

## DOCUMENT A

*Rebecca and Ivanhoe are prisoners in a besieged castle.*

“Alas,” said Rebecca, leaving her station at the window, and approaching the couch of the wounded knight, “this impatient yearning after action—this struggling with and repining at your present weakness, will not fail to injure your returning health—How couldst thou hope to inflict wounds on others, ere that be healed which thou thyself hast received?”

“Rebecca,” he replied, “thou knowest not how impossible it is for one trained to actions of chivalry to remain passive as a priest, or a woman, when they are acting deeds of honour around him. The love of battle is the food upon which we live—the dust of the *melee* is the breath of our nostrils! We live not—we wish not to live—longer than while we are victorious and renowned—Such, maiden, are the laws of chivalry to which we are sworn, and to which we offer all that we hold dear.”

“Alas!” said the fair Jewess, “and what is it, valiant knight, save an offering of sacrifice to a demon of vain glory, and a passing through the fire to Moloch?—What remains to you as the prize of all the blood you have spilled—of all the travail and pain you have endured—of all the tears which your deeds have caused, when death hath broken the strong man's spear, and overtaken the speed of his war-horse?”

“What remains?” cried Ivanhoe; “Glory, maiden, glory! which gilds our sepulchre and embalms our name.”

“Glory?” continued Rebecca; “alas, is the rusted mail which hangs as a hatchment over the champion's dim and mouldering tomb—is the defaced sculpture of the inscription which the ignorant monk can hardly read to the enquiring pilgrim—are these sufficient rewards for the sacrifice of every kindly affection, for a life spent miserably that ye may make others miserable? Or is there such virtue in the rude rhymes of a wandering bard, that domestic love, kindly affection, peace and happiness, are so wildly bartered, to become the hero of those ballads which vagabond minstrels sing to drunken churls over their evening ale?”

“By the soul of Hereward!” replied the knight impatiently, “thou speakest, maiden, of thou knowest not what. Thou wouldst quench the pure light of chivalry, which alone distinguishes the noble from the base, the gentle knight from the churl and the savage; which rates our life far, far beneath the pitch of our honour; raises us victorious over pain, toil, and suffering, and teaches us to fear no evil but disgrace. Thou art no Christian, Rebecca; and to thee are unknown those high feelings which swell the bosom of a noble maiden when her lover hath done some deed of emprise\* which sanctions his flame. Chivalry!—why, maiden, she is the nurse of pure and high affection—the stay of the oppressed, the redresser of grievances, the curb of the power of the tyrant—Nobility were but an empty name without her, and liberty finds the best protection in her lance and her sword.”

Walter SCOTT. *Ivanhoe*. 1819. London: Penguin, 1984. Pp. 317-18.

\* *Emprise*: an adventurous, daring, or chivalric enterprise (Webster)

Colour code: the beauty & poetry of chivalry; the ridicule and savagery of chivalry; the opposite of chivalry (offered by Rebecca); forms of exclusion; archaic language.

## DOCUMENT B

[Chivalry in the 18<sup>th</sup> century] did not amount to very much. So much else had happened to overshadow the chivalric tradition, or make it seem barbarous and absurd. The literature, art and architecture of classical Greece and Rome and of Renaissance Italy had provided an alternative culture which dominated most aspects of European civilisation. New discoveries in science or movements in thought had upset the structures of belief on which the Middle Ages had rested. Chivalry had little relevance to ordinary gentlemen living in security and comfort and leaving war to professionals. What meaning could it have for an average Georgian landowner busily planting parks and turnips, building temples, enclosing commons, looking for an heiress, or cementing political alliances? He might be proud of mediaeval ancestors, in so far as they contributed to the status of his family, but that he should in any way imitate them would have seemed absurd to him. Many of the most important elements of chivalry now conflicted with the conviction of the upper and most of the middle classes that anything that savoured of 'enthusiasm' should be avoided, and the belief of progressive people that society could and should be remodelled according to the dictates of reason. Loyalty to a king or leader, however disastrous the result, faithful love, however little requited, readiness to fight for one's honour, however slight the slur on it, or truth to one's word, however rashly given, were qualities which the literature of chivalry singled out for praise, but which eighteenth-century opinion tended to consider stupid rather than noble. Chivalry had no more typical or famous expression than the Crusades; but Hume, in his *History of Great Britain* (1761), wrote them off in a much-quoted phrase as 'the most signal and durable monument of human folly that has yet appeared in any age or nation'.

