

# **Feudalism Simulation**

**Objective(s):** students will be able to describe the hierarchy and relationships upon which European feudal society was based. Students will experience how bonds of loyalty held European society together during the Middle Ages.

## **Divide class into roles:**

- Two large masking tape sections represent two manors within classroom.
- Teacher is facilitator; One narrator, one monarch (king), two lords, 4 knights, remaining students are serfs (peasants).
- Distribute scripts to each student (one page both sides)
- Orchestrate each student to section of the room (consisting of two manors).
- Arrange the classroom into a “feudal kingdom”. One desk at the front of the class on teacher desk is the throne. Create two manors by splitting the classroom in half. Lords sit on desks in each manor. Use placards to label the manor (A and B)
- Read through the script one time
- Read through the script the second time – with Q&A (class discussion)

## **Simulation Rules**

Students can't switch roles

Script on next page

## **Questions for Q&A**

- How does it feel to be a monarch? A lord? A knight? A serf?
- How does it feel to be “born” into a role you could not change?
- What appears to be the basic needs of **each** group in this society? (go group by group). Who provided the land? The military protection? The food?
- In what ways are the lord, knight and serf dependent on each other?
- Why do you think the loyalty oaths were necessary? What do you think would happen if someone broke a loyalty oath? (ask Ben....)
- Who has the most power in this society? Who has the least?
- What are some of the advantages of organizing a society in this way? What are the disadvantages?
- Why do you think western European societies developed this system after the fall of the Roman Empire?
- What factors do you think could destroy the security of this society?

## **Historical Realities:**

- Social class determined by birth
- No social mobility
- Monarch controlled all of the land in the kingdom
- Monarch rewarded loyal supporters with land
- Serfs not free to leave lord's manor
- Serfs produced food for manor
- Knights offered military services to lords in exchange for land and food

**Narrator:** “Good morning and welcome to the Middle Ages. You are all members of European society during the 12<sup>th</sup> century. This activity is designed to introduce you to the society that developed in Western Europe after the fall of the Roman Empire. After the fall of the Roman Empire, there were various waves of barbarians who attacked Europe from every side except the west, where the Atlantic Ocean afforded protection. Most feared of all were the invaders who sailed down from Scandinavia in the north to raid the coasts of England and France. These fierce warriors were known as Norsemen, Vikings or Danes. They stole everything they could carry off and destroyed what they could not. Because there was no central government to provide protection against these invasions, people looked to powerful lords and their bands of knights for security and protection.

Mr. George will now assign roles for all students & pass out background cards for each role as it is assigned. Please read your background card aloud as you receive it.”

[after Monarch reads background card]

The Monarch assumes the throne as he walks in a stately fashion.

Now it is time for the Lords to approach the monarch and negotiate the exchange of fealty or loyalty. One at a time, each Lord must kneel before the monarch – even if they are reluctant to do so.”

**Lord A:** [read Background card] “Oh powerful monarch, I humbly request land for my family.”

[The monarch takes the hands of one of the lords between his hands. The monarch needs to dictate the following oath so that the lord can repeat it]

**Monarch:** In taking this oath of fealty, I swear to be loyal to you all the days of my life, and I swear never to make war against you.”

**Narrator:** The lord takes his seat at Manor A.

[the Monarch should repeat this process with Lord B now]

[as both lords are seated within their manors, Mr. George will divide up the serfs among both manors. Serfs should sit on the floor and must have one foot inside the taped area at all times. Each serf is given 3 food tokens.

**Narrator:** Serfs will remain tied to the land for the rest of the activity. There is nothing that can be done to change their destiny.

**Serf A:** [read background card]

**Lord A:** "I have allowed you to live on and farm the land of my manor. In exchange for this privilege, you must give me a large portion of the food you have grown. In return, you can farm and live on this land safely, as I promise to protect you from harm. Each of you needs to give me two food tokens now.

**Narrator:** The serfs have no choice in the matter. If they do not pay, they will be executed.

[repeat this process with Lord B now]

**Narrator:** Knights seek land and food by offering their military service to the lords. Tell the knights to go from lord to lord to try to gain permission to live on a manor. Remind them that they must find a place to live and food to eat in exchange for their military service. At the same time, point out that the lords must have military protection for their manors. Lords will offer food tokens – as many as they deem appropriate- for the knights' military service. Knights are free to choose which manor they want to live on – but can only accept food tokens from one lord.

