

Medieval Europe

(a.k.a. the Middle Ages)



GENERAL TIMELINE

- Ancient History: Ends with the fall of the Western Roman Empire around 500 AD.
- Medieval History: Begins with the end of the Roman Empire. Overlaps with the Renaissance starting in the 1300s. Ends with the “discovery” of the Americas around 1500 BC.
- Modern History: Continues to the present.

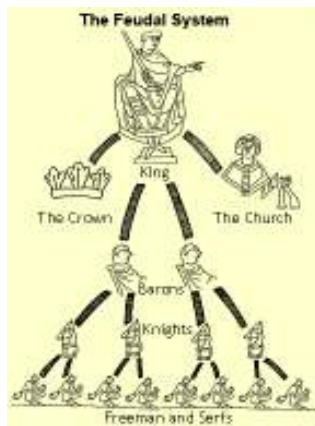
MEDIEVAL EUROPE: MAJOR TOPICS

- Feudalism
- Crusades
- Black Death
- Creation of Nation States
- Growth of Capitalism



FEUDALISM

- **Feudalism: The political and economic system that existed in Medieval Europe.**
 - The king officially owns the land, but gives it to his nobles in return for their loyalty and military service.
 - Peasants and serfs farm the land, giving their labor and part of their crops to the noble who controls the land.
 - Under feudalism, people were born with a permanent position in society.



CRUSADES: DEFINITION



Crusades: A series of wars where European kings tried to conquer land in the Middle East (owned by Muslim empires) from the late 1000s through the 1200s.

CRUSADES: MOTIVATION

- **Religious Reasons: Conquer the “Holy Land” and encourage European pilgrimages.**



CRUSADES: MOTIVATION

- **Political Reasons**
 - **The Church: Reinforce their control over people’s imaginations and their influence over European kings.**
 - **Kings: Provide justification for building up their armies and tightening their control over nobles.**

CRUSADES: CONSEQUENCES

- **Introduced Europeans to a world outside their towns and nations**
 - **Soldiers fighting in the wars**
 - **People reading accounts of the wars**
 - **People seeing goods brought back from the wars (e.g. spices, sugar...)**

CRUSADES: CONSEQUENCES

- Created a demand for trade with the outside world
- New ideas and technologies were introduced to Europe



THE BLACK DEATH (a.k.a. the Bubonic Plague)

- Timeframe: 1347-1500
- Began in SW Asia and spread to Europe. It was carried by fleas who were attached to rats. The rats traveled on ships or camel caravans.
- Filth in the cities and poor sanitation helped spread the disease.



THE BLACK DEATH (a.k.a. the Bubonic Plague)

- 75 million people died worldwide.
- 20 million people died in Europe, which is somewhere between 1/3 and 2/3 of Europe's total population.





POLITICS IN MEDIEVAL EUROPE

- Europe at this time was divided into “fiefdoms” controlled by lords (most power rested with the lords)
- Countries as we know them today did not exist
- Most people lived their lives tied to the land and as a result they had very little awareness of the outside world
- European history was one of constant conflict
 - Lords v. Lords
 - Kings v. Lords
 - Serfs v. Lords

CHANGE IN POLITICS

- Kings controlled larger areas of land
- Kings worked to strengthen their power
 - Fighting wars
 - Claiming divine rights
 - Taking power from lords and the Church



GROWTH OF CAPITALISM

- **Medieval Economic System**
 - Barter economy
 - Almost all products and services were local
 - No stable currency (e.g. taxes were paid with goods)
 - Crusades lead people to learn about new products, but they couldn't buy them without gold and silver



CAPITALISM

- **Capitalism: A system where economic decisions are made by private groups and individuals.**
- **Timeframe: Begins forming in the 1300s, in place throughout Europe in the 1500s**

CHARACTERISTICS OF CAPITALISM

- Individualism
- Intense economic competition
- Private ownership
- Supply/Demand
- Hired labor (wage labor)
- Loaning money with interest

SUMMARY

- The Crusades opened Europeans up to a wider world and created changes in Europe's economic system
- The Black Death caused changes in Europe's social system (feudalism)
- The rise of the nation state caused changes in Europe's politics
