Feudal System Worksheet

Grade 7 – 8 social studies · medieval Europe



Name: Date: Score: / 26

A deal repeated all the way down

For several centuries across much of Europe, land and loyalty were traded for one another. A monarch granted estates to **nobles**. Nobles granted smaller estates to **knights**. In return, each man owed his lord military service and support. That arrangement is called **feudalism**.

The estate granted was a **fief**, and the man who received it was a **vassal**. He swore loyalty in a ceremony called **homage**. There were no police and no standing national army, so a ruler who wanted soldiers had to pay for them with the one thing he had in quantity: land.

At the bottom were the peasants, who did none of the granting and all of the work. Many were **serfs**, bound to the manor and not free to leave it. They farmed the lord's fields as well as their own and handed up a share of what they grew, plus a **tithe** to the church. Protection flowed down the ranks and food flowed up.

Part A — Vocabulary match each term to its meaning (8 marks)

1. Feudalism	_____	A. A share of produce, usually a tenth, paid to the church
2. Fief	_____	B. A system exchanging land for service and loyalty
3. Vassal	_____	C. A peasant bound to the land and not free to leave
4. Manor	_____	D. The code of conduct expected of a knight
5. Serf	_____	E. Someone who received land and owed service for it
6. Tithe	_____	F. A lord's estate, with the village and fields around it
7. Homage	_____	G. An estate of land granted in return for service
8. Chivalry	_____	H. The ceremony in which a vassal swore loyalty to a lord

Part B — Fill in the blanks (6 marks)

1. Under feudalism, land moved _____ the ranks and service moved up.

2. An estate granted in return for service was called a _____.

3. Someone who held land from a lord and owed him service was a _____.

4. A peasant who was not free to leave the land was a _____.

5. A lord's estate with its village and fields was a _____.

6. The share of produce paid to the church was the _____.

Part C — Who did what complete the second column (4 marks)

Rank	What they gave and what they received
Monarch	
Nobles	
Knights	
Peasants and serfs	

Part D — Read the oath (4 marks)

AN OATH OF HOMAGE, TWELFTH CENTURY

I promise on my faith that I will be faithful to you, and will hold to you without deceit, as a vassal should to his lord, and I will keep the service I owe for the land you have granted me.

— a vassal swearing to his lord

1. What is the vassal promising, and what has he already received?

2. Why would a lord want this promise spoken aloud in front of witnesses rather than written privately?

Part E — Think it through (4 marks)

1. Feudalism weakened as coins came back into wide use and lords began paying soldiers wages. Explain why money would undermine a system built on granting land.

2. Who had the least choice in this system, and what does that tell you about who it was designed to serve?

Feudal System Worksheet — Answer Key

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Part A — Vocabulary

1. **Feudalism** → B
2. **Fief** → G
3. **Vassal** → E
4. **Manor** → F
5. **Serf** → C
6. **Tithe** → A
7. **Homage** → H
8. **Chivalry** → D

Part B — Fill in the blanks

1. **down**
2. **fief**
3. **vassal**
4. **serf**
5. **manor**
6. **tithe**

Part C — Who did what

1. **Monarch** — Owned all the land in principle; granted estates to nobles
2. **Nobles** — Held large estates; supplied knights and soldiers to the monarch
3. **Knights** — Held smaller estates; fought for their lord and kept order
4. **Peasants and serfs** — Worked the fields; handed up produce and labour

Part D — The oath

1. **He promises faithfulness and the service he owes; he has already received a grant of land.**
2. **Witnesses made the promise public and hard to deny later.**
   Most people could not read, there were no courts as we would recognise them, and a public ceremony everyone remembered was the strongest record available.

Part E — Think it through

1. **A lord who can pay wages no longer needs to give away land, and land given away is gone for good.**
   Paid soldiers can also be hired for one campaign and dismissed, which gives a ruler far more control than a vassal who holds his estate permanently.
2. **Serfs and peasants, who could not leave, choose a lord or own what they produced.**
   The system secured land and military service for those at the top. Accept any answer noting that obligations ran upward while protection was the only thing flowing down.