

# STRONGBOW

A STORY FROM IRELAND IN THE MIDDLE AGES





# What can we learn about the Middle Ages from Strongbow, Part 1?

*Fill in the blanks.*

1. Young noble boys learned hunting, \_\_\_\_\_ and fighting.
2. Before becoming a knight, you usually had to be a \_\_\_\_\_ and then a \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The oldest child \_\_\_\_\_ titles and property when the father passed away.
4. A knight could become vassal to a lord, which meant \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Every lord was vassal to one person, the \_\_\_\_\_.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ did all the work to support knights and kings.

*Can you think of any other lessons we can learn about the Middle Ages from this story?*





Strongbow was Earl of Pembroke, in Wales.

Wales was part of the Kingdom of England.

Diarmat was a king of Leinster, just across the sea from Wales.



Chepstow Castle, where Richard “Strongbow” De Clere grew up





King Henry II of  
England



# Medieval Ireland

<- from the videogame *Total War: Thrones of Britannia*, taken from [totalwar.com](http://totalwar.com).

This map shows medieval Ireland. As you can see, there were many small kingdoms.

Here we can see some strange names such as:

- Hlymrekr
- Vedrafjodr
- Veisafjodar
- Dyflin

These were all towns set up by the Vikings. Can you figure out the modern names of these towns?



Medieval Ireland was very different from other countries. England, France and other countries in Europe had **Feudalism** (also known as manorialism). Ireland had an ancient system called **Brehon Law**. Here are just some of the differences:

### **Feudalism (England, France)**

- When a king died, his eldest son became the new king
- Kings were holy; the people had no say
- The king had his own trained soldiers loyal to him, and an army of well-trained knights
- Nobles owned the land

### **Brehon Law (Ireland)**

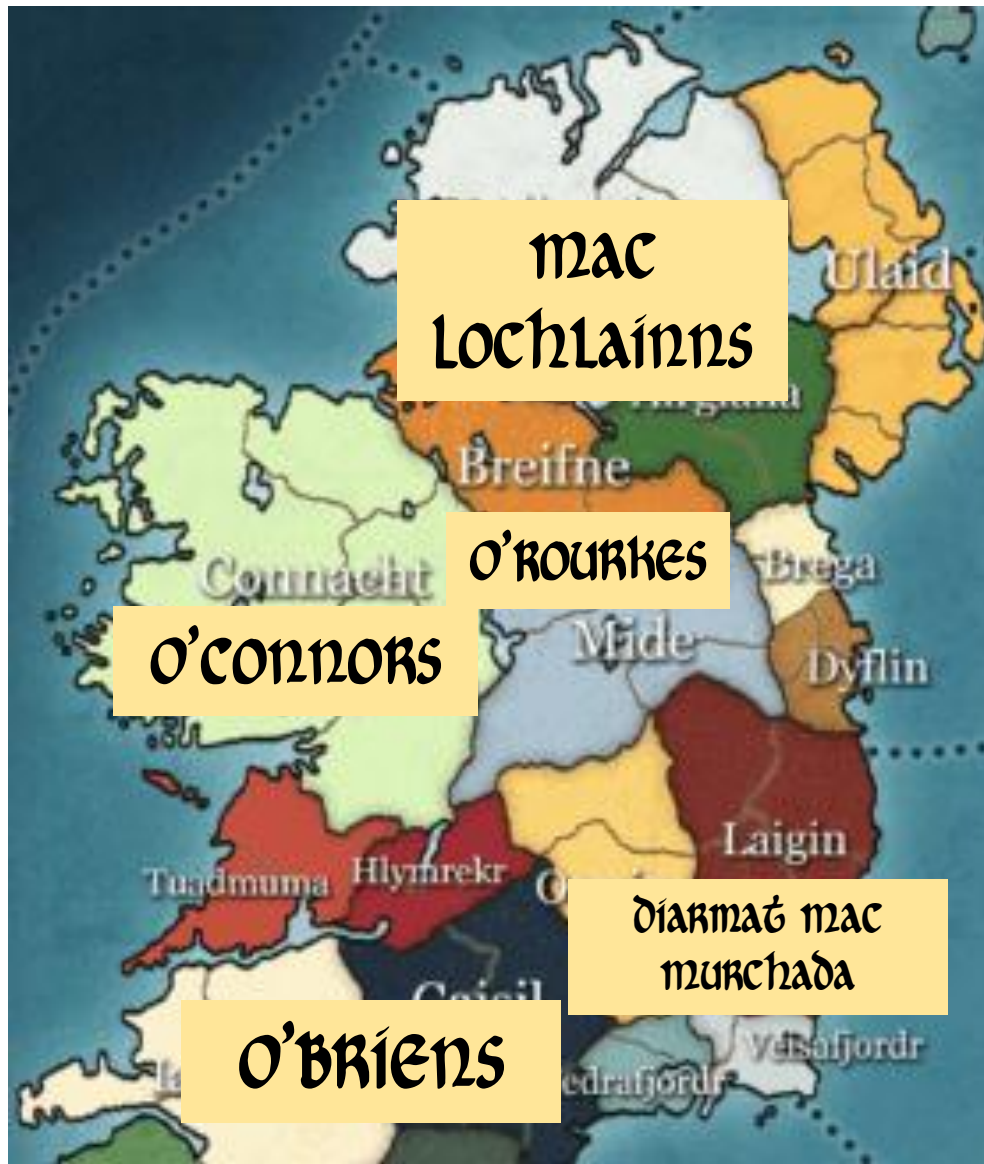
- Kings had to be elected
- The people could get rid of a king if they didn't like him
- All free people served in the army whenever there was a war
- All free people owned the land in common

1. Answer either (1) or (2) below.

a) What are the advantages of Feudalism?

b) What are the advantages of Brehon Law?

2. Have a class debate on which system is better.



In the 1160s, a small number of powerful kings were fighting for control of Ireland:

- O'Briens of Munster
- Mac Lochlainns of Ulster (Ulaid)
- O'Connors of Connacht (supported by the O'Rourkes of Bréifne)
- O'Neills of Meath (Mide)

The King of Leinster (Laigin), Diarmat mac Murchada, was less powerful than the others.

But he managed to annoy all the other kings, who ganged up on him and threw him out of Ireland.

*Are there any O'Briens, O'Rourkes, McLoughlins, O'Connors, O'Neills or MacMorrows in this class?*

^ from the videogame *Total War: Thrones of Britannia*, taken from [totalwar.com](http://totalwar.com).



# Diarmat, King of Leinster

Exiled from Ireland (kicked out)

What did he do to make the other kings angry?

- He abducted the wife of the O'Rourke king.
- He attacked a convent and badly harmed a nun.



## Questions on Strongbow, Part 2

1. Explain the offer that Diarmat made to Strongbow.
2. List two ways that Ireland was different to England.

Exercise: Imagine that you are Strongbow. Would you say Yes or No to Diarmat's offer? Explain your reasons.





Daniel Maclise, *The Marriage of Stongbow and Aoife*



Take a look at this painting and answer the questions on Page 5 of the notes





[1919review.wordpress.com](http://1919review.wordpress.com)