

NB: This is not a word-for-word transcript

Neil

Hello and welcome to 6 Minute English. I'm Neil...

Alice

... And I'm Alice. My chair feels [audibly shifts about in her chair] uncomfortable today. How does yours feel?

Neil

Um... mine is fine - very comfortable, thank you.

Alice

Well, it would be nice if you offered to give me your chair, Neil.

Neil

What? No chance. Well, I would be uncomfortable then, wouldn't I?

Alice

You should give me your seat, Neil.

Neil

Should I? Well, now might be a good time to mention that chivalry is the subject of today's show.

Alice

Chivalry these days means polite behaviour usually by men towards women.

Neil

Though in the past it referred to a code of behaviour followed by knights in the Middle Ages. It was all about honour and courage in battle – and only later on about being polite to the ladies. Well, we aren't living in the Middle Ages any more, are we?

Alice

No comment. Let's go for our traditional question. I have a literary one for you today: Who

wrote the novel *Don Quixote*, about a 50-year old man travelling Spain in search of knightly adventures in rusty armour and a cardboard helmet? Was it...

a) Miguel de Cervantes

b) Leo Tolstoy

Or c) William Shakespeare?

Neil

I think - I'm going to get it right today, Alice – I'm going to say a) Miguel de Cervantes.

Alice

Well, we'll find out later on in the show if you were right or not. But first, do you think chivalry is dead, Neil?

Neil

No, not at all – these traditions are alive and kicking – in Poland at any rate. If something is **alive and kicking** it means it's active. The BBC reporter Adam Easton saw it with his own eyes and is going to describe it for us.

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Adam Easton, BBC reporter

Medieval knights' tournaments or battle re-enactments are popular across Europe. But there's something about dressing up as a knight that particularly appeals to people here in Poland. In the summer there's events every weekend and here in Malbork Northern Poland home to Europe's largest medieval castle there's one of the biggest of the season. There's archery, crossbow, jousting, other horse skills, and more than a hundred thousand people come to watch these tournaments.

Alice

The BBC reporter Adam Easton. By the way, what's a **re-enactment**, Neil?

Neil

It's where you perform the actions of a past event. And in Malbork in Poland they stage battle re-enactments every weekend apparently – at least in the summer months!

Alice

Mmm... it doesn't sound like **my cup of tea** – and that means it doesn't sound like something I would enjoy doing – how about you, Neil?

Neil

Well, I'm not sure about the archery, crossbow and jousting. It all sounds like too much hard work. But I'd definitely enjoy the dressing up.

Alice

Excellent! Well, **jousting** is where two people fight on horseback using a **lance** – or long pole – to try to knock the other person off their horse, especially as part of a **tournament**

– or sporting event. So with the dressing up, Neil – I'm curious. I can't imagine you as a knight in shining armour, to be honest...

Neil

Come on, Alice. I'd look very appealing to any damsel in distress. A **damsel in distress** is a young unmarried woman in need of help.

Alice

OK. You might make a very **fetching** – or attractive – knight, Neil. But you should get used to actually helping the ladies ... maybe offering me your seat. I'm still sitting uncomfortably here...

Neil

Come on, Alice, a knight needs to sit comfortably too. We've always been the ones with battles to fight!

Alice

But at some point in the history of chivalry – **prowess** – or skill – on the battlefield became combined with a set of **conventions** – or rules – governing other aspects of behaviour. This included a knight's moral and religious duties and how to conduct their love affairs. Professor Laura Ashe at Oxford University explains.

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Laura Ashe, Associate Professor in English at the University of Oxford, UK

The really strange thing is the idea that love should somehow make you a better knight. I mean, this is what is suddenly claimed in the late 12th century and it makes very little sense, you know, if you imagine a footballer telling his teammates that being in love makes him a better footballer.

Neil

That was Professor Laura Ashe. And I agree with her. What has being a great footballer or a great warrior got to do with love?

Alice

Well, **courtly love** was a social code governing behaviour between aristocratic men and women that developed at the same time and amongst the same people as chivalry and the two became **intertwined** – or hard to separate – from then on.

Neil

And **aristocrats** are people of high social rank. OK Alice, I think it's time you told us the answer to today's quiz question.

Alice

Good idea. OK. I asked: Who wrote the novel *Don Quixote*, about a 50-year old man travelling Spain in search of knightly adventures in rusty armour and a cardboard helmet? Was it... a) Miguel de Cervantes, b) Leo Tolstoy or c) William Shakespeare?

Neil

And I said a) Miguel de Cervantes.

Alice

And you were right! Well done! *Don Quixote* was written by Miguel de Cervantes and published in 1605. It's a comic novel which describes what happens to an elderly knight who, his head muddled by reading too many romances, sets out on his old horse with his companion Sancho Panza, to seek adventure.

Neil

Very interesting, Alice. Now can we hear the words we learned today?

Alice

Sure, they are:
chivalry
alive and kicking
re-enactment
my cup of tea
jousting
lance
tournament
fetching
damsel in distress
prowess
conventions
courtly love
intertwined
aristocrats

Neil

Well, that's the end of today's 6 Minute English. Please join us again soon. And... by the way, Alice, would you like my chair? It's very comfortable...

Alice

Oh, thank you - now that the programme is over, Neil!

Neil

Better late than never.

Both

Bye.

Vocabulary

chivalry

polite behaviour usually by men towards women

alive and kicking

very active

re-enactment

where you perform the actions of a past event

my cup of tea

something I would enjoy doing

jousting

two people fight on horseback using a long pole or a lance to try to knock the other person off their horse

lance

a long pole used in jousting

tournament

sporting event

fetching

attractive

damsel (in distress)

young unmarried woman (in need of help)

proWess

great skill or ability

conventions

rules

courtly love

an aristocratic code concerning the faithful love of a knight for his lady

intertwined

hard to separate

aristocrats

people of high social rank