



# The Norman Conquest



## Learning Objective:

To know how to become a knight

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One of the reasons why William won the battle of Hastings could be said to have been his **knights**.



Norman knights on horseback at the Battle of Hastings

What was a **knight**?

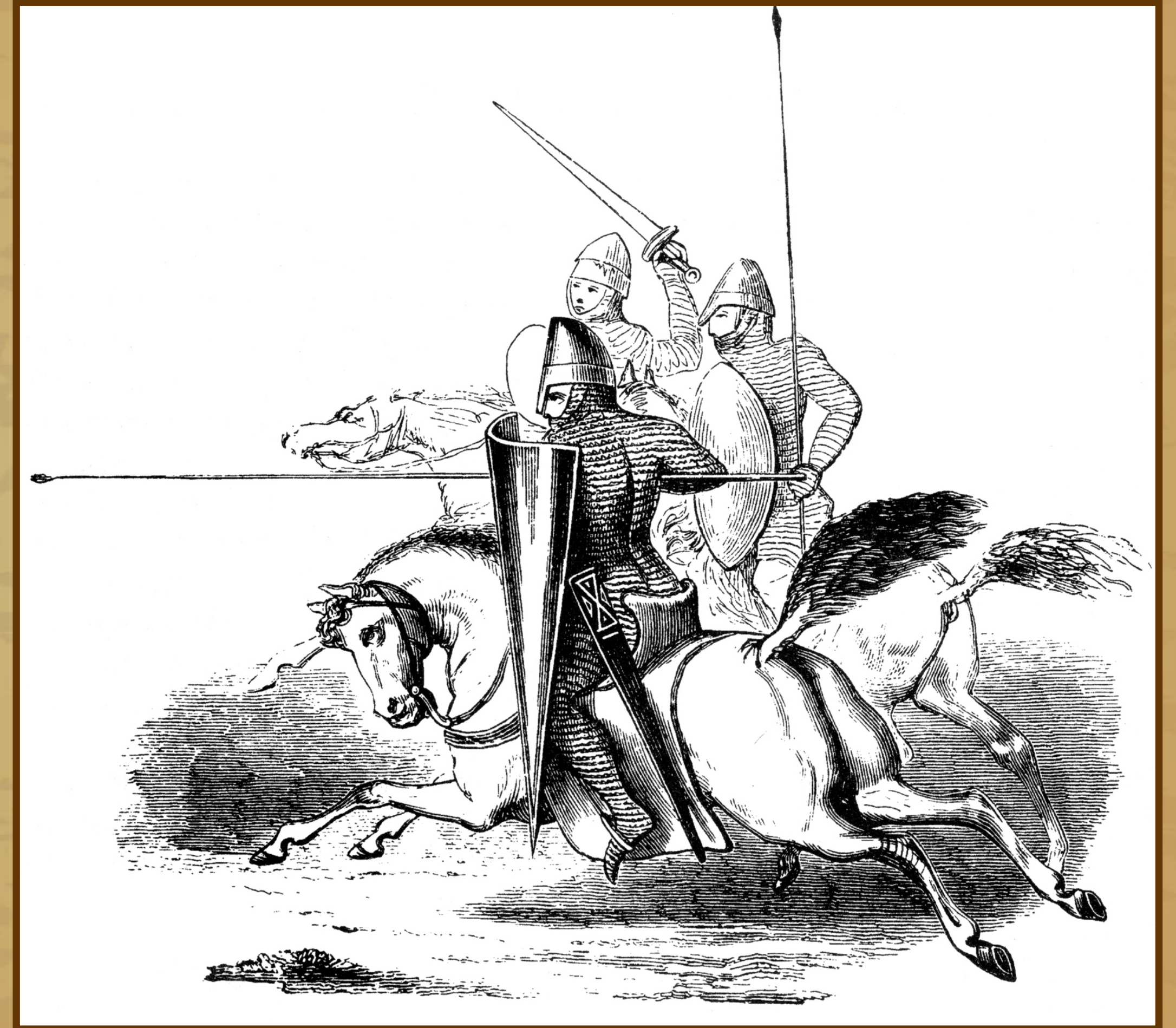


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A **knight** was someone, usually of noble birth, who was trained to fight for his lord.

Norman knights were well-trained and highly skilled fighters. They rode on warhorses, wore armour and carried weapons. They were formidable opponents. However, it took a long time to become a knight...



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## Being a page

Around the age of seven, a boy from a noble family who wished to become a knight was sent to another lord's castle to begin his training. He was called a **page**.

