

Annotated Bibliography

While much of the information in this book came from living sources—professors of medieval history and tour guides through ruined monasteries, for example—I also relied on many, many books. Some of these books might be used in a school setting, even though they were written with an adult audience in mind. Others are popular histories and are accessible to adults looking to learn more. And some are fairly dense scholarly works and are best consulted for deep dives into specific topics. I've included just a few of my favorite sources and divided them into those that might be useful to young people and those that are probably best for adults, with a short note on each title.

For Young People and Adults

Bennet, Judith M. *A Medieval Life: Cecilia Penitader of Brigstock, c. 1295–1344*. Boston: McGraw-Hill College, 1999.

This is a wonderful and accessible account of one peasant village in England. It is short, the images are very good, and it provides the reader with a vivid picture of how life was really lived by the peasants of Western Europe. I highly recommend it for classroom use or personal edification.

Coles, Richard. *Lives of the Improbable Saints and Legends of the Improbable Saints*. London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 2012.

Saint Denis, who carried his head for miles while it preached a sermon, and Saint Lawrence, who proclaimed “this side’s done” while being roasted alive, are just two of the amazing saints described by Coles in these humorous, kid-friendly, illustrated books.

Hozeski, Bruce W. (trans. and ed.). *Hildegard’s Healing Plants*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2001.

This is just a list of plants, collected and written by one of the great geniuses of the Middle Ages—and really, of all time—Hildegard von Bingen. Hildegard was an abbess, a philosopher, a healer, and a composer (her music is still performed today, and it is *beautiful*). Her book of plants is a great source for healing herbs . . . and poisons.

Joyes, Andrew (ed.). *Medieval Ghost Stories: An Anthology of Miracles, Marvels, and Prodigies*. Woodbridge, Suffolk, England: Boydell Press, 2001.

This is one of my favorite collections of medieval primary sources. I mean, how can you beat a collection of genuine medieval ghost stories? Joyes places each one in context, too, which allows you to feel both scholarly and scared at the same time.

Ross, James Bruce, and Mary Martin McLaughlin (eds.). *The Portable Medieval Reader*. New York: Penguin Books, 1977.

A treasure trove of medieval sources. Probably too dense for middle schoolers, but high schoolers (and college students and adults) can use the table of contents to find medieval writings on all sorts of topics, from Italian fashion in the fourteenth century to the founding documents of the University of Paris to how one community of Jews dealt with the Black Death.

Schlitz, Laura Amy. *Good Masters! Sweet Ladies! Voices from a Medieval Village*. Boston: Candlewick Press, 2007.

While a work of fiction, this Newbery Award-winning collection of monologues is so thoroughly researched and richly imagined that,

paired with the Benet book, you will feel like you really know what it's like to live in a medieval village. Also, it'll make you laugh.

Swan, Charles, and Wynnard Hooper (trans. and eds.). *Gesta Romanorum, or Entertaining Moral Stories*. New York: Dover, 1959.

This book may be my favorite medieval book—and I wouldn't be alone, because it was among the most popular books in the Middle Ages. It is a collection of amusing and supposedly morally edifying stories gathered from the sermons of traveling preachers during the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries. Many of the stories are funny, others are disgusting, and some are amazing. Best of all, they always end in an obscure moral that has *nothing* to do with the story.

White, T. H. (trans. and ed.). *The Book of Beasts: Being a Translation from a Latin Bestiary of the Twelfth Century*. New York: Dover, 1984.

A wonderful bestiary edited and translated by the author of the Arthur saga, *The Once and Future King*. A sample: The Manticores "has a threefold row of teeth meeting alternately: the face of a man, with gleaming, blood-red eyes: a lion's body: a tail like the sting of a scorpion, and a shrill voice which is so sibilant it resembles the notes of flutes. It hankers after human flesh most ravenously."

For Adults

Abelard, Peter. *Yes and No (Sic et Non)*. Priscilla Throop (trans.). Charlotte, Vermont: MedievalMS, 2008.

Peter Abelard is one of the most famous and most important theologians of the Middle Ages. While he's likely best known today for his chaste love affair with Héloïse (and the unmentionable thing her father did to Abelard that *made* it chaste), we now tend to ignore what medieval scholars never ignored: Abelard was *brilliant*. This book, independently published, allows someone who isn't well versed in medieval Latin to glimpse Abelard's revolutionary technique. In *Sic et Non*, Abelard asks a series of incredibly difficult questions ("God is the cause and producer of evil . . . or not?"; "God does not have free will . . . or He does") and, instead of making arguments one way or another, presents evidence from the Bible and other authorities so that the readers (at the time, students and scholars at the new University of Paris, and elsewhere) could come to their own conclusions.

