

Jousting and the Medieval Tournament



Laura Santoso and Alex Cote

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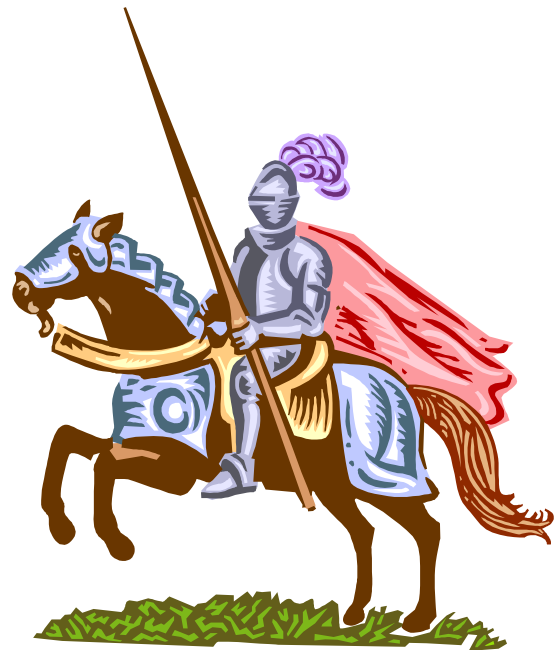
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WHAT IS A MEDIEVAL TOURNAMENT?



The **medieval tournament** was a competitive event in which knights demonstrated their battle skills against opponents, but with

The tournament featured equestrian sports of mock battles and was a popular activity for nobles of the Middle Ages. Contestants wore their armor and charged each other while on horseback, just like in real battle. Participating in these contests was a way for knights and soldiers to stay fit for actual combat and a way to earn respect by demonstrating their abilities.



Hi! My name is Arthur. No, I am not King Arthur, but like him I am a knight from the Middle Ages. I will be commenting all throughout this book, so look for me on many of the pages!