He **practised how to fight** with wooden swords and shields against the other pages, and learnt how to **ride a horse**. He needed to become fit and strong. He was also **taught how to hunt** with hawks and falcons. He might have played chess and other **strategy games**.



How do you think playing **strategy** games will help me to become a knight?

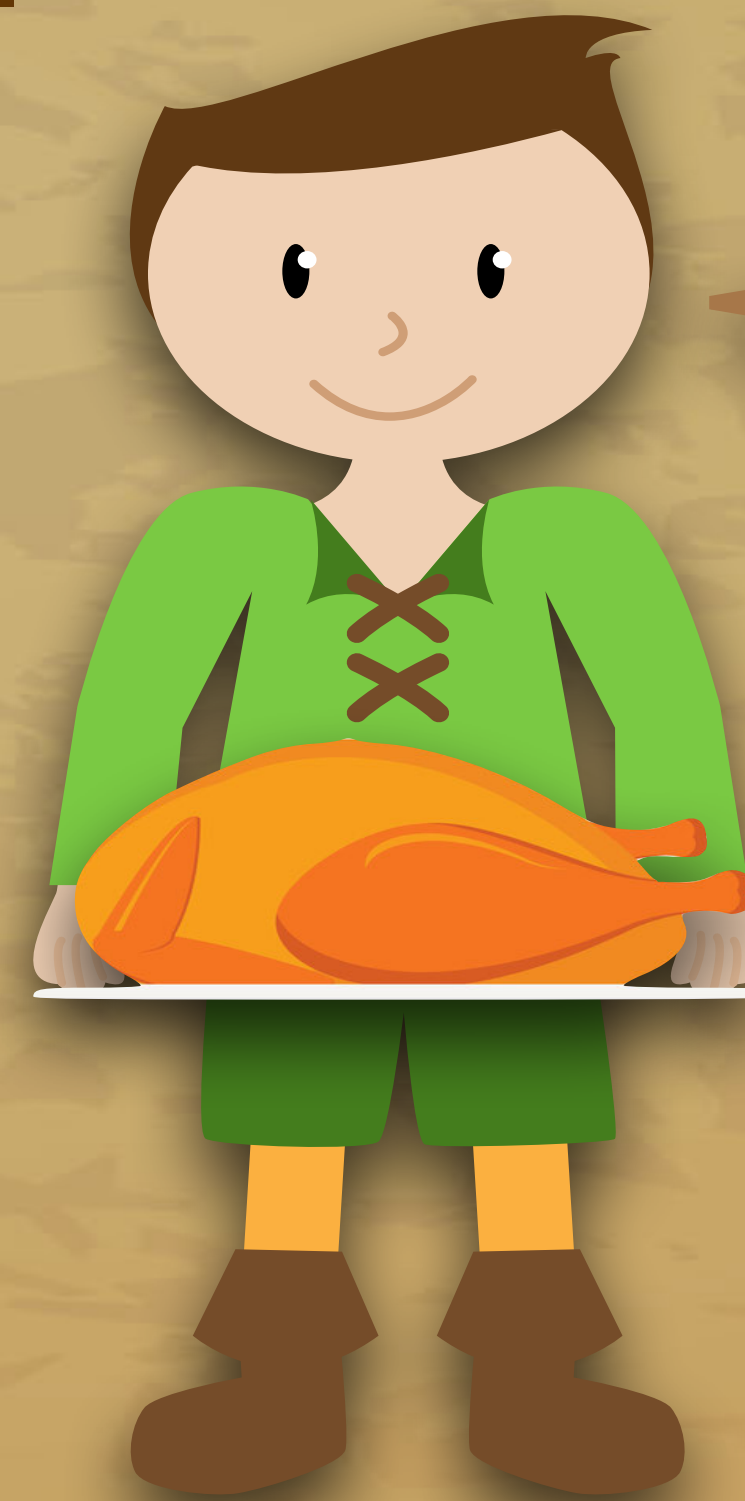
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## Being a page

He was also expected to run **errands** for the lord of the castle, **serve him meals**, look after his clothes and assist him in dressing. A priest would have given him **religious training**, and taught him how to **read and write**.

Often, the lady of the castle would look after the page, and teach him the rules of **courtesy** (how to behave towards others). She may also teach him how to **sing, dance** and play **musical instruments**.



Why do you think it is important that I know how to behave **courteously**?

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A boy's training as a page typically lasted  
for **seven** years!



How do you think I might have  
felt at different points during my  
years of being a **page**? Why?