Knights and lords will have 3-5 minutes to negotiate now. Lords offer food tokens in exchange for military service.

[once all knights have complete negotiations with lords]

**Narrator:** Once an agreement has been reached by a knight and a lord, have the knight kneel next to the lord so the knight can repeat the following oath dictated by the lord:

**Lord A to first Knight:** "In exchange for food and land given to me, I promise to always be loyal to you. I swear to fight to the death in defense of this manor and the kingdom."

[Lord A should repeat this process to the rest of his knights.]

[Lord B should repeat this process to his knights.]

**Narrator:** This concludes our initial simulation on feudal society.

### **Background Card: Monarch**

"I am the monarch – the king. I own all the land in the kingdom. I will give away two pieces of my land, called fiefs or manors, to the two most powerful nobles in the kingdom. Other names for nobles are vassals or lords. In return for land, the lords will promise their loyalty to me and will provide protection for me with knights who are soldiers who can be used to defend my kingdom."

### **Background Card: Lord**

"I am a powerful and wealthy noble. My family has found favor with the monarch. As a result, I have the opportunity to obtain large land grants by promising loyalty to the monarch and providing knights (also known as soldiers) to protect the kingdom."

### **Background Card: Knight**

"I am a knight. I have been trained since my childhood to be a soldier. I need land where I and my family can live, and I need someone to grow my food because most of my time and money is devoted to maintaining my horse, armor and weapons. I may only accept land and food from one lord."

### **Background Card: Serf**

"I am a serf. I am a member of the lowest class of society. I am not free, but I am not quite a slave either. Unlike slaves, I cannot be bought, sold or traded. However, I cannot lawfully leave the manor on which I was born. I am bound to the land. My life will be spent farming the land."

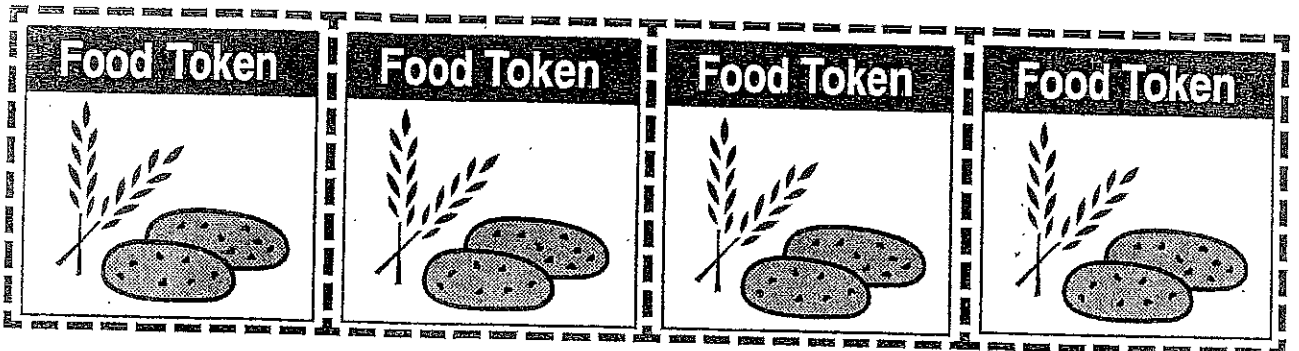
# Manor A



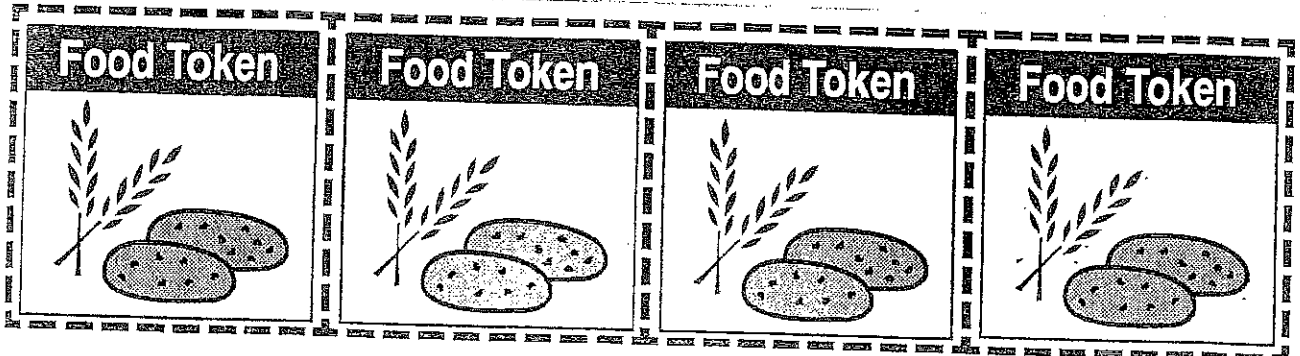
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# Manner B