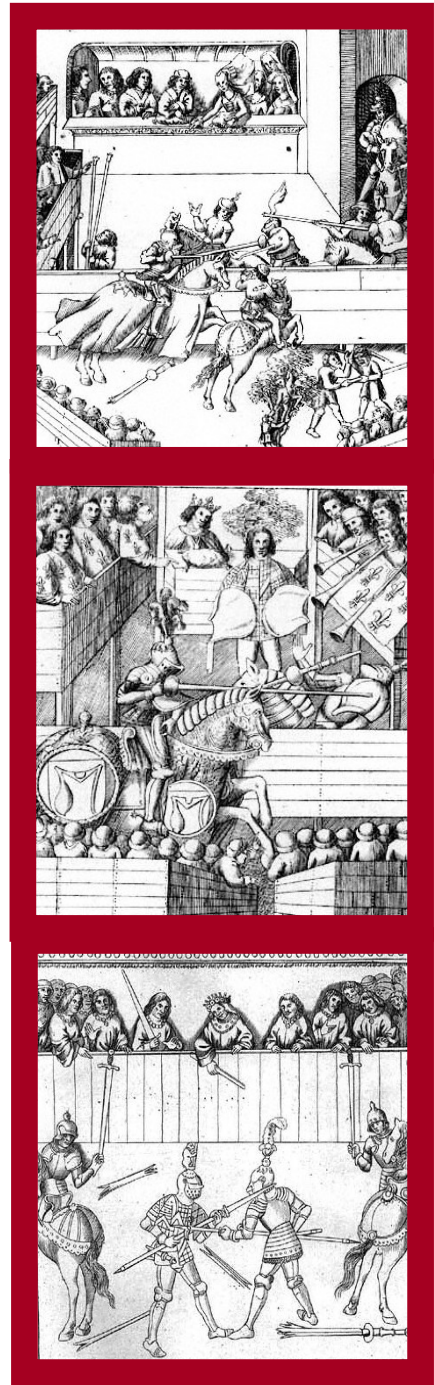
THE TOURNAMENT



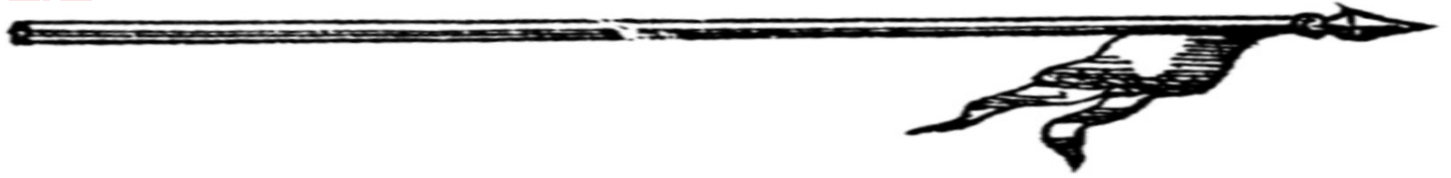
The medieval tournament developed around the 10th century of the Middle Ages with the emergence of **chivalry**. Knights wanted to train themselves in their horsemanship and weapons skills outside of actual battle. Tournaments were military exercises conducted to demonstrate ability and valor. Melée and jousting were the most prominent forms of tournament in the Middle Ages.



As time progressed the tournament changed from being a military exercise to a sporting competition. The purpose of the tournament changed from practicing battle skills to entertainment and showcase. Tournaments became all-day events and featured various activities other than the military showcases, including feasting, dancing, and pageantry. Tournaments were such popular entertainment that jousting knights sometimes traveled to different places to be new rivals.



MELEE



The **Melée** was a military competition between two groups of nobles. In the Middle Ages, groups of knights would right at each other on signal and battle across an open field.

Although jousting became more renowned over time, the Melée came first and was also very popular during the Middle Ages. Melees were typically hosted by wealthy lords and attended by young knights, who wanted to gain experience.

Like in all types of medieval tournament, items and money could also be won if players could capture their opponents as prisoners. Special areas were designated for prisoners, and if the captives could not escape they were often held for ransom.



There were also designated areas for resting and repairing armor. This type of combat could become very competitive, so injuries and even deaths were not uncommon.

ORIGIN OF JOUSTING



As military exercises and melee became more common, knights began to want to hone and demonstrate their skills in a less chaotic and more focused exhibit. The tournaments developed into organized, competitions for matched individuals and became a sport that was often played by knights and watched by others. Jousting competitions were in designated arenas called lists and more specific goals and rules were developed.

Jousting in medieval tournaments became so popular that it even influenced the status of knights! Showing our skills in tournaments with big crowds could either make or break our reputations.



OBJECTIVES



Originally, the main objective of jousting was to take your opponent prisoner by knocking him off his horse and confiscating his armor. Later in the Middle Ages, breaking the lance was an added goal to most forms of jousting.



In some forms of jousting, it was also possible to earn points based on the quality and accuracy of the attacks. Showcasing their abilities to the crowd was very important for the knights.

I never had the chance to joust during the early Middle Ages. Each time I competed, the goal was to break as many lances on your opponent as possible. As you can imagine, several lances were broken during a match so there had to be a large supply on hand.



GENERAL RULES OF THE GAMES

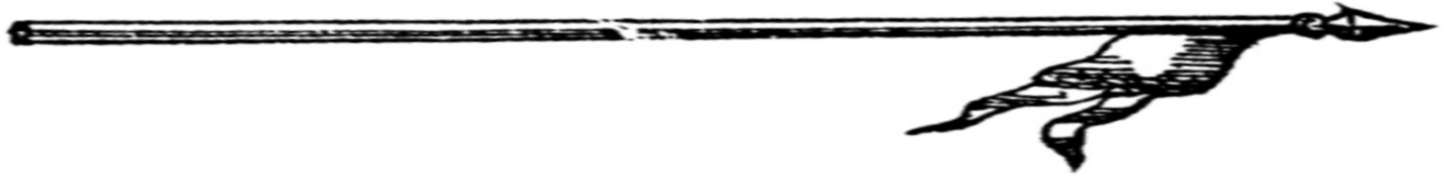


I found this flyer in the village center for an upcoming joust. Not all of them are exactly like this, but these are popular rules.