**Think, pair,  
then share your ideas.**

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## Being a squire

Once a page reached the age of 14 or 15, he became a **squire**. He was now no longer considered a boy, but a young man. In this new role, he became the **personal servant** to a knight, who took over his training.

A squire was responsible for looking after the knight's **armour, weapons** and **horse**. His job was to **assist** the knight in battle, and **protect** him if he was injured. He had to be brave and ready to **fight** if the need arose.



Why has my training now been taken over by a knight?

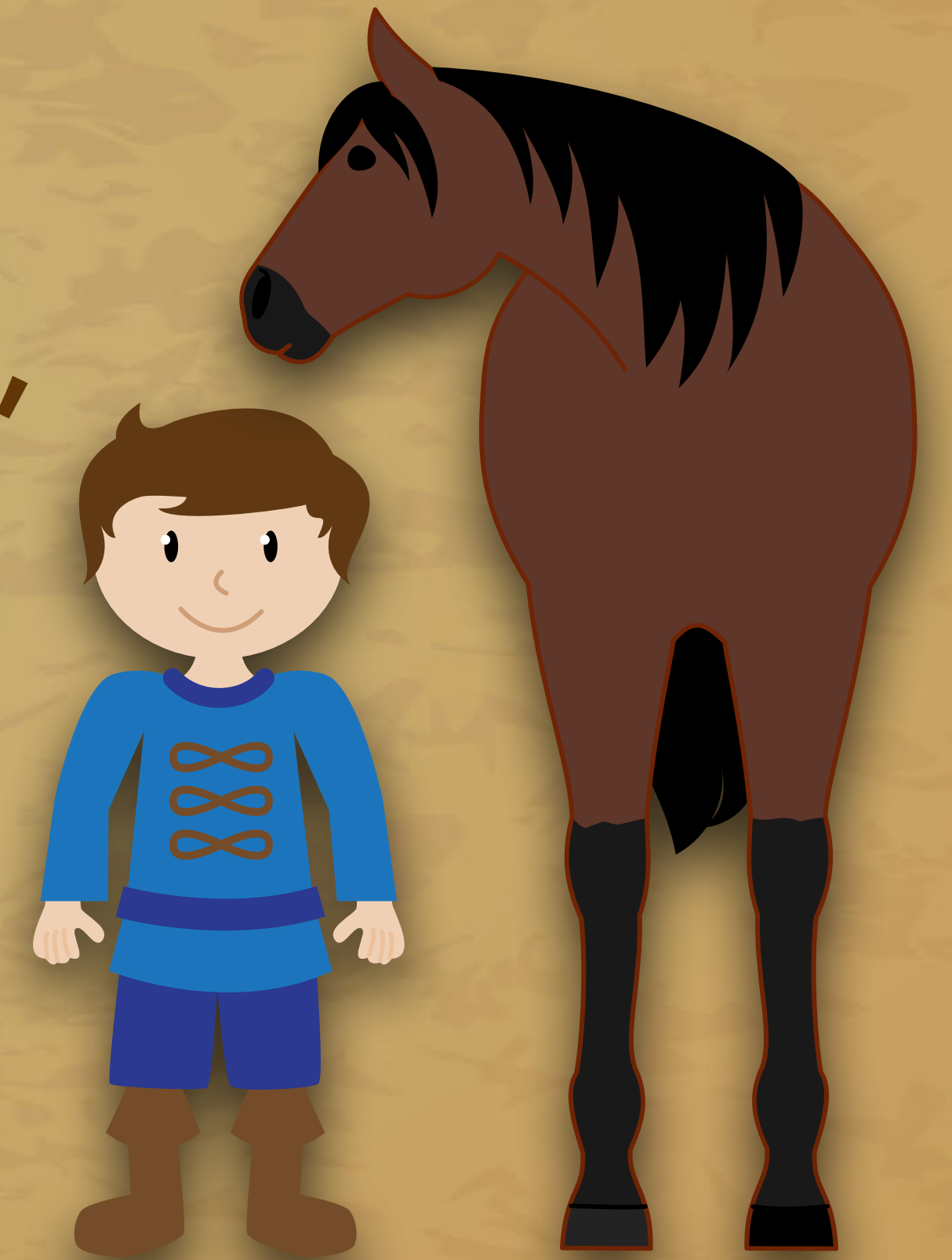
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## Being a squire

Squires had to further develop their **strength** and **speed**, as well as learning how to climb and swim (important skills if attacking a castle). They also had to learn how to endure extreme cold, heat, tiredness and hunger. A squire needed to begin to show **leadership skills**, for as a knight he would be commanding others.

