

The Renaissance Fair and the Economy

People from all cultures have gathered together in days of celebration and trade. This tradition was brought to a high state in the European Medieval and Renaissance periods. As in modern times, the main purpose of these fairs were to generate revenue, network with clients and manufacturers, and enjoy social events such as sports and contests.

Nowdays, the Renaissance Fair still fills this same role. Not only are we looking to history for entertainment, we are keeping alive useful skills and ancient knowledge which often benefits us in our modern lives.

The Fair offers a rich variety of hand made wares which range from things we use everyday such as baskets and jewelry, to things we enjoy on special occasions such as calligraphy and fancy costumes. Demonstrations are also an important part of the Fair. Blacksmithing can show how modern technology has vastly increased the convenience of modern life, but it also shows the satisfaction of producing a well crafted item. One of the best economic lessons of the Renaissance Fair is showing how people can create their own jobs, relying on themselves to earn a living.

Jousting, juggling and swordplay demonstrations are great examples of how a person can earn a living through a skill. These troupes of players and actors are an example of another economic principle of the Renaissance Fair- to go where the people are. Many Fair merchants and entertainers follow a yearly circuit, just like many people did back in the Medieval and Renaissance period.

Things to think about:

What are the advantages of following a circuit?

How is it harder to be a merchant today than in Medieval/Renaissance times?

What must a merchant do to be successful?

Why are people interested in ancient technology and items?