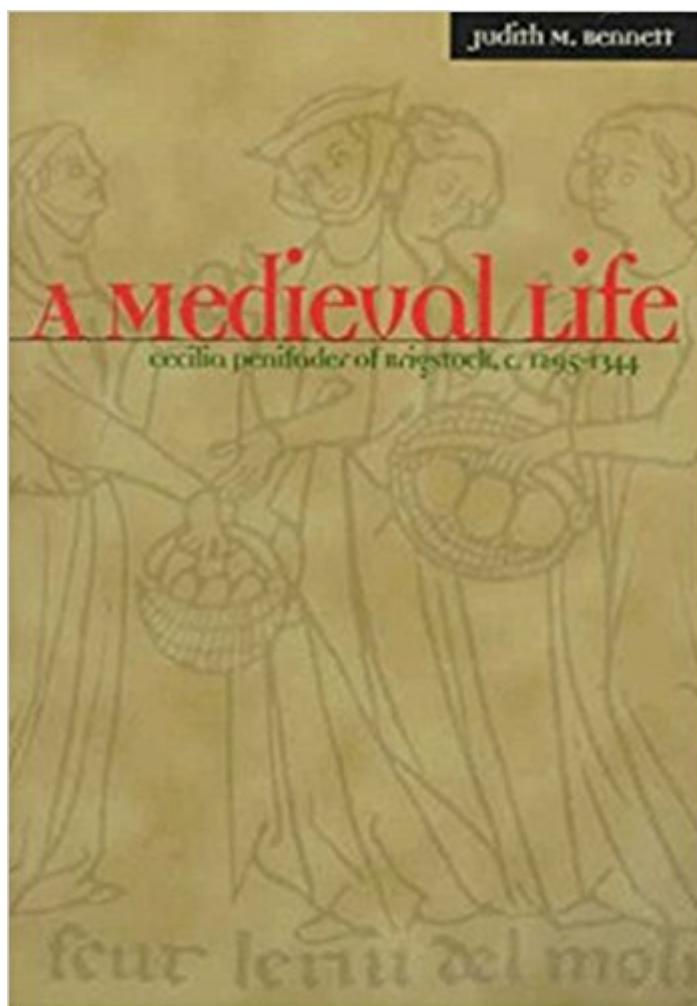


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# A Medieval Life: Cecilia Penifader Of Brigstock, C. 1295-1344



## Synopsis

This history of medieval village life is told through the experiences of Cecilia Penifader, a peasant woman who lived on one English manor in the early fourteenth century. This truly unique book offers a wealth of insight into medieval peasant society, bringing many of the characteristics of a time and a people to life. Short and readable, it is an ideal text for undergraduate teaching, suitable for courses in Western civilization, medieval history, women's history, and English history.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Judith M. Bennett teaches medieval history and women's history at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill where she is Martha Nell Hardy Distinguished Professor. Educated at Mount Holyoke College, the University of Toronto, and the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, she is the author of numerous books and articles about peasants, women, and families in the Middle Ages. Professor Bennett's research has been supported by the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the American Council of Learned Societies, the National Humanities Center, the Folger Shakespeare Library, and numerous other agencies. She has held lectureships in Australia and England, as well as the United States. A Fellow of the Royal Historical Society in London, she has held offices in such professional organizations as the Medieval Academy of America, the North American Conference on British Studies, the Coordinating Council for Women in History, and the Berkshire Conference of Women Historians. Professor Bennett has received several awards for her scholarly books and articles, and she is also an acclaimed teacher at UNC-CH, where she has won a top teaching award and is now

a fellow of the Academy of Distinguished Teaching Scholars.

Did you know we only have good accounts of about five peasants in all of the Medieval period? Much higher chances of princely records to be preserved. This book is thorough, easy to read, and I am so glad my Professor requested it for her class. Definitely a keeper.

WOW! Great Information!

If you want a book about a girl that is 99% speculative, 1% truth, and repetitive beyond belief, then this is the book for you!

This book was recommended summer reading for Advanced Placement European History. I think it will give the students an excellent understanding of Medieval Life for the majority of the population. It was not however an easy read. The organization is by theme rather than chronological and the author references many other texts that high school students and many teachers are not going to have read.

In addition the utter failure to make the text interesting by centering on a character who we have hardly any information about, the writing is horrendously repetitive. Each section will focus on a different aspect of medieval lifestyle but the same information is often restated in a different context. The actual writing is full of repetition and needless filler as well. With more concise writing and efficient organization of information this book, at only 138 pages which seemed to drag on longer than the entire Harry Potter series, could've been shortened to a single chapter in a regular textbook.

This book seems to be intended for use as a textbook in an introductory college course on medieval European history. I think it fits the bill very well. It's quite short, but it packs a lot of information in its less than 150 pages. The information is general enough to be broadly useful (with suggestions for further reading on specific topics), and there's some explanation as to the historiography involved. The author chose the old method of looking at a single, real person from that era whose life happened to be well-documented, and then reconstructing the world around them. Having already read many books on medieval history, I didn't learn very much from this one. But I think this would be a great book for college freshmen to start out with in their history classes. A good video

companion would be Terry Jones's excellent Medieval Lives series.

This was an assigned book in my Medieval History class. It's not a thorough book, but that would be almost (if not entirely) impossible given the fact that Cecilia Penifader was a peasant and peasants' lives were irrelevant and unimportant to the rest of medieval society. Still, the book gives you a good understanding of what life would have been like for this particular woman in terms of work, religion, family, dealing with manorial courts and the harsh existence for peasants. I found the book interesting. It's an easy read and though the author has to make inferences about Penifader's life, it is a well written book that at least gives some "face" to the typically unknown peasant. Bennett (the author) uses records from the courts and other written records of the times to at least give a good outline of Penifader's life.

I recently read this book for a history class and have to say that the book is very enjoyable. Its brevity and clarity make it a great introduction to medieval history. Cecilia Penifader was a well-to-do peasant woman living in Brigstock, England in the early 14th century. Bennett uses Cecilia to introduce the reader to all aspects of peasant life in this time period. There are in-depth studies of economics, religion, living conditions, and gender roles, as well as other interesting facets of peasant life. Bennett also makes sure to include some interesting little tidbits, such as the role of contraception during this period. One of the best things to be said about this book is how Bennett highlights terms that the reader is most likely to not be familiar with. These words are listed in a handy glossary in the back of the book. Most people aren't familiar with terms such as heliot, so this addition to the book is very helpful. As mentioned above, the brevity and clarity of the book go a long way to making the text more enjoyable. The book foregoes footnotes and endnotes, which would certainly help the non-scholars who can't stand wading through tons of citations. There are also some nice diagrams that help the reader visualize various aspects of peasant life. The lack of footnotes and endnotes is a problem for the historian and student, such as myself. I wouldn't go so far as the other reviewer here and pan the entire book, but that reviewer certainly has a point. Bennett also relies on inference more than she probably should. Although her deductions seem sound, her conclusions, backed up with more evidence and properly cited, would have been much appreciated. I think this is an excellent survey text that would make a nice addition to any library. After reading the book, the reader can readily picture Cecilia and feel as if they almost know her, and any book that can accomplish that is always worth a read.

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