

3

Medieval Europe

(c.590–1500)

3.1 Overview

3.1.1 LINKS WITH OUR TIMES

If we were living or travelling in Europe right now, we would be surrounded by reminders of the medieval times (the Middle Ages) through the castles, churches, streets and houses that have survived from those times. Australia, however, was colonised by Europeans 300 years after the end of the Middle Ages, so it can be hard to imagine that our modern, technology-centred society could uphold any traditions from those times. However, there are many connections to those times. Many Australians follow the Christian or Islamic faiths. Both these major world religions expanded during the Middle Ages, and major conflicts between them first emerged during this period. The architecture of some of our significant churches is based on medieval European models. Modern nations such as France, Russia and England also emerged during the Middle Ages. Even the English language is a product of the Middle Ages; it did not exist before then.

BIG QUESTIONS

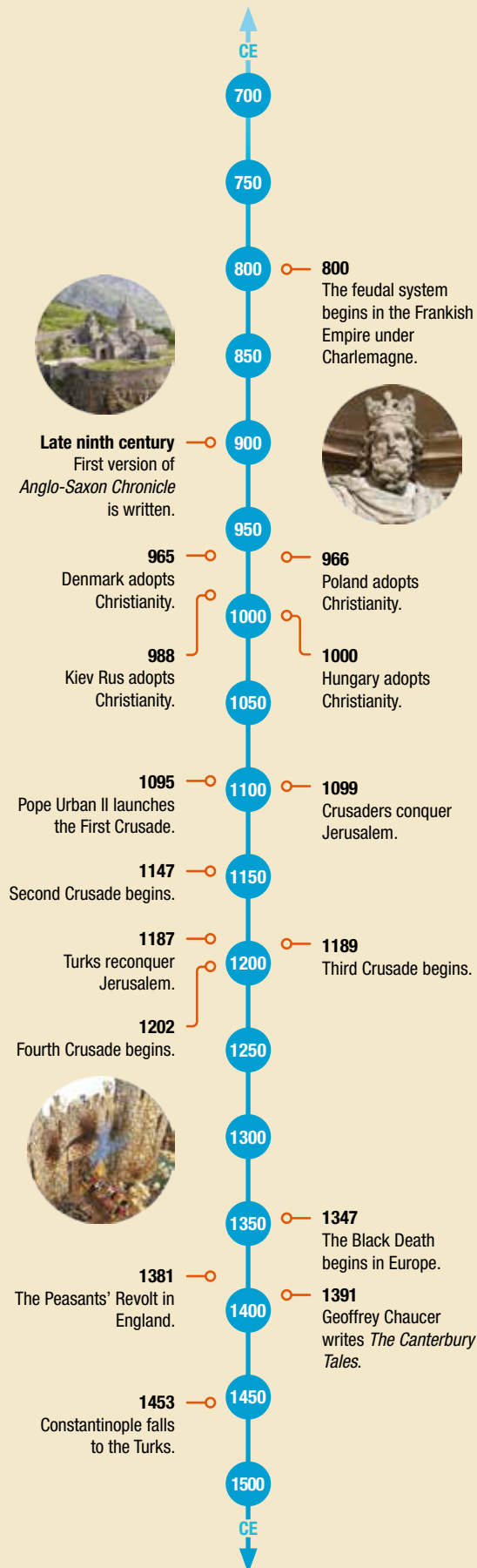
As you work through this chapter, look for information that will help you to answer these questions:

- 1 How was society organised during the Middle Ages and who held the most power?
- 2 What were some of the significant developments during this era?
- 3 What was the relationship between Islam and the West and did this change at all over the period?
- 4 Who were some of the significant individuals and groups in this time and what impact did they have?
- 5 What were the challenges that people faced in medieval times?

STARTER QUESTIONS

- 1 Have you ever seen a castle, or a building that looks like one? What are the features that stand out in your memory?
- 2 What do you know about medieval warfare? Have you ever seen a re-enactment?
- 3 Have you seen any modern films that are set in this time period? What was the film about, and what impression did it give you of the Middle Ages?

A TIMELINE OF MAJOR EVENTS IN MEDIEVAL EUROPE





3.2 Examining the evidence

3.2.1 How do we know about medieval Europe?

There are many different types of evidence that provide historians with information. These include artwork, written sources and artefacts, monuments and buildings.

3.2.2 Artwork

Illustrations like the one in **SOURCE 1** help us imagine what life was like. In the foreground, peasants can be seen engaged in various activities on a farm. Many illuminations show scenes of village life, with peasants tending their crops and livestock. For the illustrator, such a scene would have been commonplace, because 90 per cent or more of the medieval population were peasants.

The Bayeux Tapestry (see **SOURCE 2**) is an embroidered cloth that depicts the battle of Hastings in 1066 and the events leading up to it. It is remarkably well preserved and hangs in Bayeux in France. Although the origins of the Bayeux Tapestry are unclear, wall hangings of this type were used for both decoration and insulation against the cold castle walls of the times.

They were also highly portable and so moved around with their owners. These artworks give historians much information, about the scenes they depict as well as the technologies available to their creators.

Other artworks include paintings, mosaics and frescos.

illumination hand-painted illustration in a medieval book

reeve a magistrate administering law in a village

franklin in the fourteenth century, one who was a landowner but not a member of the nobility

SOURCE 1 Peasants working in the fields. From a French calendar illumination by the Limbourg Brothers, c. 1415



3.2.3 Written sources

Many stories and poems have survived over the centuries and give us more information. One of the most famous examples is a collection of stories and poems by Geoffrey Chaucer. It is called *The Canterbury Tales*, and was written about 1391. This book examines medieval English society — even the titles of the tales show the types of jobs the people of medieval England had. For example, some stories are ‘The Miller’s Tale’, ‘The Knight’s Tale’, ‘The **Reeve’s** Tale’, ‘The Monk’s Tale’, ‘The **Franklin’s** Tale’ and ‘The Squire’s Tale’.

SOURCE 2 A section of the Bayeux Tapestry that shows the nobles feasting while on campaign fighting for King William I of England



Official records also help to give us information about the Middle Ages. For example, William the Conqueror carried out a stock-take of all property in England in the late eleventh century. This record is called *The Domesday Book* (see **SOURCE 3**) and is a detailed record of the resources that were held throughout England at this time. It is an incredibly useful source for historians.

