



1000 – 1400 AD

THE MIDDLE AGES

Materials

During the Middle Ages, sunlight was the main lightsource accessible to people but was limited due to the restrictions of time as day and night. People living in this medieval era thus resorted to using alternative lightsources such as torches, candles, and oil lamps.

Torches were made from wood or a single stick or reed, and there are some naturally occurring candle type substances such as candlewood from bogs. A combustible material would be bound to one end of the torch such as tree sap, animal fat, or oil.

Candles of the time were made either from tallow or beeswax. Tallow candles were the common household candle for commoners. For tallow, mutton (sheep) fat was best, followed by beef (cow) fat. Tallow candles would sputter and burn smokily with smell. On the other hand, beeswax candles were very expensive and considered a luxury, used by churches and nobility. They would burn cleanly and without smoke, and had a clean aroma. The wicks were made from twisted threads of flax, cotton, or hemp, and didn't burn nearly as well as our modern wicks.

The bodies of oil lamps were made from stone, pottery, glass, and metal. Wicks were made from cotton, hemp, and flax. The fabrics were twisted, braided, or woven together. The tighter the wick, the longer it burned. People used animal fat such as tallow or plant oil as fuel. To ignite oil lamps properly, they needed liquid oil.

TORCH
CANDLE
OIL LAMP



Technology

The Middle Ages saw the development of several notable technology founded in the era.

As this was a period driven by Agriculture and Trade, the creation of a renovated heavy plough allowed farmers of the lower and working class to perform their daily work tasks efficiently to yield better and more crop during harvest and, as a result, an increase in income.

Furthermore, the Spinning Wheel impacted the Trade industry by replacing older methods of hand spinning and significantly reduced the time consumed in the process.

Another important achievement of the Middle Ages technology was the mechanical clock. While the origin of mechanical clock is unknown, the first such device might have been invented in monasteries, which was used to toll a bell to call all monks to prayers. This invention proved useful to help people with the telling of time where living in such an era, just simply knowing what time it was throughout the day can be a true blessing.





K I N G



N O B L E S



K N I G H T S



P E A S A N T S

Society

Society in the Middle Ages was heavily governed by a social hierarchy called the Feudal System used to maintain security and order within society. People were divided basically in two classes, the upper classes (King, Nobles, Knights) versus the lower classes (Peasants). Power within society was primarily held in the hands of the King and upper class, while the lower class peasants worked to produce wealth for the land. The upper class ensured security to the lower class by offering their protection, but in return taxes needed to be paid.

As such, society in the Middle Ages was significantly influenced by the noble class as the nobility had a significant say in all aspects of medieval politics, culture, religion and economics.

Interaction

Interactions with lighting in the Middle Ages depended on the lightsource that people chose to use.

A torch is a stick with combustible material at one end, which is ignited and used as a light source. It can help illuminate the area immediately around few feet ahead and cast light on large objects. In medieval times, people could put torches out instantly by placing a cone made of metal or thick leather and attached to a stick over them.

The oil lamp used a wick, made from fibers such as linen or papyrus, that was inserted into the body of the lamp. The end of the wick rested in the nozzle. The oil was poured into the lamp through the filling hole on top of its body. The wick was lit and a small flame was emitted from the tip of the wick resting in the nozzle. The lamp could be set on any flat surface but was also portable and could be carried in a person's hand.