Thirty years later, in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), Edmund Burke talked of chivalry as dead, but in a different mood to that of Hume. In a moving and memorable passage he described his only meeting with Marie Antoinette and lamented her fall. 'Surely', he wrote, 'never alighted on this orb, which she hardly seemed to touch, a more delightful vision. I saw her just above the horizon, decorating and cheering the elevated sphere she just began to move in, –glittering like the morning star, full of life, and splendour, and joy... Little did I dream that I should have lived to see disasters fallen upon her in a nation full of gallant men, in a nation of men of honour, and of cavaliers. I thought ten thousand swords must have leaped from their scabbards to avenge even a look that threatened her with insult. But the age of chivalry is gone. That of sophisters, economists, and calculators, has succeeded; and the glory of England is extinguished for ever.'

In fact, even as he lamented, the age of chivalry was on the way back. The signs of its return were numerous, but one of the most striking can be used to stand for the rest. In 1788 Benjamin West had painted a huge and panoramic picture depicting Edward III's meeting with the Black Prince after the Battle of Crecy. Bareheaded, modest, with eyes downcast, the Black Prince (Plate III) is shown as the epitome of the chivalrous young knight, whose sword would surely have leapt from his scabbard to avenge any wrong to a beautiful woman in distress.

Mark GIROUARD. *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman*.  
New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1981. Pp. 18-19.

Colour code: the beauty of chivalry; the ridicule and savagery of chivalry; reasons for the dislike for, or (on the contrary) appreciation of, chivalry; noteworthy.



Edmund Blair Leighton, "God Speed!" 1900. Oil on canvas.

Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edmund\\_Blair\\_Leighton](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edmund_Blair_Leighton)



## Personal notes on the 3 documents: **Excerpt from *Ivanhoe***

\* **Mêlée**: like the joust, one of the events (a general fighting game) for the participants in the Ashby-de-la-Zouch tournament.

\* **Hatchment**: (*Heraldry*) "a diamond-shaped tablet displaying the coat of arms of a dead person." Also called "achievement."

\* **The (rusted) mail that hangs as a hatchment** (line 18) = the coat of mail (Fr. cotte de maille) which hangs like an escutcheon on a knight's grave.

\* **Hereward**: "Hereward the Wake (c. 1035 – 1072), known in his own times as Hereward the Outlaw or Hereward the Exile, was an 11th-century leader of local resistance to the Norman conquest of England. Hereward's base was in the Isle of Ely, and according to legend he roamed The Fens, covering North Cambridgeshire, Southern Lincolnshire and West Norfolk, leading popular opposition to William the Conqueror. The name *Hereward* is composed of Old English roots *here* = army, and *ward* = guard, and is cognate with Old High German *Heriwart* and modern German *Heerwart*. The title "the Wake" (meaning "watcher") was popularly assigned to him many years after his death." Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hereward\\_the\\_Wake](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hereward_the_Wake)

\* **Which rates our life far, far beneath the pitch of our honour** (lines 27-8): which considers our lives to be much less important than our honour.

Noteworthy in this excerpt:

\* **opposition between Rebecca & Ivanhoe: tit-for-tat conversation** in which Rebecca's wit wins the day (**verbal jousting**, as opposed to Ivanhoe's prowess during the famous episode of the Ashby-de-la Zouch tournament). She is a **healer** (she knows the power of herbs, though she is in no way a witch) when Ivanhoe's strength & skills associate him with death. Other oppositions: **male/female, life taker/life giver, public/private sphere, dynamic/static, death/love**, etc. On the face of it, this looks like an insurmountable series of differences...