3.2.4 Artefacts, monuments and buildings

Artefacts, monuments and buildings that have survived from the Middle Ages can be valuable sources of information. Artefacts include all types of items, such as coins, armour, weapons, utensils, tools and goblets. Artefacts made of durable metal like silver, gold and bronze are more common than garments and timber and iron materials, which tend to rust or rot away. To understand what such materials may have looked like, historians rely on written and pictorial records.

SOURCE 3 *The Domesday Book* is an amazing eleventh century public record of who owned what and how much they had. After conquering the English, the new king, William I, ordered a public survey of his new territory and the record was written up to become *The Domesday Book*.



SOURCE 4 These reconstructed cottages date back to the fourteenth century.



SOURCE 5 Dover castle in Kent, England. It was built in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.



All sorts of buildings have survived from the Middle Ages: some cottages, churches, monasteries, **tithe barns**, castles and manor houses still exist. The cottage in **SOURCE 4** is made of **thatch** and stone. Although it would have been frequently renovated (for example, thatch needs to be replaced every 20 to 30 years), it is a good example of a peasant's cottage from the fourteenth century. Compare this to **SOURCE 5**, Dover Castle. Dover Castle is clearly intended for a class of people far wealthier and more powerful than peasants. The history of its site goes back to pre-Roman times. However, its present appearance began to take shape under King Henry II in the late twelfth century. Castles like Dover help historians understand how such buildings were used both as military fortresses and homes for rich owners and their supporters. Comparing cottages and castles also gives us an idea about the class differences between the peasants and their rich and powerful rulers. Even buildings which are now ruins may give us clues about what life was like in the Middle Ages.

tithe barn a barn where peasants' produce is stored as a form of taxation

thatch straw used for making roofs

3.2 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 1 Find out more about the Bayeux Tapestry, such as who they think may have commissioned it and which side of the Battle of Hastings it favours. What questions would you need to ask to work out what its biases are?
- 2 Is a photograph of a primary source, such the one of *The Domesday Book* in **SOURCE 3**, a primary or a secondary source? Discuss your answer in your class.
- 3 How do **SOURCES 1, 4** and **5** help us learn about what life in medieval Europe was like?
- 4 Make a list of types of sources under the headings of 'Artwork', 'Written sources' and 'Artefacts, monuments and buildings'. Include an explanation paragraph about what you can learn from each one as well as an example. Share these in your class and add to a class document that you can display in your history classroom.

3.3 The impact of the ‘barbarian’ invasions

3.3.1 The fall of Rome

DID YOU KNOW?

The term ‘Dark Ages’ was originally used by the Italian scholar Petrarch in the 1330s. He was describing what he considered to be the poor quality of literature coming from Europe in the period following the fall of Rome.

The term ‘Dark Ages’ is sometimes used to describe the Early Middle Ages; that is, the period in Europe from the fall of the Roman Empire in 476 CE to about 1000 CE. It was a time when some believed the ‘light’ of Rome was extinguished, and Europe was plunged into ‘darkness’ and chaos, until it began to advance its knowledge and learning in a time known as the Renaissance. Many historians and archaeologists now avoid use of the term ‘Dark Ages’ as they believe it downplays the significance of the period and undervalues the achievements of the societies of the time.

Romans called all those from beyond the borders of the empire ‘barbarians’, from a Greek word meaning foreigners. Barbarians were thought to be uncivilised because of their different culture and customs. For a number of reasons, these barbarians were still able to defeat and overthrow the Roman Empire.

Historians have various hypotheses to explain the fall of Rome:

- The empire was simply too big to survive.
- The Roman population was declining.
- The Roman legions increasingly enlisted ‘barbarians’, whose loyalty could no longer be taken for granted.
- The adoption of Christianity as the official religion of the empire blunted their desire to conquer.
- Infighting and civil war weakened the empire.

The collapse may have been due to a combination of these or other factors. Whatever the cause, the last Roman emperor, Romulus Augustulus, was **deposed** in 476 CE.

Not all of the Roman Empire was lost, though. In 395 CE the empire had split and the eastern part became known as the Byzantine Empire. Its capital was the city of Constantinople (modern-day Istanbul in Turkey). The Byzantine Empire lasted another thousand years until it was conquered by the Turks in 1453 CE.

Many kingdoms emerged to fill the vacuum left by the fall of the Western Roman Empire. At different times, Huns, Goths, Vandals and other groups that had challenged Rome established empires of their own. However, beset by internal divisions or invasions, most of these kingdoms did not last.

deposed removed from a position of authority

SOURCE 1 A map of Europe in 500 CE



Source: Map drawn by Spatial Vision.

3.3.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Who or what was a 'barbarian'?
- 2 Explain the main reasons for the fall of Rome.
- 3 Who was the last Roman emperor and in what year was he deposed?
- 4 What did the remaining piece of the Roman Empire become known as?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 5 The map in **SOURCE 1** shows the kingdoms and empires that rose after the fall of the Roman Empire.
 - a Which of these kingdoms or empires appears to be the largest?
 - b What modern continents does it cover?
- 6 Using **SOURCE 1**, explain the impact of the fall of the Roman Empire on Europe.

3.3.2 The times that followed

Consequences

The Dark Ages were a time of great instability. The security provided by Roman control was gone. These were times of great violence. To educated people it seemed that ignorance and backwardness had triumphed over learning and order. Grand Roman buildings, roads and aqueducts were destroyed or abandoned. Migrations of peoples from various lands led to further conflict. Because few could speak or read Latin, the great Roman works of literature were no longer widely read, and many were lost.

Contributions

We now recognise, however, that important changes were taking place during this period, with new social systems and cultures emerging. Feudalism is an example of one such system. Many Roman customs and legal principles survived because the new rulers came to see the benefits such laws gave them and their people. Charlemagne was one ruler whose achievements were far greater than those of a mere warlord. As king of the **Franks**, he encouraged the arts and learning. Under his rule, large parts of western Europe became Christian and he promoted education, particularly through monasteries. The English king Alfred the Great is another great ruler from this time. Some Early Middle Age societies, such as the Vikings, had political systems that had no place for kings or dictators; some historians see in these systems the beginnings of modern democratic principles.

Contrary to the views of Petrarch, great works of literature containing magnificent artwork were created in these years. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, which documents the early history of England, was written in the time of King Alfred. The beautifully illuminated *Book of Kells*, featuring the four Christian gospels written in Latin, was created during the eighth century; it is on public display in Dublin today.