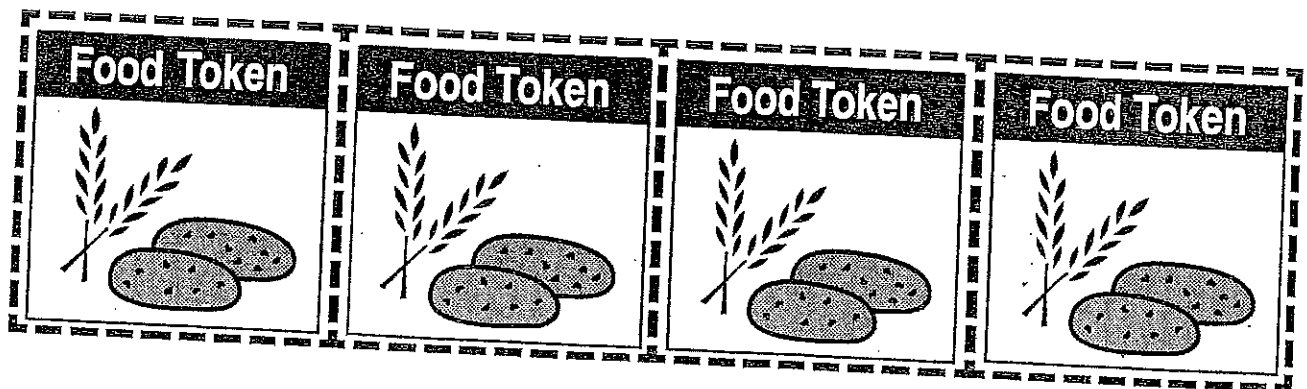
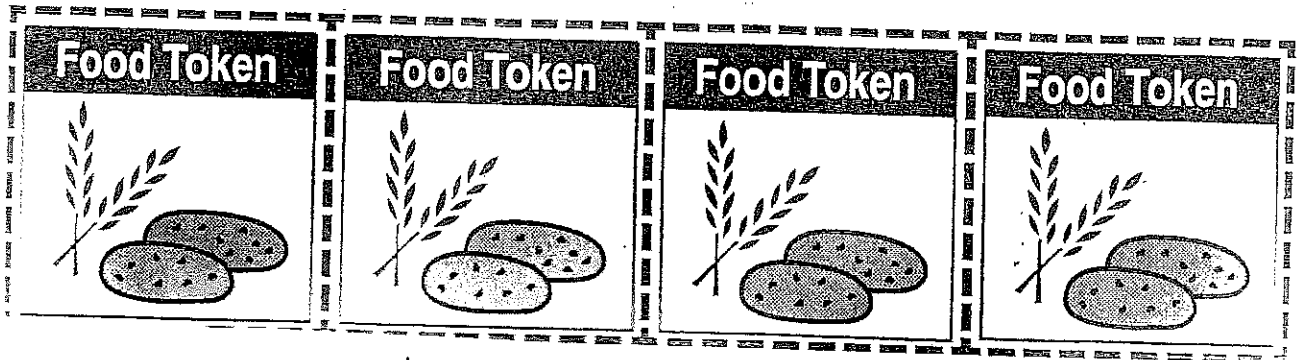




