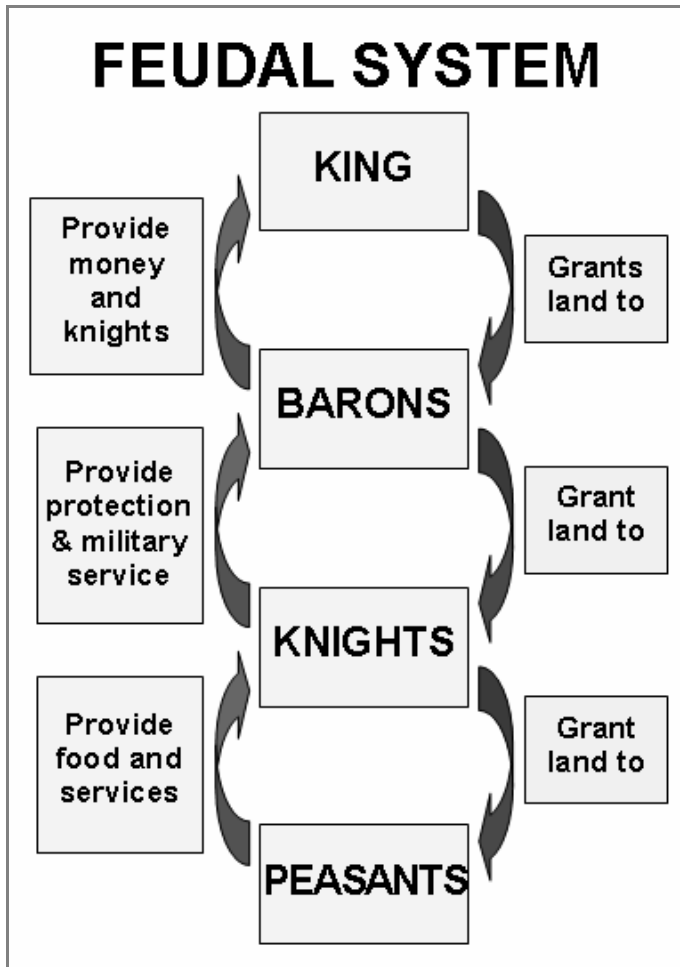


The Feudal System



The Feudal System was introduced to England following the invasion and conquest of the country by William I (The Conqueror).

The system had been used in France by the Normans from the time they first settled there in about 900AD.

It was a simple, but effective system, where all land was owned by the king. One quarter was kept by the king as his personal property, some was given to the church and the rest was leased out under strict controls.

Each group of people had certain duties and obligations to perform.

The King

The king was in complete control. He owned all the land in the country and would only allow people he could trust to lease land from him.

Men that were selected to lease land had to swear an oath to remain faithful to the King at all times.

These men were known as barons. They were wealthy, powerful and had complete control of the land they leased from the King.





Barons

The land that barons leased from the King was known as a manor and the barons were called the Lord of the Manor. They kept as much land as they wanted for their own use and divided the rest among their knights.

The barons were in complete control of this land. They established their own system of justice, minted their own money and set their own taxes.

In return for the land they had been given by the king, the barons had to serve on the royal council, pay rent and provide the king with knights for military service when he demanded it. They also had to provide lodging and food for the king and his court when they travelled around the country.

Knights

Knights were given land by a baron. In return for the land they had to provide military service when demanded by the king. They also had to protect the baron and his family, as well as the manor, from attack.

The knights kept as much of the land as they wished for their own personal use and distributed the rest to peasants.



Peasants

Peasants, sometimes known as serfs or villeins, were given land by knights. In return they had to provide the knight with free labour, food and service whenever it was demanded.

Peasants had no rights. They were not allowed to leave the Manor and even had to ask for permission before they could marry.