Franks people of a group of a Germanic nation who ruled in western Europe from the sixth century CE

SOURCE 2 Alfred the Great, as depicted in a twentieth-century stained glass window



SOURCE 3 An image from the *Book of Kells* showing Mary with the baby Jesus



3.3.2 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 What were some of the results of the loss of the security of the Roman Empire?
- 2 Why were significant works of literature from that time lost?
- 3 Name two great rulers from the so-called 'Dark Ages'.
- 4 What was one of the new social systems that developed during this time?
- 5 List two great works of literature from this period.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 6 **SOURCE 2** shows Alfred the Great holding two objects. What are these objects, and what might this depiction tell us about his accomplishments?
- 7 Artworks such as the one in **SOURCE 3** were drawn by monks by hand and took a very long time to create. They devoted their lives to this work. What conclusions can we draw about these monks? What does it tell us about the importance of religion to these people?

3.3 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

ANALYSING CAUSE AND EFFECT

- 1 What is meant by the term 'Dark Ages'?
- 2 Identify three reasons why some consider the period from 500 CE to 1000 CE to be a 'dark age', and give three reasons why some believe this to be an inaccurate description.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 3 Using information gathered from looking closely at **SOURCES 2** and **3**, argue

whether or not you believe that the Early Middle Ages was a time lacking in art and learning.

IDENTIFYING CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

- 4 Identify the contributions of the medieval period and rank them from most significant to least significant.

3.4 Early medieval Christianity

3.4.1 The power of the Pope

Christianity stemmed from the Jewish religion in the first century CE. After becoming the official religion of the Roman Empire it spread throughout Europe. Following the fall of Rome, it became entrenched as the principal religion across Europe. For many reasons, cultures turned away from their traditional belief systems and adopted Christianity.

The Pope is the head of the Catholic Church. After the fall of the Western Roman Empire, the power and authority of the Pope increased; he became a unifying figure. Based in Rome, the Pope made a powerful ally in political disputes. Papal support gave a leader both political prestige and moral authority.

The Pope became far more powerful than any other Christian bishop for several reasons. He was able to claim authority based on St Peter's decision to lead the Christian Church from Rome. St Peter and St Paul, two early Christian leaders, were **martyred** in Rome, and this gave the city particular religious significance. Strategic political alliances with rulers such as Charlemagne also saw papal power and importance rise.

martyred killed or made to suffer because of religious beliefs

SOURCE 1 Charlemagne's coronation by Pope Leo III (800 CE)



3.4.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 What was the role of the Pope?
- 2 Why was the Pope so powerful in the early Christian period?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 3 Examine **SOURCE 1**. What evidence is there in this image that Pope Leo III was a powerful man?
- 4 Approximately how long after the fall of Rome was Leo III the Pope?

3.4.2 Monks and monasteries

An important feature of early Christianity was the role of monks and monasteries. A monk was a man who chose to withdraw from society in order to live according to strict Christian principles. Communities of monks were formed, with rules governing every aspect of their lives in order to ensure their obedience to God. These communities of monks lived in monasteries. Many monasteries were built in isolated places (see **SOURCE 2**), both for their protection and to free them from worldly distractions and influences.

SOURCE 2 A stone cross on Skellig Michael in Ireland. The monastery, on a small island off the west coast of Ireland, was built in the seventh century.



pagan someone who is not a Christian, Jew or Muslim, but who worships many gods

SOURCE 3 A ninth-century monastery in Tatev, Armenia



Some monasteries, however, played important roles in the community. Many had schools attached to them. Some had markets where fairs were held. Justice and law was dispensed by the abbot in the towns that developed around the monasteries. People gave money to the monasteries in the belief that this would please God. Sometimes people were forced to pay taxes to the monastery for the use of their land or to sell produce in the markets. This made some monasteries very rich and powerful.

The spread of Christianity during the Early Middle Ages was in large part due to the work of missionaries. These were committed Christians, usually men, who took the message of Christianity to the **pagan** foreign tribes. They were usually most successful when they were able to convert the king, who would then ensure his followers converted. A notable example of this occurred when Clovis, king of the Franks, converted in 496 CE and began the task of converting the Frankish kingdom to Christianity.

3.4.2 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Explain why someone might become a monk.
- 2 List one role that monasteries played in the community.
- 3 Explain what a missionary did.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 4 After closely examining **SOURCES 2** and **3** explain why monasteries were built in isolated places.

superstition a belief based on custom or fear rather than knowledge or reason

holy relics the physical remains of someone or something very significant to a religious tradition

3.4.3 Education and health

The Church was one of the few sources of education during this period. Most schools were run by the Church; they represented the only educational opportunities for most people (see **SOURCE 4**). Similarly, most hospitals were attached to monasteries. The Church was often the only place the poor could turn to for help or welfare.

Despite its position of authority, there was still much ignorance in the Church and in society's perception of the Church. Medical knowledge was scant and often based on **superstition** rather than science. For example, the monks believed that a person could be saved from disease only through the intervention of God. Often they would pray to the saints or use **holy relics** to treat people rather than apply practical medicine.

SOURCE 4 A thirteenth-century illustration showing a boy being brought by his parents to a monastic school



SOURCE 5 In this medieval illustration a sick man is cured through the power of prayer. The scene is set in a room with a green and gold patterned background and a blue border. A man in a green robe is kneeling on the floor, holding a book and praying. A monk in a black habit is sitting on a bench in the background, reading a book. A small figure of a sick man is visible on the floor near the kneeling man.



DID YOU KNOW?

Pope Leo I personally met the barbarian invader Attila the Hun in 452 CE outside the walls of Rome. Attila, known as the 'Scourge of God', had ravaged Europe, invaded Italy and was set on sacking the city. No-one knows what was said during the meeting, but Attila withdrew his forces and Rome was saved.

3.4.3 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 How could people gain an education in the early medieval period?
- 2 Where would the poor turn if they were sick or needed help?

- 3 Give an example of superstition or ignorance from this era.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 4 Using **SOURCES 4** and **5**, evaluate the significance of the Church in the lives of the poorer people.

