Name _____ Date _____

Medieval Europe: Feudalism and the Manor

Directions: Read the passage about medieval Europe and study the table of the feudal model. Some questions ask for the main idea, and others ask for a short summary.

Feudalism and the Manor

The Pyramid Model of Medieval Society

Historians often describe society in medieval Europe as a pyramid. In this model, the king sat at the top, and in theory all the land belonged to him. He granted large pieces of land, called **fiefs**, to nobles. A noble who accepted a fief became the king's **vassal**. In a ceremony, the vassal knelt and promised loyalty and military service. Vassals could grant parts of their land to lesser vassals. **Knights**, warriors who fought on horseback, served lords too. Some held small fiefs, and others lived in a lord's household.

At the bottom of the pyramid were peasants. Many were **serfs**, bound to the land they farmed. Serfs lived on a **manor**, a lord's estate with a village, fields and pastures. Manors like these were common in parts of western Europe, such as France and England. Serfs worked the lord's fields for part of each week, gave him a share of their crops and paid fees. They usually needed his permission to leave the manor or marry. In return, the lord was supposed to protect them.

Many historians now say the pyramid is too simple. Life varied from place to place. Some vassals held land from more than one lord, which could make loyalty unclear. Even the idea of **feudalism** was worked out by scholars after the Middle Ages ended. In 1974, historian Elizabeth A. R. Brown argued that historians should stop using the term. In 1994, Susan Reynolds questioned the ideas of fiefs and vassals themselves. Others still find the model a useful starting point.

What the Feudal Model Says Each Group Received and Gave

Group	Received	Gave in return
King	Loyalty and military service from his vassals	Fiefs for his vassals, and a promise to protect them
Vassal lords	A fief and the protection of a more powerful lord	Loyalty and military service
Knights	A small fief or a place in a lord's household	Service as warriors on horseback
Serfs	A plot of land to farm and the lord's protection	Work on the lord's fields, a share of their crops and fees

1. Which statement best expresses the central idea of the whole passage?

A. Knights were the most powerful people in medieval Europe, even more powerful than kings.

B. Medieval kings owned every piece of land and ruled with no help from anyone.

C. Historians often describe medieval society as a pyramid, but many now say the model is too simple.

D. The word feudalism was used by every lord and serf who lived in the Middle Ages.

2. Match each term from the passage on medieval Europe to its meaning.

Write the letter of the matching answer on each line.

1. _____ fief
2. _____ vassal
3. _____ serf
4. _____ manor
5. _____ feudalism

Choices for question 2

A. a piece of land granted by a lord in return for loyalty and service

B. a merchant who traveled from town to town

C. a peasant bound to the land he or she farmed

D. a king who ruled all of Europe

E. a person who received a fief from a lord

F. a name scholars gave to this system after the Middle Ages

G. a lord's estate with a village, fields and pastures

3. Which sentence best summarizes the first paragraph?

A. In the model, the king and other lords granted land to vassals, who promised loyalty and military service.

B. In the model, serfs owned most of the land and gave large pieces of it to the king as gifts.

C. In the model, the king gave all of his land to the Church and kept none of it for himself.

D. In the model, knights chose the king, and then the knights ruled all of the manors together.

4. According to the table, what did knights receive?

A. Fees paid by the king every year

B. Loyalty and military service from the king

C. A small fief or a place in a lord's household

D. A whole kingdom to rule on their own

5. According to the passage, a serf usually needed the lord's permission to do which two things? Select 2.

☐ A. cook food for their families

☐ B. leave the manor

☐ C. marry

☐ D. pray in the village church

6. According to the table, what did serfs give in return for land and protection?

A. Loyalty and military service in every war

B. Work on the lord's fields, crops and fees

C. Service as warriors who fought on horseback

D. Fiefs for vassals and a promise to protect them

7. According to the passage, where were manors like these common?

A. in parts of western Europe, such as France and England

B. in North and South America

C. in every country in the world

D. only in lands around the Black Sea

8. Which detail from the passage supports the claim that the pyramid model is too simple?

A. Knights, warriors who fought on horseback, served lords too.

B. Some vassals held land from more than one lord, which could make loyalty unclear.

C. In a ceremony, the vassal knelt and promised loyalty and military service.

D. In theory all the land belonged to the king.

9. Which statement best sums up what the table shows?

A. In the model, each group received something and gave something in return.

B. Knights received more land than any other group.

C. Only serfs owed anything to anyone in the model.

D. No one in the model received any land at all.

10. A student is writing a summary of the passage. Which sentence adds an opinion that the passage does not state?

A. In the model, the king sat at the top of the pyramid.

B. Knights were warriors who fought on horseback.

C. In 1994, Susan Reynolds wrote about fiefs and vassals.

D. The pyramid was the fairest way to organize a society.