\* **... but there are also a few vital similarities between them**: both try to instill **idealism & purity** into their lives. Chivalry for him ≠ domestic bliss & affection as far as Rebecca is concerned. Ivanhoe is actually in love with the black-haired Rebecca (the "fair" [= beautiful] Jewess – Cf. "her sable tresses" in Ch. VII), whom he (unconsciously?) prefers to the golden brown-haired Rowena (a beautiful Saxon ["her profuse hair, of a colour betwixt brown and flaxen" in Ch. IV]).

\* **"thou" form of address throughout**: stresses: (1) that this is a story from the Middle Ages, after the Third Crusade (1189-92) → **archaic** forms ; (2) the familiarity between the two characters.

\* **Vanity of the heroic quest according to Rebecca**, for a number of reasons: (1) **bloodshed** can't be justified (insistence of Moloch = sacrifice); (2) **historically outmoded** (no one will remember Ivanhoe → actually untrue as we know → why *does* Ivanhoe (or Don Quixote, for that matter, even though the quest of both men cannot be equated) inspire some of us, even today? Is it this idea of purity, nobility, etc.? In the background, historical characters as Scott always presents them = trying to hold on to outmoded models in a world that is moving forward fast; (3) only a form of **"vain glory"** (line 12); hence (4) a **ridiculous quest** (just like Don Quixote's); (5) **deprives would-be heroes of the true joys of life** (including... herself).

\* **Chivalry not justifiable in a modern reader's eyes** (not entirely so in Scott's time): based on a series of assumptions, stereotypes, & exclusions: (1) **women placed on a pedestal** (virginity, idealism, domestic, the end of the quest only, etc.) and **relegated to a passive position** (Cf. "passive as a priest, or a woman"); (2) based on an unflinching respect for the dictates of the Christian Pope (Crusades against Moslems [Saladin] especially + Ivanhoe evinces the prejudices of his time against Jews); (3) based on a social divide (what's noble and ignoble). **All of which Rebecca proves to be founded on unjustifiable prejudices.**

## Personal notes on the 3 documents: **a historical perspective on chivalry**

\* **The Battle of Crécy (26 August 1346)**: Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle\\_of\\_Crécy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Crécy)

"The Battle of Crécy (occasionally called the Battle of Cressy in English) took place on 26 August 1346 near Crécy in northern France, and was one of the most important battles of the Hundred Years' War. The combination of new weapons and tactics has caused many historians to consider this battle the beginning of the end of classic chivalry." [...] "Crécy was a battle in which an Anglo Welsh army of 9000 to 10,000 (depending on source), commanded by Edward III of England and heavily outnumbered by Philip VI of France's force of 35,000 to 100,000 (depending on source), was victorious as a result of superior weaponry and tactics, demonstrating the importance of the modern military concept of fire power. The effectiveness of the English longbow, used *en masse*, was proven against armoured knights, contrary to the conventional wisdom of the day which held that archers would be ineffective and be butchered when the armoured units closed in.

In the battle, the French knights, protected by mail reinforced with plate, nearly exhausted by charging several miles into the fray (against their king's wishes) and having to walk through a quagmire of mud to charge up a shallow hill into English and Welsh arrow storms, were cut down. The result was that much of the French nobility died, perhaps even a third (estimates of the actual numbers in each army vary considerably, depending on the source).

Knights' armour had not yet evolved to the stage where longbows could not penetrate, and the knights' horses were barely protected at all. The storm of arrows killed or disabled the knights' mounts, and left the knights floundering in the mud on foot beneath an unavoidable hail of arrows." [...] "In a strong defensive position, Edward III ordered that everybody fight on foot and distributed the army in three divisions, one commanded by his sixteen-year-old son, Edward, the Black Prince."