Squires were also expected to enter the **social life** of the castle, and demonstrate the skills in music, dance and courtesy that they learnt during their years as a page.



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The training of a squire typically lasted another  
**seven years!**

How do you think I might have  
felt at different points during my  
years of being a **squire**? Why?



**Think, pair,  
then share your ideas.**

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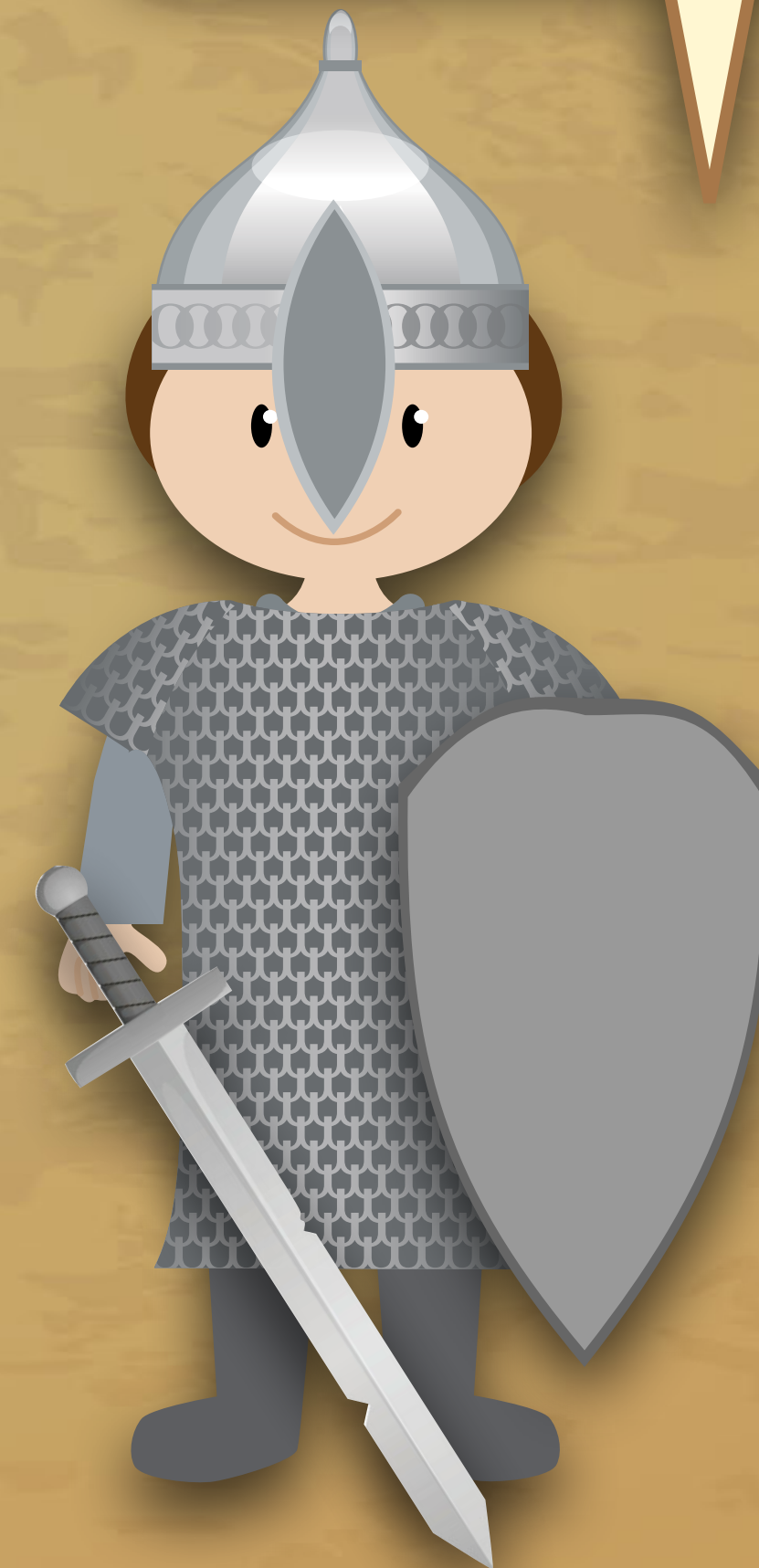
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## Being a knight

If a squire's training was successful, at the age of 21, he was made a knight at a **dubbing ceremony**. He had to **swear an oath** to be loyal to his lord and the king, defend the weak and uphold virtues like compassion, loyalty, generosity and truthfulness.

