

Medieval Matters: The Middle Age 400 - 1500

The Roman Empire Falls (376) and
Western World Ignites

DYK - “Son of a Gun” - Comes from the Medieval
Knights view that firearms were evil



Byzantine Empire

- Eastern portion of the Roman Empire – capital was Constantinople
- One of the leading economic, military, and cultural powers in Europe
- A great deal of trade (cultural, economic, etc.) between Islamic and Byzantine Empires
- By 11th Century Eastern and Western Church had split
- West Europeans invaded Byzantine during 4th Crusade and did not offer support to them when the Turks took them over.
- Fell in 1493 when Ottoman Turks take over Constantinople
- Greek culture thrived and in Western schools they began to see the importance of Greek philosophy and education.



Rise of Islamic/Arab Empire

- Birth of Mohammed, unified Arab tribes, Golden Age of Islam (700-800), dominated trade routes and goods and developed a level of sophistication the did not hold for another 300 years.
- 7- 12th Century - it had conquered 50% of former Roman Empire
- Constant movement between Byzantine and Islamic Empires.
- Heavily influenced by Greek culture and language.
- Greek texts were translated into Arabic and preserved in libraries.
- Mongols invaders
- From 1258 onwards, Islam and Arab culture, knowledge and influence would continue to grow but under new Muslim rulers. Eventually the Ottoman Turks would control most of the Muslim world and the Ottoman Caliph would rule from Constantinople in Turkey until 1918.

Western Europe

- Was initially the weakest and least likely to thrive of the three civilizations that followed the collapse of the Roman Empire
- Western Europe strayed from traditional beliefs. Christianity became the common religion and Latin, the common language.
- By the the end of the middle ages it grew into a strong and stable civilization

Early Middle Ages 400-1000

- Very violent, many wars to prevent invasion therefore no new advances (literary or artistic)
- Feudal System introduced (it was a form of social political and economic organization and stabilization)

B. Social Structure:

Feudal System

Peasants/Serfs-They work for the farmers, and they get paid in return

Merchants/Farmers-They work for the the empire to provide goods like food, and they get paid in return

Knights/Vassals- They work for the empire by giving them protection, and in return they get paid very well

Nobles- Work for the monarch by serving them in there certain needs, and return they get good standard of living

Monarch- They rule the kingdom, and in return they own everything in the kingdom



High Middle Ages (1050 - 1300)

- Advances in agriculture and increase in population
- Increase in trade and urban life. Towns were created along rivers and coasts to make trade more accessible
- Nations of England, France and Holy Roman Empire were created during this time.
- Crusades
- Stability was created

Late Middle Ages (1300 - 1500)

- Famine ravages Europe and as a result extreme inflation led to peasant uprising
- Bubonic plague kills 1/3 to a 1/2 of Europe in 2-3 years. This weakens the Church
- Civil War between France and England defines military climate. War of Roses in England results in Tudor dynasty.

Major Influences on the Middle Ages and Early Modern Period

1. Collapse of Roman Empire - Roman Empire controlled most of Europe, North Africa and the Middle East. This allowed for the export of Roman culture, language, and customs throughout the Mediterranean and Europe. After the fall, much of this movement of knowledge and goods was gone.
2. Spread of Christianity – the Crusades (1100 - 1300) exposed thousands to the Eastern world and their language, customs, culture, etc. It also spread the Catholic faith and created distrust between Christians and Muslims
3. The social hierarchy of the feudal system caused conflict between the classes (kings-peasants).
4. Plague and Famine of the 14th C. - 30% - 50% of pop. Of Europe dies.

Medieval Society and Culture

A)The Church – Absolute Power

- Monarchies used the Church to gain power
- Church owned a great deal of land and gained a great deal of wealth it received from its taxes and services
- Priest was sometimes the towns only “teacher”
- Tithe – 1/10 of income went to Church, and before long the Church owned more land than some monarchies
- Heresy, purgatory, providence, etc

Social Hierarchy Assignment

- As a group you will represent one of the classes of the Feudal/Renaissance social hierarchy.
- You need to feel their passion and position. See them, feel them, and become one of them!!!!
- Research who they are, what they represented during the medieval/Renaissance time period and defend their position in society.
- If there are 7 positions, where do you feel you belong????? Tell us about them and place them on the hierarchy.

Choice of Positions

- Merchants –
- God –
- Clergy –
- Peasants –
- Knights/Gentry –
- Monarchy –
- Nobility –

Geography

- Move from a Mediterranean focus to European
- Tribes from various areas settled in what is now Europe and set up small independent kingdoms
- For the first 500 years invasions from various groups broke up much of modern day Europe. (ie Northern France was surrendered to the Vikings and this area became known as “Normandy” meaning “Northmen”. In 1066, the Duke of Normandy, William the Conqueror, invaded England and became the first Norman King of England
- Chiefs of these tribes set up a hierarchy/social structure call feudalism
- The Holy Roman Empire was formed in modern day Germany and Italy. German rulers tried for so many years to conquer Italy that other dukes were able to split both territories into hundreds of small states.

- The Holy Roman Empire was formed in modern day Germany and Italy. German rulers tried for so many years to conquer Italy that other dukes were able to split both territories into hundreds of small states.
- Decline of Medieval Europe began during the 100 years war between France and England – the English one gaining 1/3 or all French territory.
- A women (of course) came in to save the day for France and by 1453, France had regained its territory.
- After the civil War of Roses in England, it rose again with the powerful Tudor Monarchy

C. The Rest

- Women and Marriage
- Education
- The Code of Chivalry
- Urban “Town”
- Cleanliness
- Trade – during the Crusades