

MIDDLE AGES MONASTERIES



A monastery is a building, or group of buildings, where people lived and worshiped. Medieval monasteries served many purposes. People who lived in monasteries, called monks, devoted their life and time to God. Monasteries were self-contained, meaning everything monks needed was provided by the monastery community. Each monastery had an open center area, called a cloister.

BENEDICTINE RULE

Monks dressed in loose brown robes, tied at the waist with a cord. A priest named Benedict built a monastery in Italy in 520 CE. He established rules known as Benedictine Rule. The rules said priests could not marry or own goods. They had to obey their abbot, the head or ruler of the monastery. The abbot made the laws of a monastery. All monks had to take three vows:

- 1) Vow of poverty- had to give up worldly goods.
- 2) Vow of chastity- had to stay single.
- 3) Vow of obedience- had to promise to obey the church and rules of the monastery



MONKS

Monks made their own clothes and grew their own foods. They did not need things from the outside world, so they could isolate and focus on God. Monks were important because they were some of the few people who knew how to read and write. They provided education to the rest of the world. They wrote books and recorded events too. Without these books, very little would be known about what occurred in the Middle Ages. Monks mainly focused on God and the monastery, but they also played an important role in the community. Monasteries gave travelers a place to stay because there were very few inns at the time. Monks helped feed the poor, cared for the sick, and provided education in their community. Orders of monks were influential and wealthy. Many were patrons of the arts, meaning they gave money to artists.

TASKS

Monks' days were spent praying, worshiping, reading the Bible, and meditating. Most of their day was spent in silence. The rest of their time was working on chores around the monastery. Jobs depended on the monk's talents and interests. Some worked the farms, while others washed clothes, cooked, or completed repairs around the monastery. Some monks were scribes who spent their days copying manuscripts and making books. Scribes sometimes spent over a year copying one book, such as the Bible.

BOOK ROOM

Monasteries often had a special room for monks to work on books. This room was called a scriptorium. Monks copied and illustrated books by hand. The scribes usually worked in strict silence. Some famous manuscripts involved more than one scribe. For example, three artists and four scribes likely worked on *The Book of Kells*. It was an illuminated, or illustrated, manuscript from the 800s.

LIBRARIES

Most people did not own books in the Middle Ages because they were expensive and rare. Libraries were important for reading and writing. Early monasteries had libraries of religious and classical books and writings. They shared their books so other scribes could copy them.

MAIN MONASTERY JOBS

ABBOT	Head of the monastery or abbey
PRIOR	Monk second in charge (like a deputy to the abbot)
LECTOR	Monk in charge of reading the lessons in church
CANTOR	Leader of the monks' choir
SACRIST	Monk in charge of the books

NUNS

Women could choose to become nuns who lived in a convent. They had to follow their abbess. Nuns wore a gown, veil, and a wimple. A wimple was a white cloth that wrapped around the face and neck. Nuns were usually more active than monks. Nuns prayed, spent time weaving, spinning, and teaching. Nuns also took care of the sick, the fields, and tried to be self-sufficient.



Name _____

MONASTERIES



IDENTIFY: Use the word bank to identify each description.

cantor	monks	scribes	abbot
Benedict	travelers	libraries	convents
I. Head of a monastery			
2. People who lived in monasteries			
3. Monasteries often gave these people a place to stay			
4. Priest who established rules for monks			
5. Nuns lived in these			
6. These people spent their days copying manuscripts and making books			
7. Early monasteries had these to loan people books			
8. Leader of the monks' choir			

MULTIPLE CHOICE: Choose the best answer.

9. Which member of a monastery was in charge of reading the lessons in church?
- A. Abbot
 - B. Prior
 - C. Lector
 - D. Cantor
10. What was the purpose of a scriptorium?
- A. To give scribes a place to write in silence.
 - B. To give monks a place to pray.
 - C. To give travelers a place to stay.
 - D. To give monks a place to meditate.
- II. What was a vow of poverty?
- A. Monks had to devote themselves to God.
 - B. Monks had to give up worldly goods.
 - C. Monks had to stay single.
 - D. Monks had to promise to obey the church and rules of the monastery.

SHORT ANSWER: Answer each question.

12. Name two ways monks interacted with people in their community.
13. How would people's knowledge of the Middle Ages be different without monks?

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Name KEY

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cantor		8. Leader of the monks' choir	

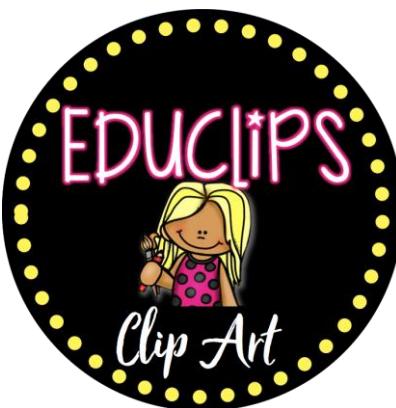
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SHORT ANSWER: Answer each question.

12. Name two ways monks interacted with people in their community.
They gave travelers a place to stay, helped feed the poor, cared for the sick, and provided education
13. How would people's knowledge of the Middle Ages be different without monks? **Not as much would be known about the Middle Ages because the monks wrote everything down.**

THANKS!



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