Rules of the Joust

1. Only nobles may compete in the joust
2. Competitors must have their own horse and armor
3. Up to 3 lances may be used in one match
4. Only the squire can talk to the knight during the joust
5. Knocking your opponent off the horse ends the match
6. Winners may choose to take the loser's armor or horse, or claim another prize

VARIATIONS



Practice tournaments were often held for the knights to practice their skills. Accuracy exercises were popular because a knight's aim was very important for the actual joust.

Quintain Jousting

In quintain jousting, the knight aimed his lance at a fake wooden target on a pole which sometimes revolved. If he hit the target inaccurately or slowly, a sand bag would swing around and hit him.



Ring Jousting

In ring jousting, or tilting, a knight would attempt to spear small rings on the tip of his lance. These rings were sometimes hung on cords, posted on stanchions, or tossed in the air.

In the early 1400s, a low partition wall between the two opponents was added to the individual joust. The knights would go back and ride at each other again and again until a winner was announced. The partition wall was primarily added to reduce injury for the horses.

EQUIPMENT: THE HORSE



Horses were very important for medieval combat. They helped knights tire less quickly and were necessary for attacks with the lance. Special horses were bred for knights, because they had to be exceedingly strong with incredible stamina. A knight's horse needed to be able to:

- ♦ Carry a knight AND his heavy armor without tiring
- ♦ Travel for long periods of time, still with a heavy load
- ♦ Gallop quickly for strikes during battle
- ♦ Stay steady as the knight braced attacks or received blows
- ♦ Remain calm enough to perform in front of cheering crowds during jousts and tournaments

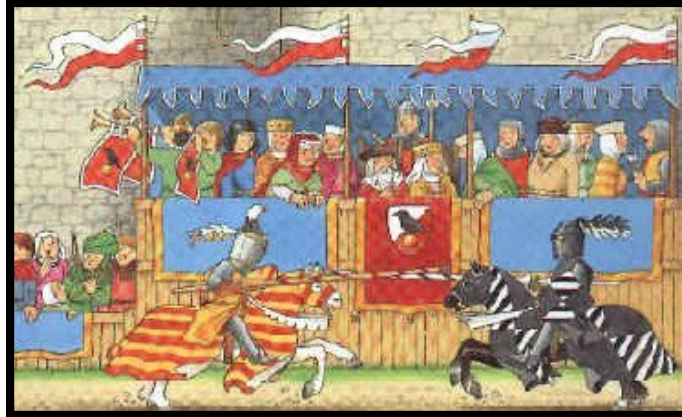


Falling of a horse was a huge disadvantage during battle, and was often the signifying event during a joust that proclaimed a winner and a loser.



Battle was just as dangerous for the horse as it was for the rider, so horses sometimes had armor as well (more weight to carry!). Attacking the horse while jousting, however, was considered unfair play.

REWARDS



A knight could receive several rewards if he was a good jouster. Very frequently, if a knight won a joust he would receive his opponent's horse or armor. The winning knight might also be able to hold the losing knight ransom on parole, and the losing knight would have return to his estates to raise money for the winning knight.

On various occasions, I joust in the name of a lady. The day before yesterday I jousted a tournament for Lady Elizabeth. She gave me her handkerchief as a favor, and I attached this to my clothing while I competed. Thankfully, I won, so Lady Elizabeth has more respect for me. I love earning respect from a lady, but it can be quite stressful losing in the name of a lady, because I embarrass myself and the lady!



EQUIPMENT: THE LANCE



This is a type of lance!



The **lance** is a type of spear most prominently used in the Middle Ages. It comprises a long shaft, usually made of wood, with a sharp metal point at the end.