3.4 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 1 Look at **SOURCE 3**. Apart from being a place to live, does this monastery look as though it had other purposes? Explain why this might be needed.
- 2 Examine **SOURCES 4** and **5**. What conclusions can you draw about the Church and its importance to people of the time?
- 3 Using software such as Google Earth, locate Skellig Michael in Ireland (see **SOURCE 1**). Evaluate why monks might have chosen to construct a monastery in this location.

- 4 Using the internet and the library and both primary and secondary sources, investigate the importance of Christian relics. Can you find examples of religious relics that still exist today?

DETERMINING HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

- 5 Evaluate the two important contributions of the Church to the lives of people in early medieval times.

3.5 The feudal system

3.5.1 Charlemagne, King of the Franks

Charlemagne, or Charles the Great, was king of the Franks, modern-day France, who ruled from 768 to 814 CE. He was a powerful leader who conquered many lands around him. He was a strong Christian monarch who converted his subjects to Christianity, by force where required, thus expanding the religion widely across Europe. Under his reign, his Empire grew larger than the old Roman Empire and in 800 CE, he was crowned ruler of the Holy Roman Empire by the

orb globe with a cross, symbolising a Christian monarch's rule

SOURCE 1 A statue of Charlemagne that stands in Paris. Charlemagne bears the traditional symbols of a medieval European king: **orb**, sceptre and crown.



Pope. By implementing a strong feudal system, Charlemagne brought peace and productivity to his previously chaotic empire.

In 800 CE Charlemagne, king of the Franks, gave land to churchmen and wealthy families in return for their support in running the empire. This method of ordering society is called feudalism. Although Charlemagne's feudal system was based on practices that had existed for centuries, it is in this period that strong evidence first identifies a clear feudal system in Europe. It took hundreds of years for feudalism to spread. Some European countries never adopted the system, and some Asian societies, such as Japan, developed their own particular feudal system.

3.5.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 When is it believed Charlemagne introduced the principles of the feudal system to his empire?
- 2 What were the features of his rule that led to him being one of the most significant figures in medieval Europe?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 3 Explain what **SOURCE 1** tells us about the power of Charlemagne.

3.5.2 The feudal kingdom

There were few cities or towns in early medieval Europe. Most communities were based around small villages. Most people who lived in the villages were peasants — poor farmers who worked the surrounding land. Most of the wealth therefore came from the produce generated by the peasants, who were by far the biggest social class and made up about 90 per cent of the population.

Under **feudalism**, the monarch was the owner of all land in a kingdom. The next most powerful class consisted of feudal **lords**, who were the big landowning nobles. In return for the right to land and control over peasants who worked it, these nobles (or tenants-in-chief) were required to give the king their loyalty, fight for him in wars and provide him with a proportion of taxes collected from the peasants. Below the nobles were the knights (or sub-tenants). In return for land, they gave loyalty to their lord, fought for him and provided him with taxes from their peasants.

The monarch also gave land to the **clergy**. In western European countries such as England, the clergy swore loyalty to the Pope in Rome over their king. However, they also supported the feudal system by accepting the monarch and the lord as God's earthly representatives. Well-educated clerical advisers were often assigned to the king's service and helped keep social order.

Maintaining the social order

Feudalism was an effective way for the kings to control their nobles and lords. If they broke their oath with him, he could take the lands back and remove their source of power.

SOURCE 2 An oath taken in 1127 by knights and clergy to serve William, Count of Flanders, at Bruges, Belgium. The bond between them was sealed when William touched each man with a **sceptre** at the end of the ceremony.

I promise by my faith that from this time forward I will be faithful to Count William and will maintain towards him my **homage** entirely against every man, in good faith and without deception.

feudalism social order in medieval Europe

lord chief position in the feudal system below the monarch

clergy officials of the Church

sceptre rod symbolising royal authority of the monarch

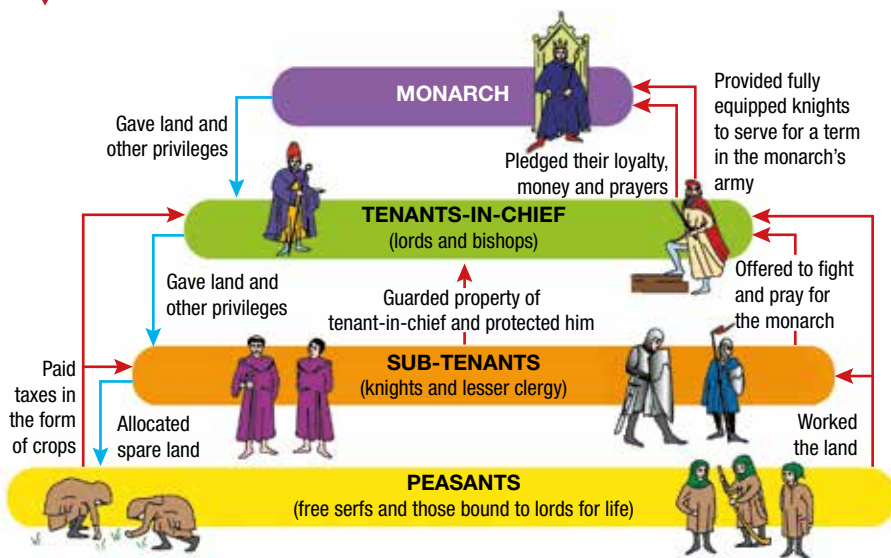
homage pledging duties and loyalty to someone of superior rank in the feudal system

In return everyone had the same power of control over those who were below them, all the way to the peasants at the bottom of the social order.

Towards the end of the Middle Ages, towns and cities based on trade began to grow. The rich merchants who ran them could afford to defy or ignore the king and his lords. They could even afford to hire their own knights to protect their interests and the power of feudalism began to decline.

The Domesday Book, ordered by William the Conqueror around 1085 to determine who owned what land and how much was owed to him in tax, allowed him to maintain control over what was his. It is an amazing achievement and gives us a clear picture of the medieval manors of the time.

SOURCE 3 How society in Europe was organised under the feudal system



geld A form of land tax

SOURCE 4 This extract from *The Domesday Book* gives information about a reasonably large village called Hitchin in County Hertfordshire.

