

The More Classical Curriculum

History Unit Study: The Chivalric Ideal: Knights, Honour and Virtue in the Middle Ages

Logic Stage



Pupil
Workbook



The More Classical Curriculum

Table of Contents:

The Chivalric Ideal Summary.....	7
Lesson 1: What Is Chivalry?.....	8
Lesson 2: How was a Knight made?	
Lesson 3: William Marshal.....	
Lesson 4: Roland: Heroic Loyalty or Fatal Pride?.....	
Lesson 5: Honour, Reputation and Shame.....	
Lesson 6: King Arthur and the Chivalry of the Imagination.....	
Lesson 7: Sir Gawain and the Impossibility of Perfection.....	
Lesson 8: St George: A Holy Knight.....	
Lesson 9: St Louis IX: King, Knight and Saint.....	
Lesson 10: Tournament.....	
Lesson 11: Froissart: Did knights behave chivalrously?.....	
Lesson 12: The Trial of Chivalry: Ideal or Reality?.....	
Sources.....	

The Chivalric Ideal: Knights, Honour and Virtue in the Middle Ages

Big Idea: What did it mean to be a good knight, and was chivalry a reality or an ideal?

Overview

Time Period: 1000–1500 AD

Key Figures: Saint Louis IX of France (1214–1270); Ramon Llull (c. 1232–1315/16); Geoffroi de Charny (c. 1300–1356); Jean Froissart (c. 1337–c. 1405); Roland; King Arthur; Sir Gawain

Key Events and Developments:

An Introduction:

Chivalry was one of the great ideals of the medieval world. The Medieval knights role was warfare but as society began to become more and more civilised, they were increasingly expected to behave differently from the warriors of the previous age. A good knight was supposed to be **courageous in battle, loyal to his lord, generous to the weak, courteous in his behaviour, faithful to his promises, and obedient to God**. This was the moment chivalry was born, and it sought to transform the warrior into something more: a Christian gentleman whose strength was governed by virtue.

Lesson 1: What Is Chivalry?

Was Chivalry simply a set of rules for knights?
Learn to distinguish between a knight, the social institution of knighthood and the ideals associated with chivalry.

Primary source — evidence originating from the period being studied.

Ideal — something regarded as a model of how people ought to behave.

Code — a set of rules or principles.

Retrieval:
When you were eight, what words would you have associated with a knight?

Which of your words tell us what a knight **WAS**, and which tell us what a knight **SHOULD BE**?

A knight WAS...	A knight SHOULD BE...

Source A — *Ordene de Chevalerie*

Read the extract below and underline the phrases that describe what a knight should be or do:

“The sword is two-edged, even as You see, which gives you to understand that always should the knight have both justice and loyalty; which is to say, I think, that he should always protect the poor that the rich may not tread them down, and support the weak that the strong may not bring them to shame.”

List the virtues and duties of a knight that you could find below:

Source A thinks a good knight should...

Source B — Ramon Llull

Read the extract below and underline the phrases that describe what a knight should be or do:

"Knights ought to take horses to jousts and attend tournaments; they ought to hold great feasts open to all; they should hunt harts (male deer), boars and other wild beasts, for in doing these things Knights exercise themselves in their prowess, courage, generosity and military skill ."

List the virtues and duties of a knight that you could find below:

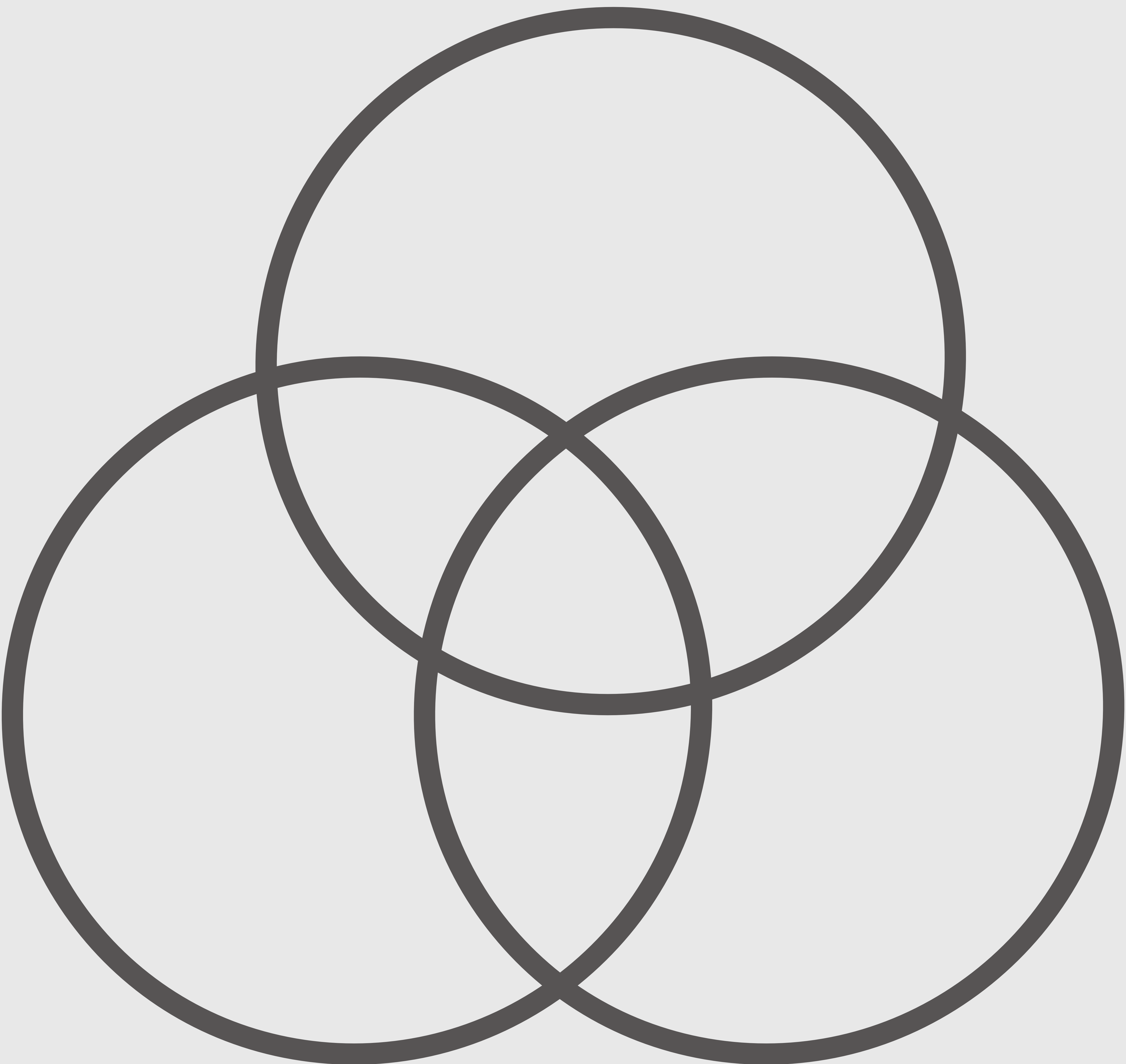
Source B thinks a good knight should...

Is this source similar to Source A?

How is it different?

PRESCRIPTIVE

CHIVALRIC IDEALS



List of Duties and Virtues

Prowess	Noble birth	Loyalty
Armour	Military skill	Horse
Sword	Courage	Piety
Courtesy	Good reputation	Justice
Obedience to one's lord	Generosity	Mercy
Protection of others	Tournament success	Wealth

Chivalry

My original definition:

My improved definition:

Three important ideals:

1.

2.

3.

One thing historians must be careful about:

One question I still have:

Bibliography

Primary Sources:

The Song of Roland

The Ordène de Chevalerie / The Order of Knighthood

Ramon Llull, *The Book of the Order of Chivalry*

Geoffroi de Charny, *A Knight's Own Book of Chivalry*

Jean de Joinville, *The Life of Saint Louis*

Chrétien de Troyes, *The Knight of the Cart (Lancelot)*

Chrétien de Troyes, *Perceval, or The Story of the Grail*

The Quest of the Holy Grail

Jean Froissart, *Chronicles*

Sir Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*

Christine de Pizan, *The Book of Deeds of Arms and of Chivalry*

Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*

Secondary Sources:

Maurice Keen, *Chivalry*

Richard W. Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence in Medieval Europe*

Richard W. Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors: The Religious Ideology of Chivalry*

Nigel Saul, *For Honour and Fame: Chivalry in England, 1066–1500*

David Crouch, *The Birth of Nobility: Constructing Aristocracy in England and France, 900–1300*

David Crouch, *Tournament*

Jean Flori, *Chivalry*

Richard Barber, *The Knight and Chivalry*

Richard Barber, *The Holy Grail: Imagination and Belief*

Christopher Tyerman, *The Crusades: A Very Short Introduction*

The More Classical Curriculum
In Admiratione Nati, in Sapientia Formati
Created by Johanna Dalton
2025