How it Works

The bottom end of the lance was secured in a rest attached to the saddle or armor. This helped to secure the lance, so that when the tip hit its target the tip would move through past and through the target instead of backwards.

Knights would charge headfirst at each other holding their lances level. If the strike was not deflected, the impact of the tip of the lance and the target could be strong enough that the target would become unhorsed.

The lance was too dangerous for friendly tournaments, so special lances had to be made for jousting. These lances were made of soft wood, hollowed, and blunted at the tips. Although the impact of these lances could still be tremendous, they would not pierce the armor and would sometimes break.

Lances were only useful for knights on horseback. The lance was very long, ranging from 9 to 14 feet in length! This made the lance bulky and too difficult to wield for individual combat.

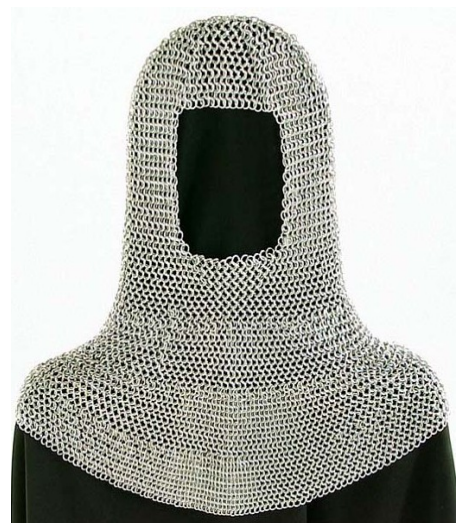
EQUIPMENT: THE HELMET



In the early years of jousting, knights wore a **coif of chain-mail** to cover the head and neck beneath the helmet. While wearing this armor, a knight's face was visible from his forehead to his chin. As jousting became more popular and physical, knights began to wear heavier and more protective helmets. Such devices implemented sheet iron that covered the head and face of a competitor. The objective of jousting was not to aim for a knight's head, but not wearing a helmet wasn't an option for knights.



Helmets were also indicative of a knight's social status. Those who held a high positions in society would often decorate their helmets to signify their superior status.



Special jousting helmets were sometimes made so that the wearer could only see out by leaning forwards. If the wearer straightened up just before the impact of the lance, his eyes would be completely protected.



EEQUIPMENT: BODY ARMOR

The most common jousting body armor during the 13th and early 14th centuries was iron chainmail. Though chainmail could protect a knight from puncture wounds, he could still be very badly bruised by even blunt jousting weapons.

As a result of this weakness, most knights switched to plate armor later in the 14th century. Hammered metal sheets were rounded to fit the shape of an individual knight's limbs and were strapped on over the chainmail. During the late Middle Ages, armorers could produce a full metal breast plate. This was one of the most exhausting time periods for knights. They were forced to wear over 50 pounds of armor when fully dressed!



Body armor was also a fashion representative of a knight's class and nobility. At one time, pointy toes signified a man of high status.

NECESSARY SKILLS



Jousting was a common form of combat practice. Therefore, many of the skills involved in combat are also implemented in jousting.

One of the most important skills that a jousting knight required was expert horsemanship. More often than not, jousting matches were determined by the skill of one knight to command his horse as compared to his opponent.



Another important skill that knights required in order to be successful jousting was mastery of the lance. The lance proved to be an extremely strange weapon to new warriors because of its sheer length and weight. Competitors could only master this massive weapon after lots of practice.