Source Taxable units: Taxable value 5 **geld** units.
 Value: Value to lord in 1066 £4.
 Value to lord in 1086 £6.
 Value to lord c. 1070 £1.
 Households: 45 villagers. 17 smallholders. 12 slaves.
 29 cottagers.
 Ploughland: 38 ploughlands (land for). 7 lord's plough teams. 1 lord's plough teams possible.
 22 men's plough teams.
 Other resources: 2.5 lord's lands. Meadow 4.25 ploughs.
 Woodland 600 pigs. 4 mills, value 2.66.
 1 church.
 Lords in 1066: Earl Harold; Hitchin, church of.
 Lords in 1086: Hitchin, church of; King William.
 Tenant-in-chief in 1086: King William.

3.5.2 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Under feudalism, who was the ruler and owner of the land?
- 2 Under feudalism, who were the tenants-in-chief?
- 3 Apart from the king, to whom did the clergy swear loyalty?
- 4 How did the lords maintain control over the people below them?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 5 The oath-taking ceremony described in **SOURCE 2** seems very formal. Why would people have sworn an oath to their lord? Do similar oath-taking ceremonies occur in modern times? List some examples.
- 6 Using the diagram in **SOURCE 3**, explain in a paragraph how the monarch received support from his subjects and what these subjects were given in return.
- 7 What power did *The Domesday Book* give William the Conqueror?

3.5 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 1 Using the information in **SOURCES 1** and **4**, explain what symbols of power are used to show the strength of the monarch, or tenant-in-chief and what they represent.
- 2 Read the extract from *The Domesday Book* (**SOURCE 4**) closely.
 - a Who was the tenant-in-chief of this village?
 - b How many families of villagers are indicated (each number represents a family, rather than a single person)?
 - c How much land does Hitchin have?
 - d What resources does this village have?
 - e What conclusions can you draw about whether or not this was a thriving village?

IDENTIFYING CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

- 3 Explore what happened in 1066 in England using the internet or other resources. Looking at **SOURCE 3**, do you think that this event had any impact on the peasants at the bottom of the feudal system?
- 4 Describe three essential elements of a feudal society. These may be physical constructions, social classifications or ways of thinking. Write these as a short paragraph.
- 5 Conduct further research into the medieval figure of Charles the Great. Why was he such a significant figure?

3.6 Life on the manor for men, women and children

3.6.1 The people on the manor

Quality of life in the Middle Ages depended largely on what position a person had in the feudal system. For the nobility, who had the luxury of wealth and servants, life was certainly more comfortable than for the peasants. Knights and barons enjoyed privileges befitting their rank; they could own several manors and lived off the taxes extracted from their peasants. The clergy led simple lives, forsaking possessions in the service of God. As the educated elite, they enjoyed the pursuit of scholarly learning in their monasteries. Although the clergy often engaged in the same kind of farm work as the peasants, many monasteries operated like manors, owning villages.

Men

For the vast majority of peasant men, life was very hard. They endured a daily grind of farm work: clearing fields, harvesting, repairing buildings, sawing and chopping timber, and paying the tithe to the lord of the manor. Most men were uneducated and remained tied to the drudgery

SOURCE 1 Life on a manor in the Middle Ages

A Lords often owned and operated grain mills. They kept a portion of all grain ground as tax. The lord lived in a castle or a manor house. The woods, and any game they contained, were the lord's property.

B The house of the steward — the lord's business manager — was surrounded by stables, barns, a bakehouse and a kitchen.

C Animals grazed on an open stretch of land called a common.

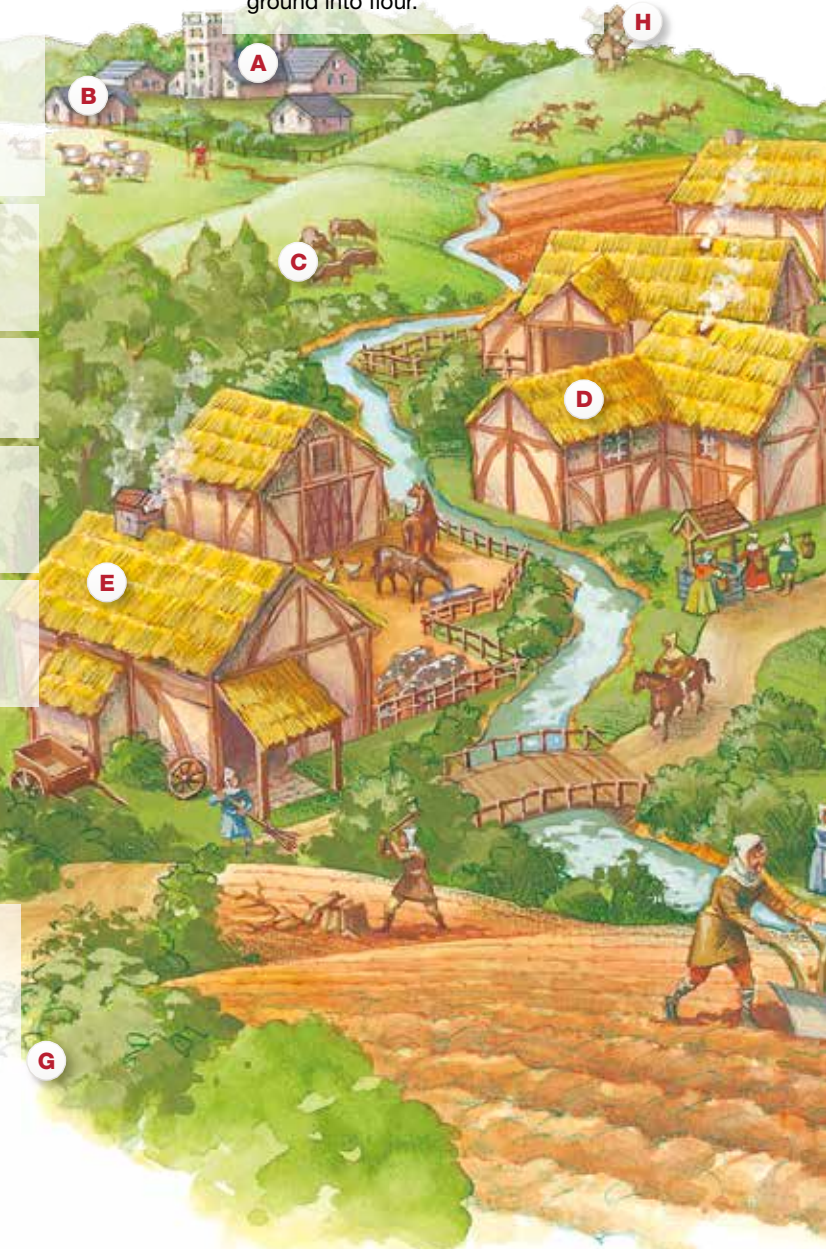
D The house of the bailiff, who collected taxes and ensured the steward's directions were carried out

E The house of the reeve, who supervised farm work carried out by serfs to ensure it was done properly

F Women were the property of their menfolk, and were married by about 14. They cooked, spun and weaved, and tended to the animals and the children.

