

Jester

What is a Jester?

A jester is someone that works as a type of clown, comedian or jokester to entertain people. Jesters wear brightly coloured clothes and funny hats. Their hats had three floppy points with a bell at each end. The hat is this shape because early jester's used to wear a donkey's ears and tail as a hat.

Jesters entertained by:

- telling stories
- riddles
- puns
- jokes
- poems
- acting
- singing
- juggling
- acrobatics
- playing an instrument

Jesters may have looked physically different for example be a dwarf, hunch back, gangly or move in a different way. They might be very flexible or clumsy but however they moved would be exaggerated or unusual.

William Sommers - Famous Tudor Jester

William Sommers or Somers (d. June 15, 1560) was the most well-known court jester of Henry VIII of England. William was a skinny boy with a stoop. When Henry VIII was older and had a bad and painful leg it was said that William Sommers was the only person that could cheer him up. He was very popular with the public and was known as 'friend to the poor' as he often stood up for the poor's rights in Henry VIII's court. His picture still hangs in Henry's old home Hampton Court.

Elizabeth I and Jesters

Elizabeth I also had jesters. Elizabeth's jesters were also actors that sometimes played in William Shakespeare's plays. Elizabeth also had women jesters such as Lucretia the Tumbler and Jane the Fool.

Jesters and Shakespeare

We know that jester's were popular in Tudor times as William Shakespeare often put Jester's in his plays for example:

- S The Clown in Othello
- S Feste in Twelfth Night
- S Puck in A Midsummer Night's Dream
- S The Fool in King Lear
- S Yorick in Hamlet

Jester Jokes

Q: When a knight in armour was killed in battle, what sign did they put on his grave?

A: Rust in peace!

Q: What did the dragon say when he saw the knight?

A: Oh no! Not more tinned food!

Q. Which English king spent days and nights at his Round Table writing books?

A. King Author!

Q: Why were the dark ages called the dark ages ?

A: Because there were so many knights !

Q: Why did Arthur have a round table?

A: So no one could corner him!

Q: Who built King Arthur's round table?

A: Sir Cumference!

Q: Why did the knight run about shouting for a tin opener?

A: He had a bee in his suit of armour!

Q: What was Camelot ?

A: A place where people parked their camels!

Q: When were King Arthur's army too tired to fight?

A: When they had lots of sleepless knights!

www.surreycc.gov.uk/surreyheritage

www.exploringsurreypast.org.uk

- 1. Colour in your jester**
- 2. Cut out your jester**
- 3. Stick a lollipop stick to the back of your jester**
- 4. Entertain your friends and family with Medieval jokes**