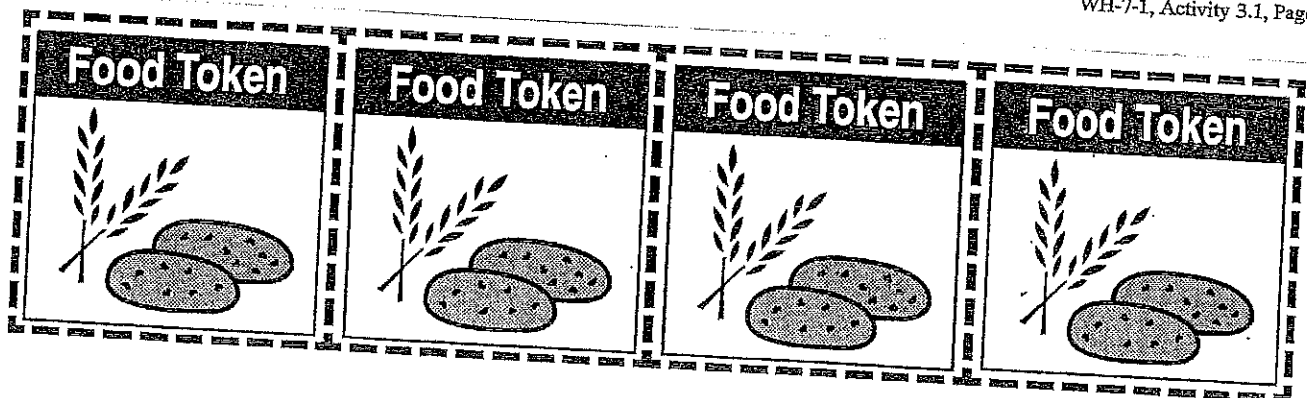
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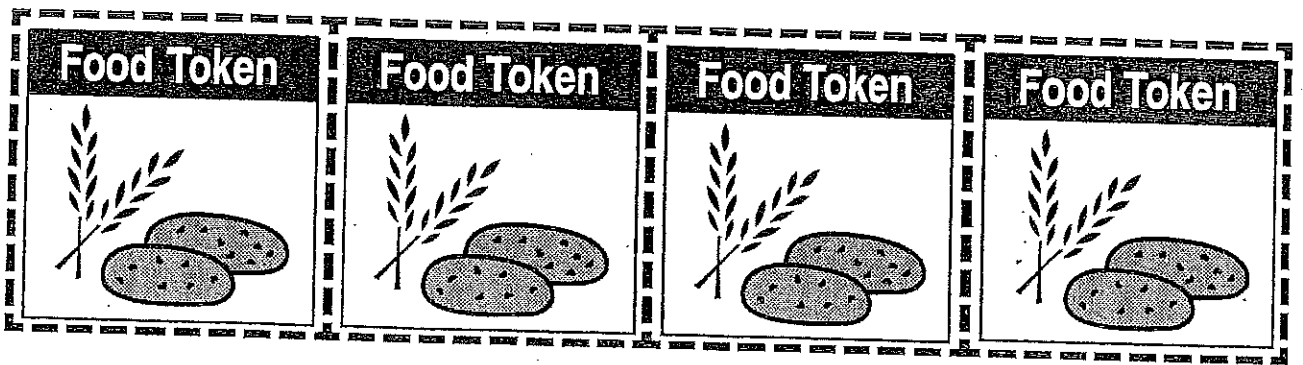


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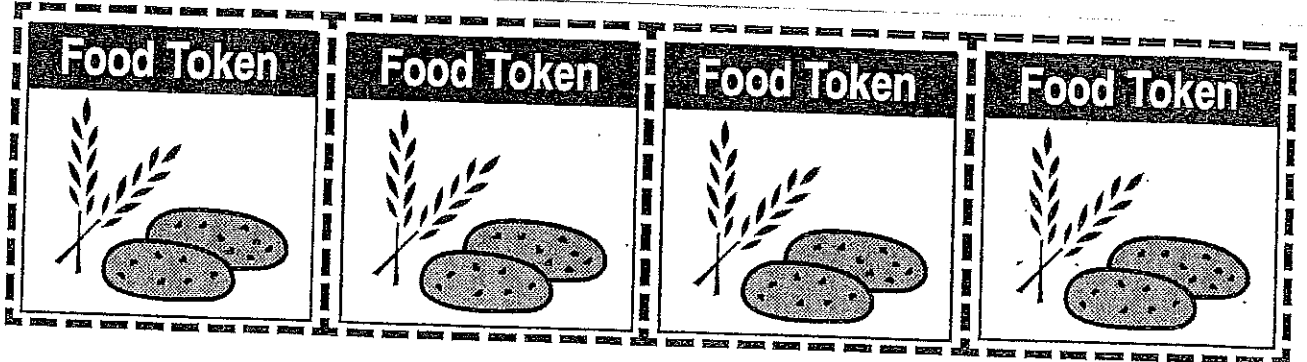