Baldwin, John W. *Paris, 1200*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2010.

This is a wonderfully rich scholarly portrait of Paris at the beginning of the thirteenth century. It covers the monarchy under Louis's grandfather

Philip Augustus; the founding of the university in Paris; trades and guilds; the physical growth of the city; personal life in the city; and much more. Just as Judith Bennet's *A Medieval Life* will make you feel like an expert on peasants, this book—perhaps more so—will make you feel like an expert on Paris at a critical juncture in its history.

Chazan, Robert. *The Jews of Medieval Western Christendom 1000–1500*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Among the most respected scholarly overviews of various communities and events in the Jewish diaspora during the High and Late Middle Ages.

Ferrante, Joan M. (trans. and ed.). *Guillaume D'Orange: Four Twelfth Century Epics*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1974.

This is the scholarly source for the legends about Guilhem, or Guillaume, D'Orange. The stories are as cool as you think they are.

Gerald of Wales. *The Journey Through Wales / The Description of Wales*. Ed. and trans. Lewis Thorpe. London: Penguin Books, 1978.

My character Gerald of Aberdeen was inspired by this Gerald, who writes a charming account of

traveling through Wales. There may be no better way to understand the cultural assumptions of a different age than to hear a chronicler write about a strange place he's visiting.

Jones, Colin. *Paris: Biography of a City*. London: Penguin Books, 2004.

A fun and readable history of Paris, from its inception to . . . well, who am I kidding? I didn't read past the section on the Middle Ages. But everything through then was entertaining and informative!

Joinville and Villehardouin. *Chronicles of the Crusades*.

M.R.B. Shaw (ed.). London: Penguin Books, 1963.

Yes, Jean de Joinville was real, and much of what we know of King Louis comes from the biography/hagiography he wrote soon after Louis's death, when the canonization process had begun. Joinville would be a successful writer even today—he is humorous and quick-witted, and has a wonderful eye for visual detail. In a passage quoted by LeGoff (see below), he comments that when he first met Louis, "the king was wearing a blue satin tunic and an overcoat and a cloak of vermilion satin trimmed with ermine, and on his head a cotton hat that suited him poorly because he was still a young man." (LeGoff, 92)

Jordan, William Chester. *The French Monarchy and the Jews: From Philip Augustus to the Last Capetians*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989. Jordan is one of the preeminent experts on France under Saint Louis, and perhaps the preeminent expert on Jewish-royal relations during that period.

LeGoff, Jacques. *Saint Louis*. Gareth Ewan Gollrad (trans.). Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009.

This is an 800-page biography of King Louis IX, and it is as well-written, interesting, empathic, and as thoughtful as it is informative. An incredible portrait of a human and his time.

Lipton, Sarah. *Dark Mirror: The Medieval Origins of Anti-Jewish Iconography*. New York: Henry Holt, 2014.

Lipton tells the story of the “steadily intensifying anti-Judaism of medieval Christianity” as it reveals itself in the art of the period. A guide both to history and to art, the book indeed serves as a dark mirror on our current dark times. Lipton has also written powerfully on our current society, and the way the resurgence of hate speech today echoes the rise of hate imagery in medieval Europe. See her wonderful Op-Ed in the *New York Times*, “The Words That Killed Medieval Jews,” Dec. 13, 2015.

Schmitt, Jean-Claude. *The Holy Greyhound: Guinefort, Healer of Children Since the Thirteenth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Schmitt’s book is part readable account of the real Saint Guinefort, and part highly scholarly investigation of the tale and its analogues in Western myth. Luckily, the readable part comes first and is fascinating!

de Voragine, Jacobus. *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*. William Granger Ryan (trans.). Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.

This is one of the great medieval sources for saints’ lives. Enormous, and sometimes slow going, gems will pop out of nowhere, like the detail about Saint Margaret and the farting dragon.

Woolgar, C. M. *The Great Household in Late Medieval England*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999.

A fascinating deep dive into the traditions, practices, and microeconomics of noble households. It was here that I learned a feast often consisted of three courses: boiled meats, roasted meats, and fried meats. And that’s just scratching the surface!