G The three-field rotation system was introduced by the Anglo-Saxons. Crops were grown in two fields, with the third left to lie fallow (not used) so the soil could recover its nutrients. Fields being used were divided into strips, with different serfs working each strip. Crops were rotated to prevent the same nutrients in the soil always being used.

H The miller operated the mill, where grain such as wheat was ground into flour.



of peasant labour. Still, some boys managed to receive formal education in monasteries. This might provide them with the opportunity to become a parish priest or to work in the manor in a bookkeeping role such as a bailiff or a steward.

Women

Medieval women, regardless of class, had few rights. Women from the nobility married as early as the age of twelve! Their marriage was arranged by the family. The aim was usually to gain political power or wealth for the girl's family. Her husband — and society in general — expected her to produce a male heir to continue the noble line of her husband. In an era of poor medical care, childbirth for women of any class was dangerous. It has been estimated that during the Middle Ages, one in five women died during childbirth. Although she looked after her husband's household and had some command over the servants, the noble woman could not own property, except as a widow.

Peasant women had even fewer rights. Peasant families generally were reluctant to allow their girls to marry as young as the noble girls. This was because children were an important source of labour. Peasant women did much the same farm labour as the men. On top of that, they had household duties such as preparing food and weaving clothes, and looking after the children and small livestock.

Children

Childhood as a time of play or schooling was almost non-existent. Children were regarded as sources of labour on the farm. At first it was helping the women with household chores, but fairly soon they could be expected to be sent out to the fields. Peasant children were educated in how to harvest a field, fix a thatched roof or milk a cow.

I Tithe barn, where peasants deposited one-tenth of all they produced for use by the church

J The church (and its grounds) was a central feature. People went to church regularly. It was also the place where they paid their tithes and often held their simple markets. The tithe was a tax given to the Church equal to one-tenth of what someone received, grew or raised.

K Serfs lived in simple wattle and daub huts with thatched roofs. A hole in the roof allowed smoke to escape from cooking fires. Windows had rough wooden shutters.

L As well as farming, some serfs also worked as blacksmiths and carpenters. They generally could not read or write.

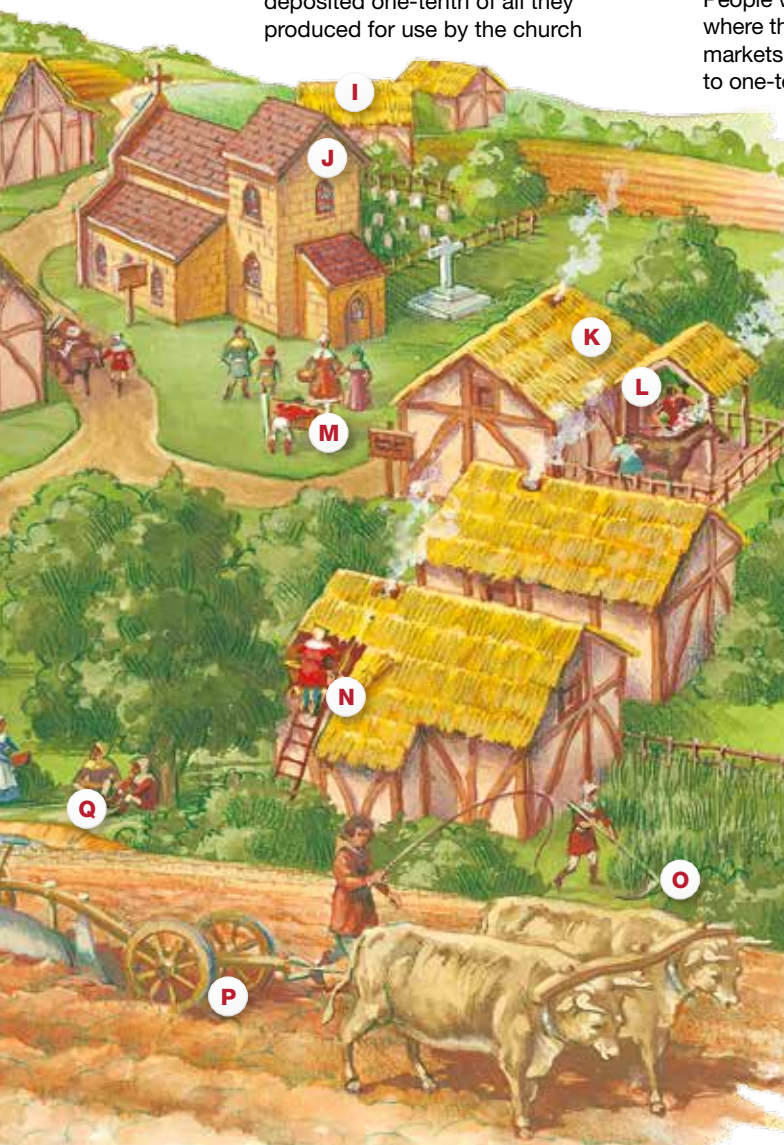
M A serf who had been punished by the reeve was placed in the pillory. This punishment instrument consisted of a wooden framework built on posts, with holes through which the victim's head and hands were placed and then locked.

N Thatchers wove thick bunches of straw, reeds and sticks together to form roofs of village houses.

O Scythes, sickles and rakes were used to harvest crops.

P A serf's most important tool was the heavywheeled plough.

Q Lunch for a serf might be coarse bread and vegetable soup, washed down with ale.



It appears that in medieval Europe, the period of growth now called adolescence was ignored. Children were treated as adults from the age of ten, because by then they could participate in the farm work. Boys generally married a little older than girls — when they were about 14. ‘Teenagers’ were isolated; as they did not go to school, they had few opportunities to mix with other people their own age.