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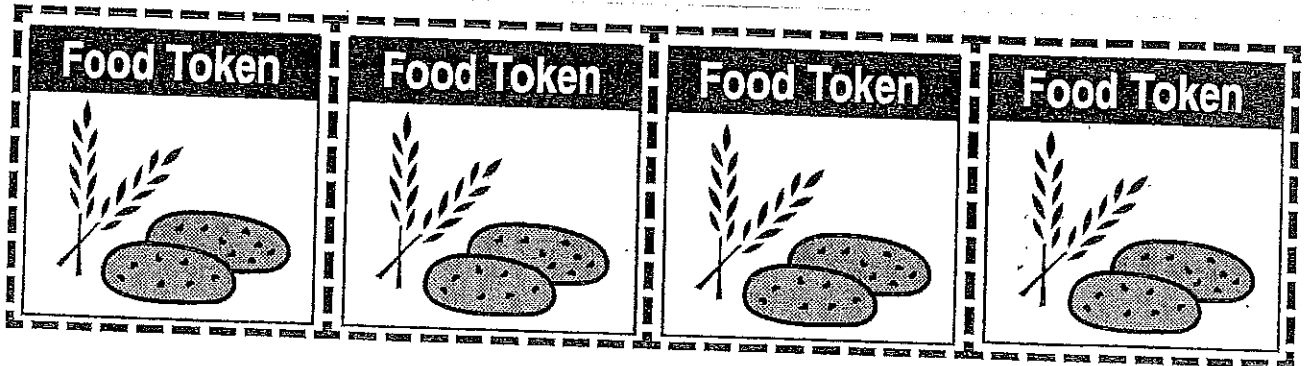




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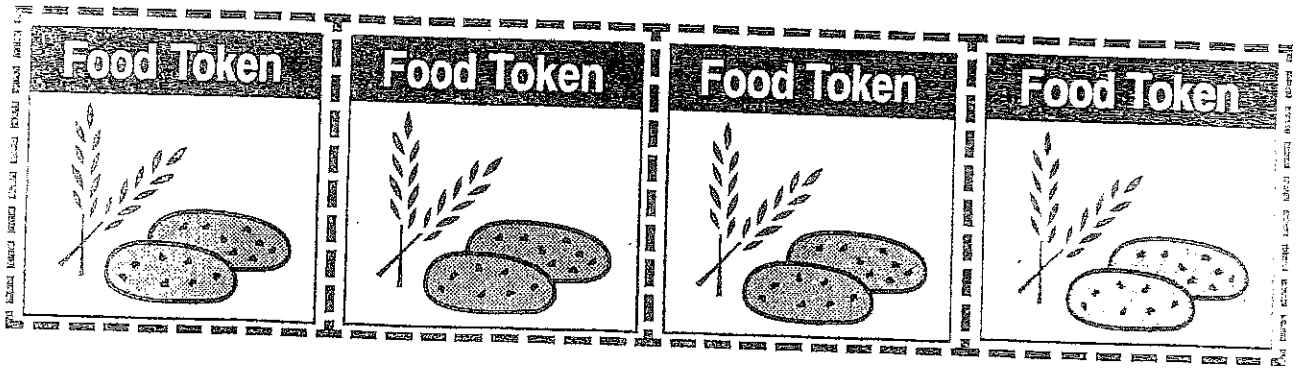