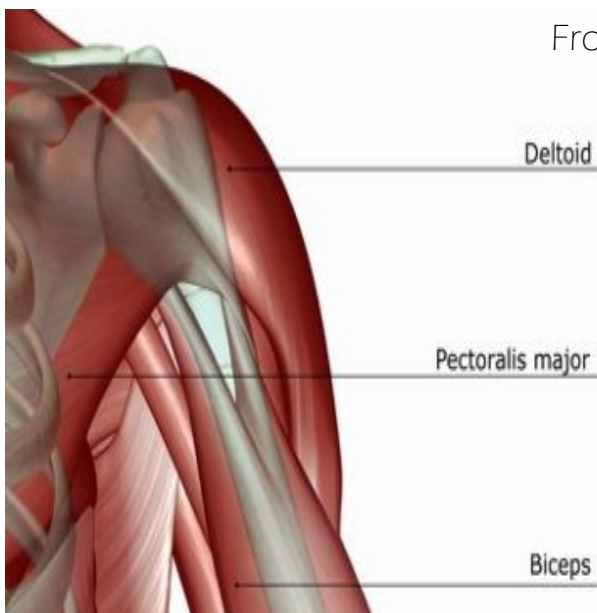
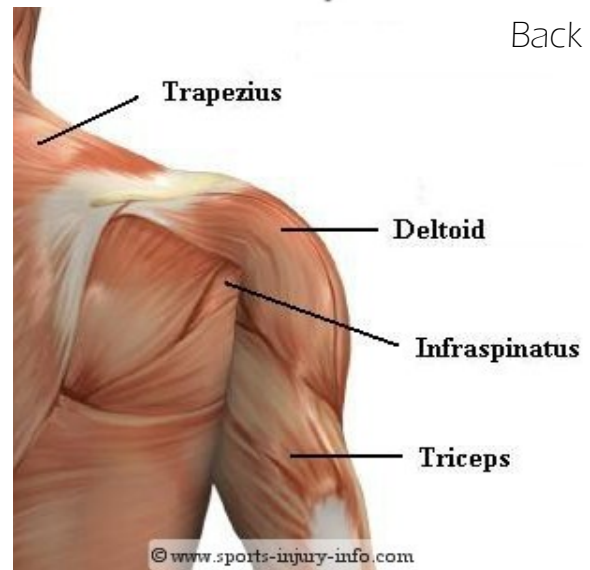


As you will see on the next page, it also helps to be in physical shape!

MUSCLES INVOLVED IN JOUSTING



Knights require large amounts of strength in order to joust competitively. The arms and shoulders are what the knight uses to keep his lance in control. The better shape that he is in, the easier he is able to control and aim his weapon. Some of the most important muscles are the deltoid, triceps, and biceps.



Front Jousting was and still is an extremely dangerous activity. If a jousting was not in the correct physical shape, he could very easily be killed. This has been proven true several times throughout history. For example, in 1599, the French King Henry II died due to a shard of metal which became lodged in his brain through his eye.

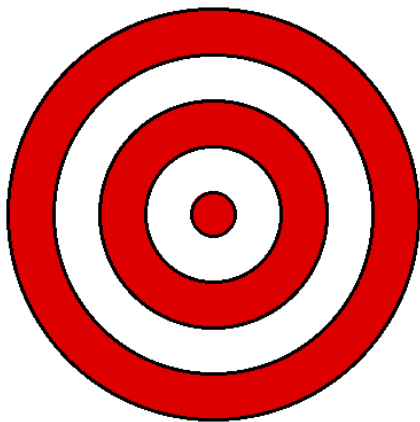


I always make sure I am in tip top shape before I enter a jousting match! It keeps me safe and gives me confidence!

STRIKING THE OPPONENT (OFFENSE)

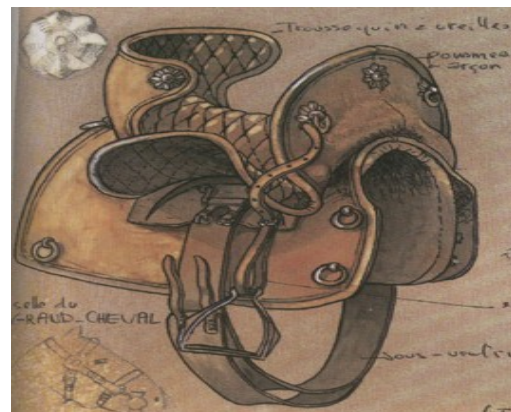


Aside from physical prowess, knowing techniques could give a knight an edge. In order to win a jousting match, one needed to knock his opponent off his horse. It was very important to charge the opponent at full speed, so that the strike had more force.



