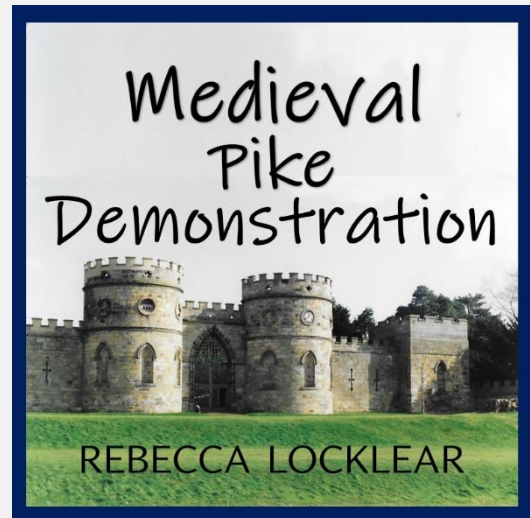


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## Pike Demonstration

Target: Grades 6-12

Goals: To present a weapon demonstration drill with authentic commands

Materials: Pikes

Background

A pike was a 10-20 foot pole with an iron spear-point used by infantry for combat against cavalry beginning around 1250. (It was not a spear meant to be thrown.) Men were trained in the use of the pike so they would work well together as a team – often in dense squares in the middle of fields. The time when knights and cavalry reigned supreme came to an end in history as the tactics of infantry troops changed.

The article, "Medieval Polearms" explains the types of poles used. The *pike* was basically a super-elongated spear; whereas the *bill* and *halberd*, which also repelled cavalry, have interestingly shaped heads.

"Medieval Polearms"

[http://www.weapons-universe.com/Swords/Medieval\\_Polearms.shtml](http://www.weapons-universe.com/Swords/Medieval_Polearms.shtml)



## How to Make Fake Pikes

**MATERIALS:** bamboo poles, thick cardboard, serrated knife, photos of pike heads, silver duct tape, pencils, silver paint.

### POLES

Authentic pikes can be 10-20 feet long but were commonly 10-12 feet long and 2 inches in diameter. Practically, a pole 10-feet or more is too long to use in a theatre and too long for students to handle safely. A better size pole is 5-6 feet.

There have been times where I have assigned students to find their own poles. Some students do find poles or make ones from tree limbs. The result with different

## Authentic Commands

The point of a medieval pike demonstration is to give audiences an idea of how men used to drill with these weapons.

What was the pike drill leader called?

Would the man in charge of the soldiers have been called commander? Captain? Leader? I put this question to three historians:

- "I think 'captain' would be the best choice." (Mike Loades, British military historian, weapons expert, and writer. Personal Correspondence, 2021)
- "An interesting rank you get in medieval (and later) armies is 'marshal.' We now have Field Marshal as the highest rank. Originally, the Marshal was in charge of

Where can this demonstration be used?

- As part of a history unit.
- At a historical outdoor reenactment
- Along with medieval literature.
- As part of a skit or play.
- When performing medieval history with music and drama on stage. (Demonstrations like pike, sword, sword dance, or games can be included.)

My hope is that this pike demonstration will come in handy in your teaching!

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PIKE PREVIEW