3.6.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 What type of work did peasant men generally do?
- 2 How might peasant men manage to get an education?
- 3 Why were noble women’s marriages arranged for them by their family?
- 4 What property rights did a noble woman have compared with her husband?
- 5 Why did peasant women generally not marry as young as noble women?

- 6 How were children regarded on a farm?
- 7 Why might it be highly valued to have a large family?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 8 Make a list of the work you can see people doing in **SOURCE 1**.
- 9 Of the jobs listed, which ones would women and children have been able to do?

3.6 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

ANALYSING CAUSE AND EFFECT

- 1 To which social class did most people in medieval Europe belong?
- 2 Compare the quality of life of those high up in the feudal system with those at the bottom. Be specific about wealth and work.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 3 Is **SOURCE 1** a primary or secondary source? Explain your answer. What is its value?

- 4 Who held the most wealth and power in the manor in **SOURCE 1**? Explain what the basis of their wealth was?
- 5 Examine **SOURCE 1**.
 - a Explain the roles of the reeve, steward and bailiff.
 - b Create a diagram that shows them in order of importance.
 - c Do you think women would have been allowed to do these jobs in medieval times? Explain your answer.
- 6 Using the information gained from **SOURCE 1**, as well as any other knowledge you have, write a paragraph about life on the manor, describing work, living conditions and farming practices.

3.7 The knight

3.7.1 The warrior on horseback

One of the most iconic images of the Middle Ages is that of the mounted warrior called the knight.

Although there are some earlier descriptions of warriors on horseback, the knight as we know him, did not appear until the Middle Ages. Two important developments were needed to enable a soldier to move around on horseback during a battle: the **stirrup** and a heavier breed of horse capable of carrying a man in full armour. These developments emerged in the Early Middle Ages. The Battle of Hastings, fought in 1066 between Norman knights and English infantry, is one of the earliest recorded military engagements involving knights on horseback.

The knights at Hastings fought for their lord, William, **Duke of Normandy**. This feudal service to the lord or the king was an important aspect of knighthood. Generally, knights were wealthy themselves, as it was expensive to breed warhorses and own good armour. They were also generally quite powerful landowners. Some knights, however, were monks who served the Church. Their role was usually to

SOURCE 1 A scene from the Bayeux Tapestry, dating from the late eleventh century. Norman knights on horseback are seen here attacking their English enemies at the Battle of Hastings in 1066.



stirrups foot supports suspended from a saddle by straps

duke in England, a lord whose status placed him just below that of a prince; elsewhere in Europe, a ruler of a small state called a duchy or dukedom

Normandy now a French province, in the Middle Ages it was a dukedom in northern France

accompany pilgrims and protect them while they were on the Crusades. The Church could afford to pay for their horses and armour.

3.7.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 The knight could not have existed without two important developments. What were they?
- 2 Which individuals or institutions did the knight serve?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 3 Describe in a paragraph what is happening in **SOURCE 1**. How would this source help the historian find out about the weapons and armour of the medieval knight of the eleventh century?

3.7.2 In battle

Weapons and armour

As **SOURCE 1** shows, a heavily armed warrior on horseback was meant to terrorise and destroy foot soldiers. The decapitated body at the bottom of the panel demonstrates the effectiveness of a charging knight.

The knight used an arsenal of heavy iron weapons. Swords, **maces** and battle axes were common. However, the **lance** appears to have been the favoured weapon: it helped to put distance between the knight and the infantry soldier he was fighting. As a last resort, the knight's wooden shield could be used as a weapon — swiping at someone with its rim could cause severe wounds.

The armour was both heavy and awkward. The coats of mail worn by the fighters in **SOURCE 2**, for example, could weigh over fifteen kilograms. It was no easy task wearing such a cumbersome outfit on horseback and fighting furiously in battle.

mace iron-headed club

lance a long wooden shaft with steel point used as a weapon by mounted knights

SOURCE 2 The development of the knight's armour

Early 1100s ▶

- Cone-shaped helmet with protective nose strip
- Long chain mail suit with sleeves (called a hauberk). It is made of thousands of metal rings.
- Large kite-shaped shield
- Padded woollen tunic (called a gambeson)



Late 1100s ▶

- Helmet is rounder with wider nose band.
- Loose-fitting surcoat worn over chain mail armour to protect it from sun's heat.
- Coat of arms identifies the knight.
- Hauberk now covers neck and is attached to helmet with leather strips.
- Hauberk now includes chain mail mittens. It is getting shorter.
- Shield is not as big and is more triangular.
- Chain mail leggings now cover feet.



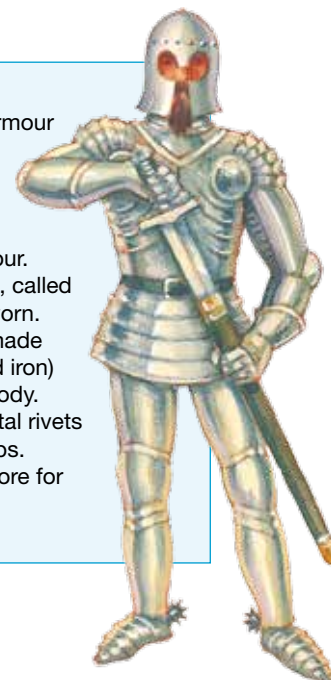
1300s

- Bascinet helmets worn by late 1300s. Visor can be lifted up.
- Pieces of hammered iron plate are added for protection.
- The combined weight of chain mail and plate armour is now so great that a knight cannot get up on his own if he falls over.
- Shield is smaller and curved for added protection.
- Iron gloves (called gauntlets) protect the hands.
- Hauberk is even shorter.
- Padded stockings with iron braces are worn.



1400s ▶

- Whole suit of armour weighs about 25 kilograms, but is more flexible than chain mail armour.
- Lighter helmets, called barbutes, are worn.
- Plate armour (made from hammered iron) covers whole body. Joined with metal rivets and leather strips.
- No need any more for shield
- Iron shoes



joust combat between two mounted knights using blunted lances

Jousting tournaments

In films and other popular media, knights are often seen charging at each other in sporting events called **jousts**. This type of sporting event actually did happen. It was no doubt a useful method of training. Unlike Roman gladiators, knights in jousts did not fight to the death. The lances were padded, but swords and other weapons were not, so it was still a violent sport with many accidental fatalities.

