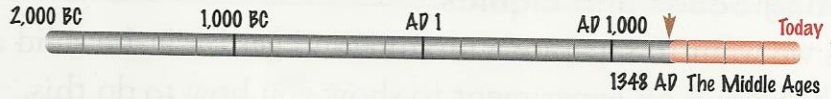


50 – Dublin in the Middle Ages



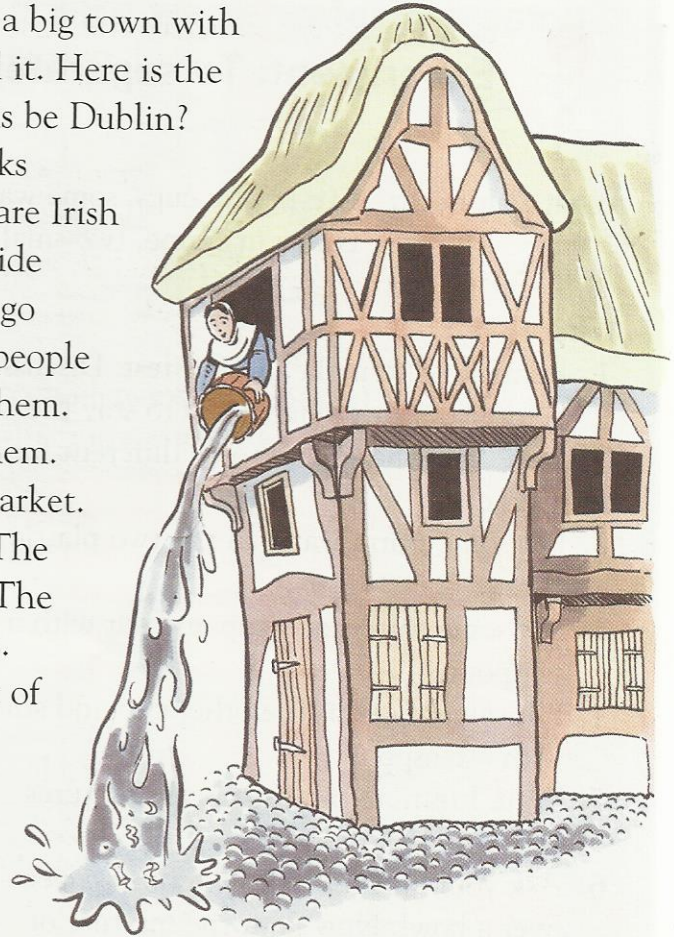
Hi! I'm Frankie, the teenage time traveller. Where am I? I am outside a big town with high, thick walls all around it. Here is the way in. Could this be Dublin?

Wow, it sure looks different. There are Irish beggars sitting outside the gate. They will not go inside because the English people living in Dublin do not like them.

They are afraid that they bring disease with them.

I'll go in the gate. This must be the Cornmarket. There are lots of people selling bags of grain. The streets are narrow with small wooden houses. The shops are in the front rooms of people's houses. Oy! That woman almost got me with a bucket of dirty water. Imagine throwing dirty water and all your rubbish on to the street. I bet there are lots of fat rats around here.

What is that smell? Fish! Oh, it is a fish market. Fish heads and fish tails dumped on the street – it must be great to be a cat around



here! It is smelly, but it sure is cheap. A whole salmon is only about 2 cent in our money.

On to the next street. Lots of people selling bread, wine, leather and much more.

I wonder what toys the children have? Let me see. I see some children playing with drums, rattles and whistles. They are making quite a racket. There are some other children playing with toy soldiers. They seem to be made from wood or clay. They are not as colourful as the ones I have at home. I can see a girl playing with a rag doll. Her friend has a paper windmill. I have one just like it at home.



What is that noise? It is the town crier. He is standing on the steps of a High Cross. "Hear Ye. Hear Ye. I bring bad news. The Black Death has come. This plague is spread by fleas on black rats coming in on the boats. Be warned – it will kill you."

This is very bad news. Many of these poor people will die. They do not know it yet, but by Christmas 14,000 of them will have died. Only the nuns and priests take care of the sick here. They try to make cures from the herbs they have grown.

A group of children are gathered in a circle. They have heard about the Black Death. They are holding hands and chanting a rhyme. I am going to get nearer to hear what they are chanting.



"Ring a ring a rosie,
Pocket full of posie,
A-tishoo!
A-tishoo!
We all fall down."

It is
getting dark
now. I do not
think I will
stay. As I leave the
town behind me, I see

the night watchmen on duty. It is goodbye to Dublin in the Middle Ages and home to pizza and chips for me. Forward to the twenty-first century...



Exercises

1. What was sold at the Cornmarket?
2. Why were the streets very dirty?
3. Name three toys or games that children had or played.
4. What news did the town crier bring?
5. What rhyme did the children sing?
6. You are a time traveller. If you had a time machine, where would you go?
7. You are a child in Dublin in the Middle Ages. Write a story about your life.