

My first “guerilla teaching” exercise led to several novel discoveries that were both unanticipated and for the most part pleasing. After much necessary consideration over who should be my first student, I finally chose to teach my mother. However, I was slightly skeptical about how much she would really be interested in my research topic, the social structure of the Middle Ages, because I recalled her once mentioning that history was not one of her favorite subjects in school. Therefore, I attempted to create a lesson plan that would invoke interest in my students and be by no means completely boring. To my delight, my mother proved to be a commendable student and the teaching experience was very successful.

I separated the crafting of my lesson plan into several important steps. First, I researched the medieval estates for several hours using a variety of websites, including many of Ms. Dudley’s hypertext resources and those located on both the Yahoo and Google search engines. As I was searching for sources, I continually printed out the information I found to be examined in more detail at a later date. After I concluded I had enough information to prepare a thorough lesson on my topic, I read through the plethora of papers I printed, underlining the most useful information. Later, I prepared two pages of notes to aid me in my lecture. However, after this point, I was presented with a dilemma. I was unsure how I should best teach the information I gathered to my students, primarily debating over the use of the PowerPoint program. Before I even decided to make use of the PowerPoint program I faced an additional problem. The computer I was using surprisingly did not have the PowerPoint program on it. To counter this obstacle, I tried to download the program from the internet, but I was sadly unsuccessful. So, I

reluctantly chose to use the PowerPoint program on one of my older computers.

Following much deliberation, I decided to use the PowerPoint to only display pictures of my lecture's subject matter (figuring it would be redundant to have the same information I was going to say be written on the slides), resulting in me having to rewrite some of my PowerPoint slides because I was originally going to include information on them. By the time my PowerPoint slides were finished, I realized I had invested all of my free time for an entire school week preparing to teach my topic.

Once I read through my notes a few times, I determined it was time for me to "guerilla teach" for the first time. Shortly after I came home from school yesterday, I asked my mother if she wanted to help me with my English assignment by learning about the social structure of the Middle Ages and she happily agreed. As a result of me lacking the resources I would have in school (like a projector to display my slides), I set up a table with a laptop on it to display my visuals. After my makeshift classroom was set up, I encouraged my mom to ask questions if she had any and I quickly began teaching. Immediately following my first few words, I was shockingly confronted with my mother's first (among many) question. She was curious as to why my initial slide was labeled "Medieval Religion" instead of the primary topic of my presentation, the medieval estates, and I explained to her that it was necessary to recognize the importance of religion to the society I was describing to understand why the estates were divided in accordance to their members' distances from God. Shortly after I described the general characteristics of the estates in relation to my second slide, my mother asked me what would happen if a laborer prayed more to God than a noble as well as how wealth plays into the social standing of people in the Middle Ages. Therefore, I patiently told her that

it didn't matter how much a peasant prayed because the only way he could be elevated to a higher estate was by God deciding that he was worthy to do so and giving the peasant the means to raise his social standing. Also, I told my mom wealth really did not determine what estate a person was in as much as his or her occupation in relation to God. Later, my explanation of feudalism went very well and the only question I was asked was how women ranked on the social hierarchy. I said that I would discuss the status of women in much detail later and began to discuss the clergy when my mom asked me if a monk left his monastery as well as interacted with people of the second or third estate, would he still be considered a clergyman. In response to this question, I stated that if a monk did what my mother described, he would still be in the clergy and be considered a friar instead of a monk. Once I explained the role of the clergy, I proceeded by discussing the attributes of the second estate in great detail and the pattern of questions begun early in the lecture continued with my mother asking me how a knight distinguishes himself from his peers, resulting me in explaining early that the nobility fought in tournaments in times of peace to see who was most favored by God. To my amazement, the only question raised during my description of the third estate was in relation to the fact that I used the words peasants, laborers, and third estate interchangeably. Once my presentation was about three fourths over and I reached the "Medieval Women" slide, I answered my mom's earlier question by describing how women were categorized within each of the three estates into the feminine estates. When I described the vices of the estates to my mother, she was curious as to what exactly a vice may do to a person's social status and if there were any cases of upward social mobility. I answered these final questions by simply recounting examples of people being

in vices (having their social status lowered as a result of corrupt qualities) and times in which people did indeed climb to a higher estate. Finally, I told my inquisitive pupil about the breakdown of the estate system and she made one final comment that women must have began their fight for equality after they were no longer bound to the estates, but to her dismay, I explained that it was hundreds of years after 1400 until women gained equality.

In reflection of everything that happened during my initial “guerrilla teaching,” I must say that for the most part I was pleased with the results of the exercise. I also feel that I was successful in enlightening my mom of the estates system, as her many questions and comments were indicative of her understanding of the information that I relayed to her. On the other hand, I still am quite concerned about the amount of time elapsed during my teaching, which was certainly well over five minutes (I hope that my grade will not be effected by the length of my lecture, as I condensed it as much as I could while still being thorough), as well as the alterations I will have to make to my lesson to accommodate the needs of thirty students. On a more positive note, as a result of the immense amount of time I put into preparing to teach my peers about my topic, I feel that I have gained a detailed and nearly complete understanding of the social structure of medieval England. My knowledge of the estates system has greatly contributed my enjoyment of the Canterbury Tales and perception of Chaucer’s frame of mind throughout his writings.