

Wild Relatives: Amazing Animals in Your Family Crest

Have you ever looked at your family crest or coat of arms? These special symbols tell the story of your family. Many crests have wild animals on them.

A long, long time ago in medieval Europe, only kings and queens had last names. Regular people had just first names. But then towns got very big, with lots more people. So people needed unique last names to tell each other apart.

That's when last names started. Last names were based on jobs, like Miller or Smith. Or where families lived, like Hill or Brooks. Names like Armstrong told about traits people had.

Rich noble families wanted fancy symbols. They designed crests with animals that meant something about their families. Family crests were like old logos or mascots.

The animals showed what the family valued and was known for. Lions stood for bravery, leadership and being royal. Bears meant strength and power. Foxes showed someone was clever and sneaky in a good way. Eagles were for honor and authority.

Warriors painted family crests on their shields. That helped friends know who was an ally in battle. Displaying your crest showed you were a friend. Crests were also on flags, seals, and banners. Having a noble crest was very special back then.

Later, more families had crests, even farmers and tradespeople. Although crests started with European nobility, they spread worldwide.

You can learn about the animals in your family crest and what they stand for. Look at what the creatures are and what they represent. A fox crest means being smart and sly was good. A lion crest shows leadership, royalty and bravery.

You can look into what your last name means too. Let's say your name is Carter and your family crest has oxen on it. Maybe your ancestors trained oxen to pull carts and wagons! Your name and oxen crest keep that story alive.

You can also look up the crests for your last name online. See which crest design fits your family's story and values best. This helps pick the right crest if there are different versions.

Make your own family crest if you want! Use animals that are important to your relatives or show things they did. Or include creatures from where your family is from. Make your crest special for you.

So look closely at your family crest next time you see it. See how the animals link you to the past and tell a story. Let the crest guide you as you add your own chapter to its history!

Glossary

- crest - a symbol for a family
- medieval - from the middle ages, 500 to 1500 ad
- values - things you believe are important

Questions

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What did crests let warriors do long ago?
 - a) Look brave in battle
 - b) Find their friends
 - c) Feel proud of their family
 - d) Scare enemy soldiers
2. Based on the article, what does a fox crest mean?
 - a) Strength
 - b) Cunning
 - c) Honor
 - d) Leadership
3. How were family crests special in the past?
 - a) Only kings had them
 - b) They showed what a family valued
 - c) They were painted on houses
 - d) They looked like cool animals
4. How can you connect a crest to your family?
 - a) Guess based on where you live
 - b) Research last name meanings
 - c) Copy other families' designs
 - d) Pick your favorite creature
5. Over time, family crests _____.
 - a) Lost their original meaning
 - b) Stayed only for royal families
 - c) Became popular worldwide
 - d) Disappeared
6. What is the main idea of the article?
 - a) Lions and eagles mean nobility.
 - b) Crests help identify your relatives.
 - c) Coats of arms tell family histories.
 - d) Crest designs should be creative.

Answer Key

1. b
2. b
3. b
4. b
5. c
6. c