The knight who had trained him then tapped the squire on each shoulder with his sword. The squire was now a knight!

Sometimes a squire became a knight before the age of 21, as a reward for exceptional bravery during a battle.



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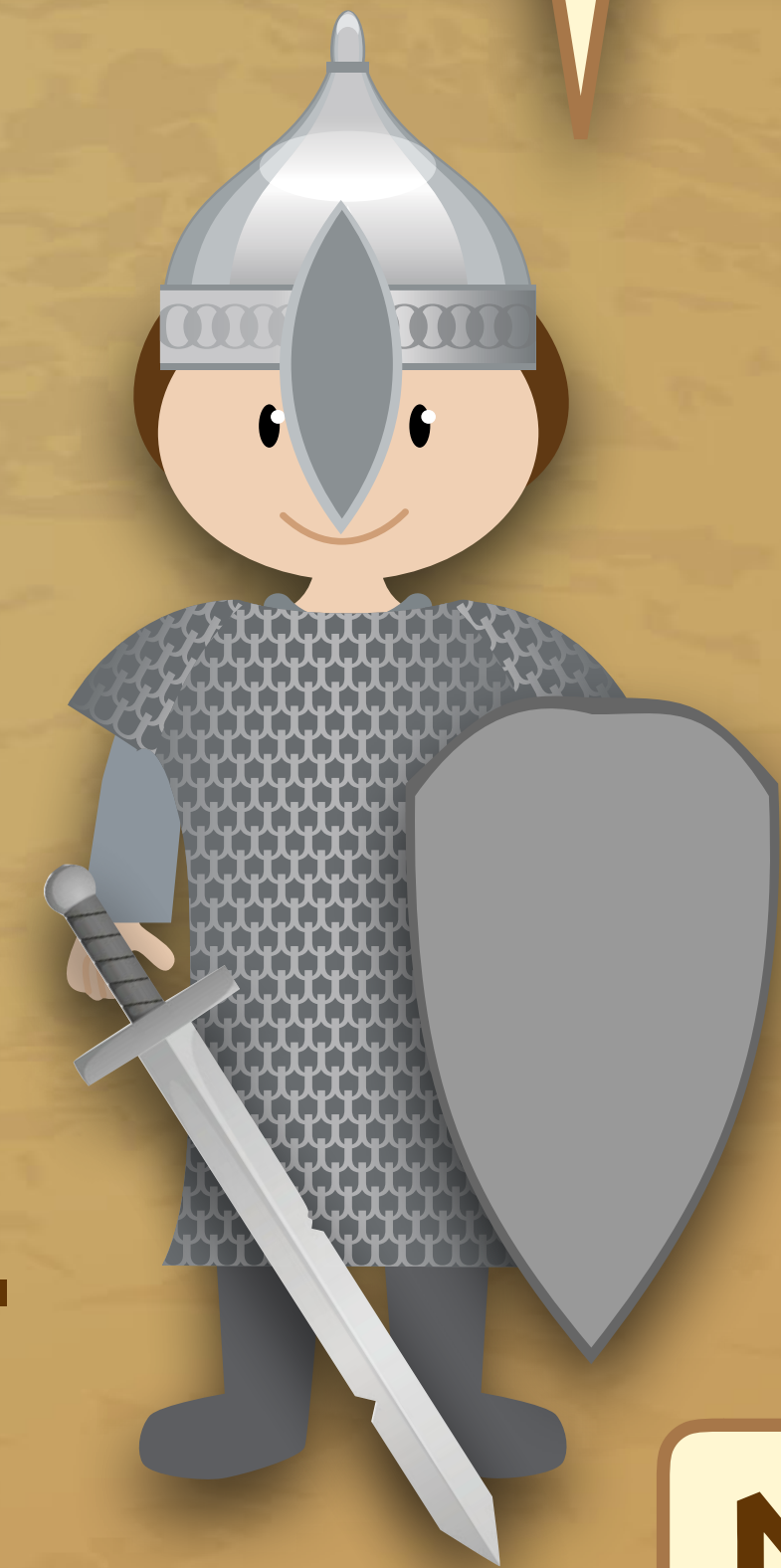
## Being a knight

Being a knight brought many privileges - he was given the title of '**sir**', sat at the lord's table at banquets, and was **given land** in return for overseeing the peasants who worked on it.