Aim was a particularly vital aspect of offense. Holding the lance steady was difficult because of the lance's size, but holding it close to the body helped to center the weight and stabilize the weapon.

It was extremely difficult to knock the opponent off his horse because the knights were positioned in the middle of a saddle that had a high, sturdy backing. Striking the opponent at an off center location was more effective.

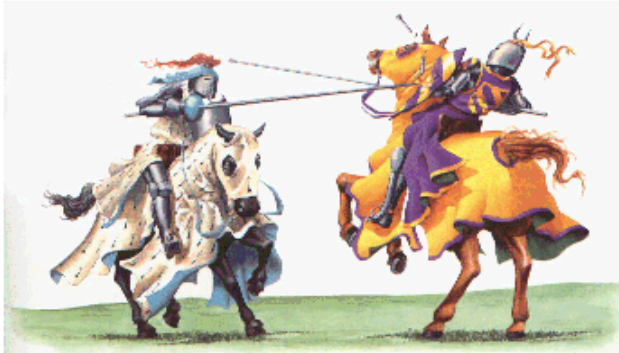


AVOIDING HITS (DEFENSE)



Jousting defensively was just as important as jousting offensively because the attacks and defenses occurred at the same time. As the opponent approached, it was important to deflect the lance and reduce the force of impact. Being hit directly was a painful experience and often resulted in loss.

Later in the Middle Ages, pointing lances at an angle was a popular technique. This was because the lance would be more likely to break and less likely to harm the opponent.



Leaning forward on the horse also helped the competitor to stay more balanced and less likely to fall over. One side of the body was also attacked over the other, because knights would hold their lances on their strong side. Bracing that side was critical for staying on the horse.



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THE END OF MEDIEVAL TOURNAMENT



The end of the medieval tournament came with the end of the medieval chivalry. As weapons technology advanced, the lance and plate armor became impractical and outdated.



The discovery and use of gunpowder in the 16th century was the pivotal end point for traditional knights and jousting. The cavalry could not be depended on to break enemy lines. With the long range of the gun and advanced archery (like the crossbow shown left), soldiers could

stop knights from advancing far before having the horses would be an advantage.

It was also very difficult to produce sheet armor that could withstand the impact of bullets. Thus, heavy full body armor be-



came less reasonable because the armor could not always protect the user from bullets.

Because the horse, lance, and armor became less useful in real battle, the popularity of the medieval tournament and jousting declined as well.

MODERN JOUSTING AND TOURNAMENT



Although the military aspects of chivalry became impractical in the early 17th century, the ideals of knighthood still remained popular. Rising theatre and drama gradually became the leading entertainment, and duels became the new sport for rivalry. Jousting was not completely eradicated, however, and was still conducted in various parts of Europe. The sport of ring jousting still survives even today.

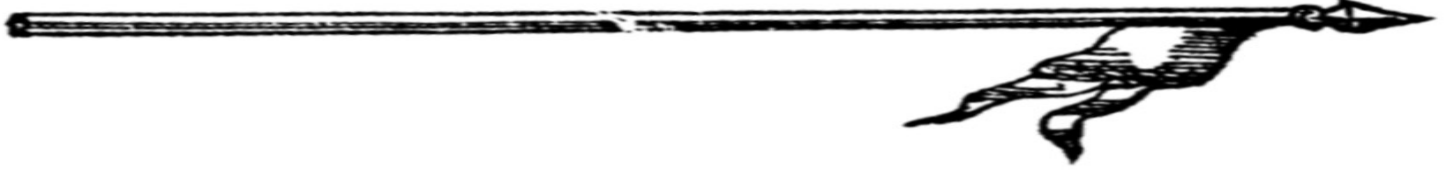


Modern jousting is much less dangerous than the jousting of the medieval ages, but still requires immense coordination and control. In Medieval demonstrations, riders still wear authentic apparel and armor, but use lightweight materials that break very easily.

