiced with



real swords, spears, and lances. In his training games, he used real weapons too, and competed against real knights. He practiced using his sword on a quintain, a sort of medieval punching bag with a shield. A squire learned to ride a war horse with one arm free for fighting.

A squire accompanied his knight to the battlefield, too. There, he was his knight's personal servant. He cared for the knight's weapons, and it was his duty to have a fresh sword ready whenever the knight's sword was lost in battle. He continued to care for his knight's armor and also took care of his horse.

Back at the castle, the squire learned all about the code of chivalry that all knights must live by.

Once he reached the age of 18, a squire might hope to become a knight. Not all squires were chosen to become knights, and not all were chosen at the same age. A squire might be knighted if he showed the bravery and honor of a good knight. A squire might also be knighted if more knights were needed for a battle.

The day of the knighthood ceremony was a special one. It was a time of celebration but also a solemn occasion. To prepare for the ceremony, the squire would stay awake all night, praying. In the morning, he would take a bath and dress for the ceremony. With some help, maybe from another squire, he would put on his full suit of bright metal armor. Then he would add a white tunic over the armor.

Once he was dressed, he was ready for the ceremony. His family and friends, as well as other nobles, would be present. His lord would slap him on the shoulder with the flat side of a sword and dub him a loyal knight.

The official ceremony was followed by a celebration with music, feasting, and dancing. After the ceremony, the new knight was ready to begin his new life. He was a medieval warrior now - ready for battles, tournaments, quests for adventure, and even for rescuing damsels in distress.



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Questions

- _____ 1. Boys began their training to become a knight at about the age of _____.
- A. 6
 - B. 5
 - C. 14
 - D. 16
- _____ 2. A boy became a squire at about the age of _____.
- A. 5
 - B. 18
 - C. 14
 - D. 6
- _____ 3. Squires became knights _____.
- A. at the age of 18
 - B. at the age of 14
 - C. at various ages after 18
 - D. none of the above
- _____ 4. Which of the following was NOT an activity usually associated with the work of a knight?
- A. seeking adventure
 - B. fighting
 - C. farming
 - D. participating in tournaments
- _____ 5. The code of honor of the knights was known as _____.
- A. medieval
 - B. paging
 - C. chivalry
 - D. feudal system

- _____ 6. A squire cared for his knight's _____.
- A. armor
 - B. weapons
 - C. horse
 - D. all of the above
- _____ 7. A lord would tap a squire on the shoulder with a sword to show that _____.
- A. he needed to behave
 - B. he had become a knight
 - C. he won the tournament
 - D. it was time to get to work
- _____ 8. Knights were warriors of the _____.
- A. Roman Empire
 - B. Civil War era
 - C. Middle Ages
 - D. All of the above

Why do you think pages were sent to another castle to be trained, rather than being trained in their own family's castle?
