

5.11 How chivalrous was European chivalry?

Do Now: Examine the images and read the excerpt. Answer the questions that follow.



Noble defender of righteousness



Gangs terrorized peasants and went to war for wealth

Count Roland in sooth is a noble peer; Count Walter, a valorous cavalier; The archbishop, in battle proved and tried, Each struck as if knight there were none beside. From their steeds [horses] a thousand Saracens [Arabs] leap, Yet forty thousand their saddles keep; I trust they dare not approach them near, But they hurl against them lance and spear, Pike and javelin, shaft and dart. Walter is slain as the missiles part; The archbishop's shield in pieces shred, Riven [torn apart] his helm, and pierced his head; His corselet of steel they rent and tore, Wounded his body with lances four; His steed beneath him dropped withal: What woe to see the archbishop fall!

Source: *The Song of Roland*, Trans. by John O'Hagan, <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/basis/roland-ohag.asp>

Questions

1. Who is Count Roland?
2. What happens to Count Walter?
3. What is this poem about?
4. In your opinion, should European knights and nobles be remembered as defenders of righteousness or were they gangs that terrorized peasants and went to war to achieve wealth, power, and fame? Explain.