\* 'enthusiasm' = religious fanaticism (line 13)

Noteworthy in this excerpt:

\* **a historical approach**, describing how British thought evolved over the 18<sup>th</sup> c.: from rejection of the chivalrous ideal (down to line 32) to its return at the close of the century (lines 33-8).

\* **the main reasons given for such a change of attitude**: (1) **new models**: ancient Rome & Greece, not the ("barbaric") Middle Ages anymore; (2) **stress on Reason** and dislike for any form of "enthusiasm" (fanaticism); (3) **comfort & ease** are preferred by the leisured classes (the idea of fighting for one's rights & reputation = ludicrous, passé); (4) **marriages of convenience** are common, as opposed to "romantic marriages," in a society which values money much more than love.

\* **best example of this change of heart: the Crusades** = the best illustration of "human folly" (line 20). New view of it: the most barbaric kind of religious fanaticism.

\* anything related to knights is **now deemed ridiculous** ("absurd," "stupid"). Just a bunch of puerile attitudes.

\* conservative men living in the past (like Edmund Burke) **regret the death of manners & of loyalty** to women/monarchs. Marie-Antoinette as the prototype of the idealized woman: perfect, pure, star-like, etc. – a somewhat biased or erroneous picture of the French Queen, as we know) placed on a pedestal ("the elevated sphere she just began to move in," lines 26-7). Note that Burke wrote this 3 years before the Queen (and King) were beheaded in 1793 → we can imagine his shock at this lack of "chivalry"...

\* but History can repeat itself: the **chivalrous ideal returned at the close of the 18<sup>th</sup> c., though in a diminished form** since battlefields do not need knights any longer (after Crécy) → **chivalrous attitude to the "weaker sex" only** → the Romantic & Victorian heroine (her perfection, her aloofness, her sexlessness, etc.).



Benjamin West (1738-1820), *Edward III with the Black Prince after the Battle of Crécy, 1788*  
[purchased by Queen Victoria]

### Personal notes on the 3 documents: **E. B. Leighton's painting**

\* **About E. B. Leighton**: Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edmund\\_Leighton](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edmund_Leighton)

"(21 September 1852—1 September 1922) was an English painter of historical genre scenes, specializing in Regency and medieval subjects."

*Obituary - The late Edmund Blair Leighton ROI 1853-1922.*



"The death of Mr Edmund Blair Leighton, on September 1, removed from our midst a painter who, though he did not attain to the higher flights of art, yet played a distinguished part in aiding the public mind to an appreciation of the romance attaching to antiquity, and to a realisation of the fellowship of mankind throughout the ages.

Mr Blair Leighton was born in London, on September 1, 1853, his father being that Charles Blair Leighton, portrait and subject painter, whose exhibits at the Royal Academy and other London galleries covered the period between 1843 and 1855. The son was educated at University College School, before taking a position in an office in the city, but entered the Royal Academy Schools after a course of evening study at South Kensington and Heatherley's.

He commenced exhibiting in 1874, and succeeded, four years later, in securing the verdict of the Hanging Committee of the Royal Academy in favour of two works, entitled respectively 'Witness My Act and Seal,' and 'A Flaw in the Title.' Since then his highly wrought style was regularly represented at Burlington House until two years prior to his decease. Among the better known of his pictures, many of which were published, may be named 'The Dying Copernicus (1880), To Arms (1888), Lay thy sweet hand in mine and trust in me (1891), Lady Godiva (1892), Two Strings (1893), Launched in Life (1894), The Accolade (1901), Tristan and Isolde (1907), The Dedication (1908), The Shadow (1909), 'To the Unknown Land (1911),' and 'The Boyhood of Alfred The Great,' 1913. For the past dozen years or so, Mr E Blair Leighton had been a member of the Royal Institute of Oil Painters. He had married in 1885, Miss Katherine Nash, by whom he had, with a daughter, one son, Mr E J Blair Leighton, who has also adopted painting as a profession."