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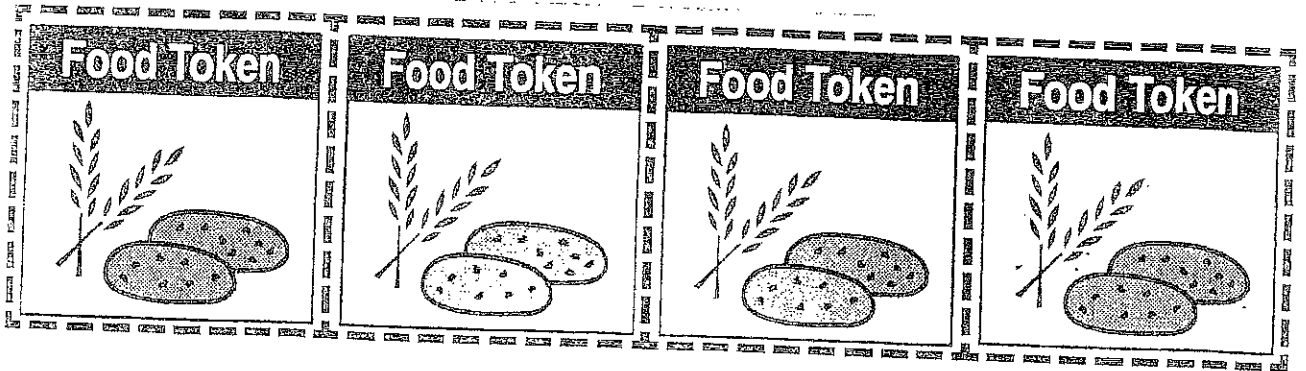


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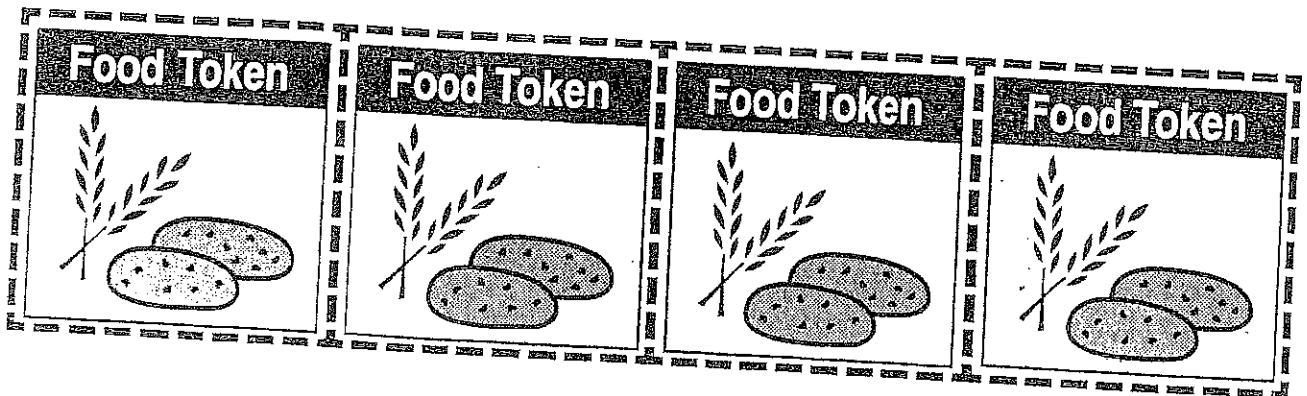
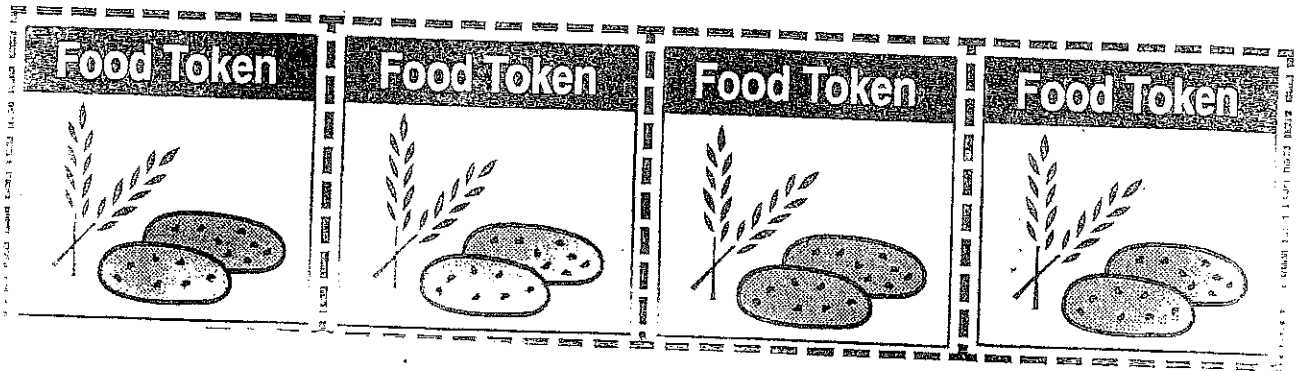




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