

Closer Looking – Form and Function of a Pollaxe



Northern European, *Pollaxe*, late 1400s, steel, brass, and ash wood, The John Woodman Higgins Armory Collection, 2014.81

After looking at the slides and watching the video, you have learned that the pollaxe was designed for knights fighting on foot. The stout thrusting tip could pierce through the gaps in an opponent's armor, without being broken off between the sturdy steel plates. The stout axeblade delivered a powerful blow that could damage armor and cleave bone. The cleated hammerhead was designed to get a hold on the surface of armor, which was always designed with rounded shapes that made it harder to get a solid hit. Yet this deadly weapon is also decorated with the elongated and cusped tracery of Gothic art, echoing the look of medieval cathedrals.

Why do you think a knight would want a deadly weapon that was beautifully decorated? What do you think this pollaxe meant to its owner?