E. B. Leighton, *The Accolade (L'adoubement)*, 1901

#### Noteworthy details in the painting:

\* **Mediaeval setting:** sort of **gargoyle** in the upper left corner; **portcullis** in the background, raised in order to let soldiers through; knight carrying a golden banner or **pennant** (Fr. Fanion) → the same kind of yellow/golden colour as his beloved **maiden**; **fabulous creature** at the bottom of the stairs (a kind of winged dragon?); presence of **Gothic architecture**.

\* **Symbolism:** (1) tying a scarf (like an **armband**) round the knight's arm → symbol of attachment, a reminder of their "love," also **carrying his lady's colors**, phrase "tie the knot" (= to marry); (2) everything about the lady is fiery: red hair, could symbolize her beauty, similar to Rowena's in *Ivanhoe* (poetic tradition attached to the color of ears of wheat), or a fiery temperament (not necessarily here); (3) the foreground is divided into two sections by the oblique line of the stone stairs → the symbolic divide between them: male/female, action/domestic status, war/love, Cf. the **flowers** on her side of the painting; (4) notice **the lady's elevated station**, literally higher than the knight (though he is riding his horse) → females as belonging to a higher, purer (usually unattainable sphere, since it was not rare for a knight's lady to be *already married*). Notice that the lady is not looking directly into the knight's eyes, but rather on her scarf → feminine modesty + the lady/knight relationship was often not sexual (sublimated sexuality); (5) **purity** of the knight's ideals & quest also in underlined (white horse).



\* Knight about to depart – for the war or just a tournament?

**CAPES 2013 – Préparation à la 1<sup>ère</sup> partie de l'épreuve de «Leçon »**  
**Présentation, étude et mise en relation de trois documents**  
**Suggested plan**

**Intro:**

[1] *Indicate what the general theme of these documents is:*] A **diachronic** set of documents on the subject of the **representation of chivalry** through time.

[2] *Introduce the docs:*] An early 20<sup>th</sup>-century painting w/ Pre-Raphaelite connections which puts to the fore the **romance & beauty** of chivalry. An excerpt from one of Walter Scott's most famous novels (featuring characters like Ivanhoe, Rebecca, Rowena, Richard the Lionheart and his brother John, Robin Hood, etc.), where the wounded hero dreams of fighting but is assailed by his nurse Rebecca's **ironic remarks**. & a historian's perspective on chivalry, mostly in the 18<sup>th</sup> c. here, according to which chivalry at the time had mostly become **synonymous with barbarity**. An illustrated book – Cf. "Plate III."

[3] *Indicate what your angle of approach will be:*] underlines the hidden face of chivalry & the need to beware of gross oversimplifications.

[4] *Indicate the plan you'll follow – slowly, clearly, fully.*] See below.

**1) Nostalgia for the would-be romance of chivalry.**

- This feeling is obviously felt – and used – in the painting. A medieval setting w/ **Gothic architecture**. Romance between the valorous knight & his heart's mistress.

- Study the **various elements of symbolism in the painting**: **tying a knot** (→ marriage) around the knight's arm; **woman's elevated position**; **woman's sphere** = the home ≠ man's sphere = the outside world, here battling w/ an enemy (invisible, as if *fighting* were more vital than the enemy the knight fought against); flowers on her side ≠ colourful pennants on his, for instance → certainly, on some level, nostalgia for a time when society was divided into simple (simplistic?) distinctions & realms.

- This same nostalgia is underlined in the excerpt from Girouard's study: 18<sup>th</sup>-c. middle-class men could derive a degree of pride from the knowledge of their medieval ancestors' **deeds of derring-do**. A time when men had not yet been transformed into genteel, "civilized" entities → nostalgia for the use of sheer strength, for a world in which **men could really show their mettle** → civilisation (order, the light of reason, etc.) perceived as a loss.