Knights practised their fighting skills regularly in **tournaments**.

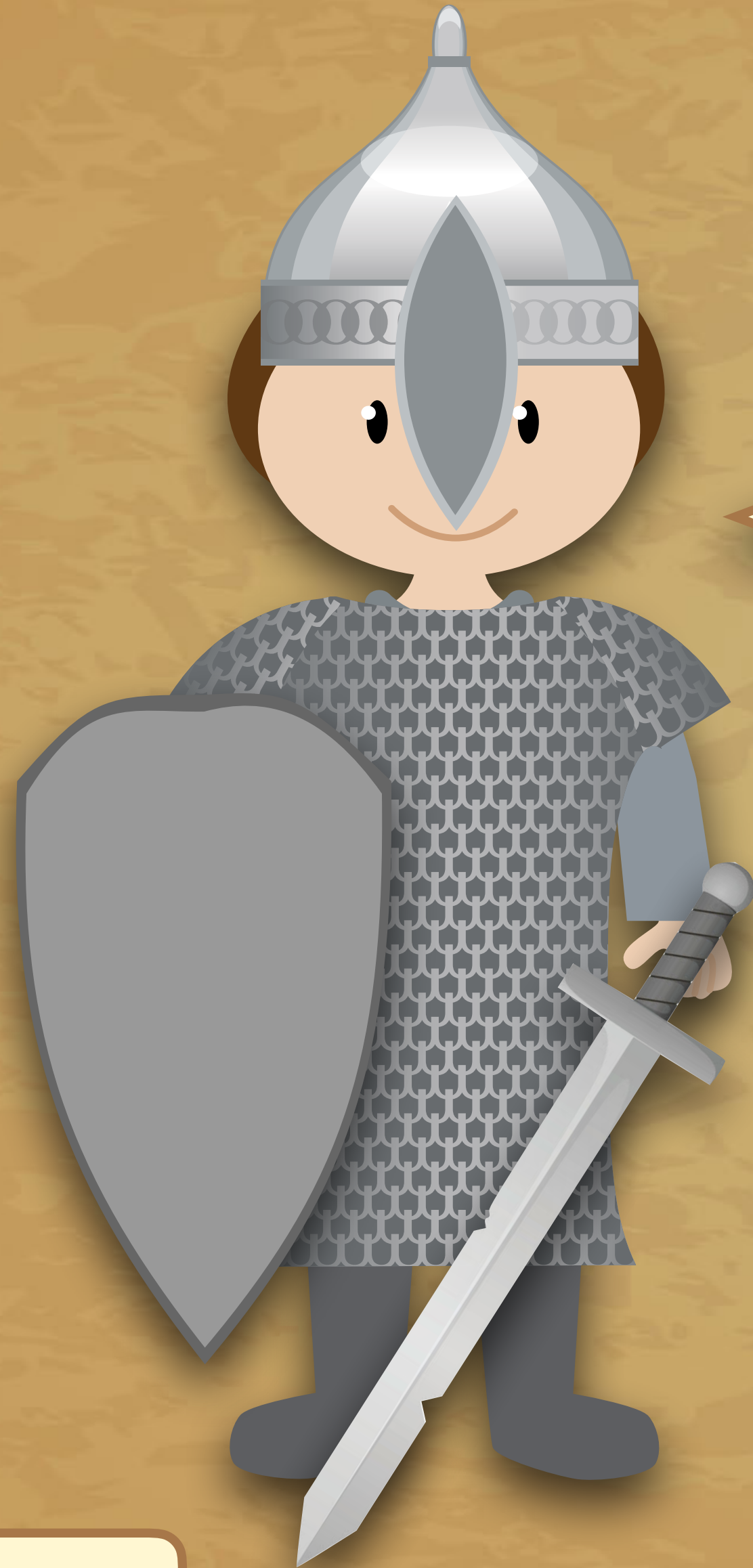
In times of war, knights were called upon by their lords or the king. They were **in charge** of the soldiers and archers, and led them into battle.

A **tournament** was a pretend battle or fight. However, they could still be dangerous, and sometimes knights were injured or killed.



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How do you think I feel now that I am finally a **knight** after 14 years of training?

**Think, pair,  
then share your ideas.**

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Now it's time to show what you have learnt in your independent work!



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## Plenary:

**Imagine you were the son of a wealthy family in Norman England, about to be sent away from your family to begin your training as a knight.**



Which part of the training would you enjoy? Which part of the training would you not be looking forward to?

**Think, pair, then share your opinions.**

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