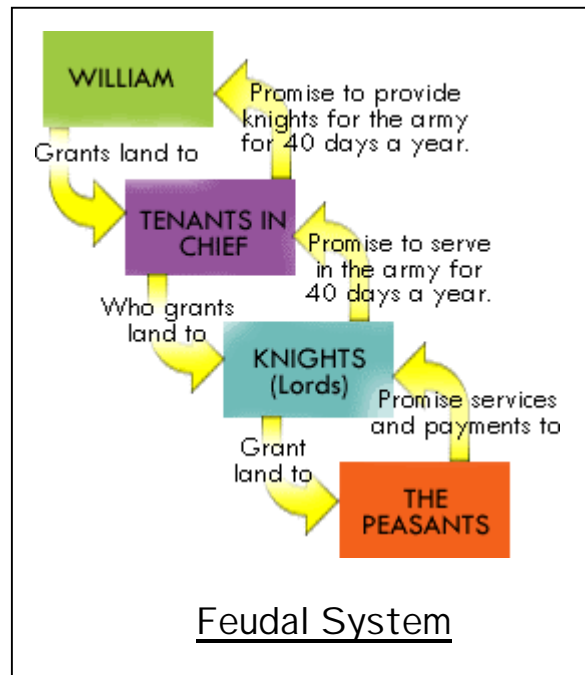


How did the Feudal System work?

Once William became king of England, he had to decide how he was going to govern the country. He did not want the old English nobles to keep their estates, because they would be powerful and might try to overthrow him. Anyway they had to make room for William's supporters who had been promised land in return for helping him.

William was very careful not to just give land away. His supporters were rewarded, but they had duties to perform as well. This system of duties and rewards was called the **Feudal System**. In Normandy when barons or bishops were given land they had to swear an oath of loyalty to the lord who was giving it. This was called **doing homage**. The barons or bishops then became **tenants-in-chief** and agreed to provide knights (mounted soldiers) to guard castles or fight in wars for their lords. The more land the baron was given, the more knights he had to provide.



The tenants-in-chief sometimes had their knights living with them in their castles. Usually, however, they gave some of their own land to the knights, who in return did homage and agreed to fight when asked. The knights became **under-tenants**. They kept some land for themselves and shared the rest among the **peasants** who farmed it. The peasants did homage to the knights who, in turn, promised to protect them.

The feudal system proved an idea for distributing the land of newly conquered England. William could have a large army whenever he liked, without the expense of keeping soldiers at his royal court. He also made sure that his supporters were rewarded, and at the same time stayed loyal to him.

TASKS

1. Draw the diagram of the feudal system into your books.
2. Copy out the following passage filling in the gaps...

William did not want the _____ nobles to keep their land. He wanted to give it to his _____. As well as receiving land, the nobles had to swear an _____ and agree to do _____. William needed an army so the nobles had to promise to provide _____ for him. The nobles already knew about this system because it was used in _____. It was called the _____ system.

3. Explain what the following meant in Norman England...

- a) a tenant-in-chief b) an under-tenant c) doing homage d) knights