I hope you learned a few things after looking through this book! Next time you hear of a Renaissance fair, you will know exactly what is going on. Maybe you can take a trip to Maryland, ring jousting is Maryland's state sport!



GLOSSARY



Cavalry— soldiers on horseback, formerly, the part of an army made up of soldiers trained to fight on horseback

Chainmail— a type of armour consisting of small metal rings linked together in a pattern to form a mesh

Chivalry— qualities of ideal knights, the combination of qualities expected of the ideal medieval knight, especially courage, honor, loyalty, and consideration for others, especially women

Coif— a thick, close-fitting cap formerly worn under a hood

Equestrian— relating to horses or horseback riding

Parole— the early release of a prisoner, conditioned on good behavior and regular reporting to the authorities for a set period of time

Ransom— a sum of money demanded or paid for the release of somebody who is being held prisoner

Squire— a young apprentice knight who acted as an attendant to a knight in the Middle Ages

Stanchion— a vertical pole, bar, or beam used to support something

IMAGE CREDITS



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Knight on horse – Clip art

Arthur – http://www.illustrationsof.com/images/clipart/xsmall2/1213_medieval_knight_or_jouster_on_a_horse.jpg

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Melée—Taken by Laura Santoso at the Higgins Armory

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Medieval battle—<http://www.teachnet.ie/mmorrin/norman/images/battle.jpg>

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Ring jousting—<http://img1.photographersdirect.com/img/15035/wm/pd2181381.jpg>

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Knight on horse—<http://www.turbosquid.com/FullPreview/Index.cfm/ID/151345>

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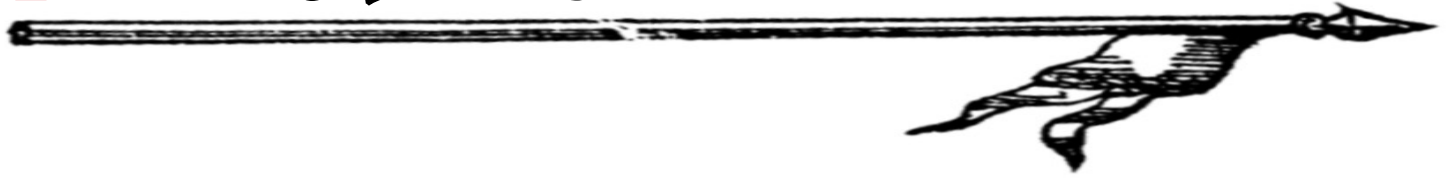
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Shield—<http://www.a2armory.com/images/shields/elcid-polish.jpg>

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Gun—http://www.istockphoto.com/file_thumbview_approve/3192441/2/istockphoto_3192441-medieval-gun.jpg

Crossbow—<http://www.netlinkenterprises.com/replicas/proddetail.php?prod=912>

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Knights—http://farm1.static.flickr.com/29/38546487_a7dead4f34.jpg

AABOUT THE AUTHORS



Alex Cote is a senior at MassAcademy of Math and Science. He lives in Worcester, Massachusetts and his hobbies include skiing, soccer, and flying gliders and planes. Alex likes to go to Cape Cod during the summer with his family, especially Wellfleet. He loves to listen to music, mostly rock styles. He has a cat named Yella and a dog named Zoey, and he likes Yella is more than Zoey but likes Bailey (his old dog) much more than either of his current pets.

Laura Santoso is also a senior at MassAcademy of Math and Science. She lives in Northborough, Massachusetts and her hobbies include guitar, piano, art, and field hockey. She loves to go to the beach to relax and have fun. Music is also a very significant part of her life and she loves to listen to music and go to concerts. Laura does not have any pets right now, but in a few years she would like to get a dog. The picture on the right was taken at a bird park in Indonesia.