- This is what readers of Scott's novel must have felt: Ivanhoe **underlines all the beauty, grace, glory**, etc. attached to chivalry, being the "champion" of a cause / a "damsel in distress," etc. In the 19<sup>th</sup> c., as Girouard shows, this ideal has transformed into a kind of gallantry – which also was disappearing (episode of **the slur on Marie-Antoinette's honour**).

**Transition:** "Heroism" might be many men's fondest wish (Cf. Freud's "pleasure principle") but there is something utterly childish about it (Freud's "reality principle"). At best, **this set of documents ridicules this ideal** from another age.

**2) A ridiculous ideal from another age.**

- The best arguments against chivalry are enumerated by Rebecca: **a ridiculous set of conventions**. See the way she mocks / belittles EVERY aspect of chivalry, especially through the use of **impertinent adjectives**: "the rusted mail ... mouldering tomb ... the defaced sculpture ... the ignorant monk can hardly read ... vagabond minstrels ... rude rhymes (= coarse, uninspired)" → **no glory whatsoever** in waging war / dying for a cause / being sung one's praises by such "poets", etc.

- In this sense, Rebecca is **the voice of modernity**. Scott uses her to show the **march of history** & the fact that Ivanhoe is the touching, if doomed remnant of an age that is about to vanish for good – as many of Scott's heroes are, destroyed as they are by historical changes over which they have no control.

- Girouard allows us to understand what happened between the age of crusades/chivalry & the 19<sup>th</sup> c. Rise of science, the Enlightenment → **chivalry = a form of "enthusiasm"** = religious fanaticism. **Enumerate Girouard's arguments**.

- Hence, not only ridiculous, but DANGEROUS (Scott & Girouard): it **often lapses into sheer barbarity & cruelty** = a mere form of **sacrifice** (of the self, certainly, but also - & especially – of other people's blood!).

**Transition:** The nostalgia for simple oppositions (as already described) can actually be seen as **the root of all evils**. An oversimplification of human affairs which only leads to exclusion & massacres.

**3) A barbaric practice founded on exclusion & stereotypes.**

- **Ivanhoe's untenable stance** is proven by the problem of Rebecca's Jewishness. Ivanhoe = a knight who participated in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Crusade, against Muslims (Saladin) & Jews (in accordance w/ Pope Urban III's call) in order to regain Jerusalem. In the novel, Rebecca & her father abhorred by many characters because they are Jewish. Yet Ivanhoe himself prefers the black-haired Rebecca over the golden-haired Saxon beauty whom he is supposed to marry (Rowena), but this union can never be.

- An allusion to Scott's Rowena in the **red-haired beauty in the painting?**

- Likewise, chivalry supposes that women are: (1) **domestic** only (Cf. painting); (2) the **object** of a manly quest = **passive** entities (as passive as priests, as Ivanhoe suggests); (3) **chaste** Cf. her eyes never meet his & she is robed in gold (= purity, divinity); (4) **Christian** naturally; (5) **aristocratic** → an ideal wh/ excludes an impressive percentage of the population!

- Hence, one can only agree w/ the quote in Girouard's essay : "the most signal and durable **monument of human folly**"

**Conclusion:** [1) *Summarize:*] Chivalry = a moment in our history, which we often think of w/ a degree of fondness or w/ a smile on our lips. Synonymous with heroic deeds, fighting for a cause & proving / surpassing oneself. Yet those were centuries of barbaric deeds, just like ours, when religion already justified the killing of thousands & the looting of entire nations & peoples.

[2) *Branch out:*] Therefore, the road to hell can indeed be paved with “good” intentions, & it seems that humans can justify any of their actions, however murky. The representation of chivalry is therefore problematic & invites us to reject all forms of exclusion, bringing about deaths, massacres, & general unhappiness as they ineluctably do.