The fall of the knight

By the end of the Middle Ages, the knight's effectiveness as a warrior had diminished. By then, professional armies were forming. These were often made up of peasants who were properly trained to bring down a knight off his horse. Also, the development of firearms by the late Middle Ages proved too much for the knight's armour. And so the days of the knight were over.

SOURCE 3 John Chalon of England and Lois De Beul of France jousting 1448



SOURCE 4 The body armour of today: American riot squad police. Modern riot squad police also often carry a perspex shield as protection from missiles such as rocks or home-made fire-bombs.



3.7.2 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 What was the purpose of the mounted warrior?
- 2 List four different weapons used by knights. Which one did they favour the most and why?
- 3 What was jousting?
- 4 Why did the knight's usefulness in battle decline at the end of the Middle Ages?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 5 Using **SOURCE 2**, write a paragraph describing how the knight's weapons and armour changed between the early 1100s

and the 1400s. List at least four things that changed (this might include changes in function, appearance or shape).

- 6 Why do you think the shield disappeared as armour by the 1400s?
- 7 Why do you think weapons and armour changed over time? Think of things like protection and comfort.
- 8 Examine **SOURCE 4**. In what ways are the riot squad police of today like the medieval knights? Modern armies, for the most part, do not use armour like the riot squad police. Can you guess why?

3.7 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 1 Compare and contrast **SOURCES 1** and **3**. Draw up a table with two columns, using it to examine similarities and differences under headings such as armour, weapons, purpose of clash, and consequences of the event.
- 2 You are a medieval sports journalist. Write a three paragraph report suitable for reading

by your medieval audience. You should use the internet and your library to research the organisation and rules of jousting.

DETERMINING HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

- 3 Why do you think that the knight is often seen as a symbol of the Middle Ages? What is it that has made them an iconic image of this time?

3.8 Medieval warfare

3.8.1 Medieval weapons and battles

Many destructive wars were fought during the Middle Ages. However, nothing like today's firepower existed in medieval times. The destruction wreaked by two atomic bombs dropped on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki show what modern technology is capable of. In medieval Europe, wars were fought literally through clash of arms — with swords and axes and maces. Arrows and rocks, rather than bullets, were the main missiles. Still, even in the Middle Ages, there were instances of large-scale massacres. The knights shown in **SOURCE 1** slaughtered thousands of Turks when they took the city of Antioch. Later in this chapter, you will read about the Tartars using **trebuchets** like the one shown in **SOURCE 2** to fling disease-ravaged bodies over the walls of the city of Caffa. This allowed them to kill many people with sickness.

The invention of gunpowder, originally from China, changed the way battles were fought. In Europe, guns and cannons were developed from the early fourteenth century. Medieval guns were at first ineffectual, being very slow to load, inaccurate and liable to blow up. Archers with longbows and crossbows were more effective. But by the end of the fifteenth century, gun technology had improved.

Medieval battles would have been terrifying experiences. Anyone observing a battle from a short distance would have heard yelling, screaming and the clash of steel on shields. This would have been noisy in the thick of battle, but from a distance it would not have been very loud. The ear-splitting noise of twentieth and twenty-first century warfare largely comes from modern **artillery**.

trebuchet heavy medieval siege machine that uses a sling to hurl large missiles

artillery large mounted firearms such as the cannon

SOURCE 1 A medieval illumination showing the siege of Antioch in 1098. The knights in this illumination resemble the soldiers from two centuries after the event depicted. In some ways, this would be like depicting a soldier from colonial Australia as a modern Australian infantry soldier. Medieval artists were not historians, and they often painted historical scenes as if the event was happening in their own time.

SOURCE 2 The trebuchet was a kind of giant slingshot designed for hurling rocks at enemy armies and fortresses. Sometimes other missiles were used, including dead animals and slain enemies, with the twin aims of demoralising the enemy and spreading disease among the besieged population.



pike long spear-like weapon carried by foot soldiers

Fighting hand-to hand, medieval armies tended to battle in tightly grouped formations. One side would push against the other. Infantry stabbed and slashed each other with swords, axes, **pikes**, maces and even farming tools. It was the job of mounted knights to charge such formations and try to break them up, as shown in **SOURCE 1** of the previous subtopic (3.7 The knight).

The bloodshed was horrific. Limbs and heads were chopped off, and brains and guts were strewn across the battlefield. The tight formations meant that soldiers were likely to stumble over the dead and the dying. By the end of the battle, which did not usually last more than an hour, the battlefield was covered with gore and blood. The ground would be littered with the bodies of both men and horses.

For those who died, there were no war cemeteries and no pensions for their wives and children. Nor were there any entitlements for disabled veterans. A beggar's bowl was often the only means of survival for the medieval common soldier who was crippled fighting for his lord or king.

SOURCE 3 From a chronicle describing the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314, when the Scottish rebel leader Robert the Bruce defeated the English, who sought to control Scotland. Robert became King Robert I of Scotland.

The two hosts [English and Scottish armies] came together, and the great steeds of the [English] knights dashed into the Scottish pikes as into a thick wood; there arose a great and horrible crash from rending [splitting] lances and dying horses, and they stood locked together . . .

SOURCE 4 From *The History of the Art of War in the Middle Ages* by C. Oman, published in 1924. The battle described here is between Swiss and German infantry.

The two bristling lines of pikes crossed, and the leading files were thrust upon each other's weapons by the irresistible pressure from behind. Often the whole front rank of each **phalanx** went down in the first onset, but their comrades stepped forward over their bodies to continue the fight.

phalanx body of foot soldiers in close battle order

3.8.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Why were guns not as popular as longbows and crossbows during the Middle Ages?
- 2 Where did gunpowder originate?
- 3 List three weapons used by fighters in a medieval battle.
- 4 Name one way a medieval battle differed from a modern-day battle.
- 5 What often happened to soldiers who were permanently injured during battle?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 6 Closely examine **SOURCE 1**. What were the weapons used in this battle?
- 7 What was the name given to the soldiers on horseback in **SOURCE 1**?
- 8 Closely examine the trebuchet in **SOURCE 2**. List two ways that it could be used against the enemy.

3.8 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 1 Study **SOURCES 2, 3** and **4**. What can you tell from each of these source about:
 - a the effectiveness of pikes in battles
 - b the risks to horses in battle
 - c the tight formations in which medieval battles were fought
 - d the reasons for high casualties in the front ranks?

IDENTIFYING CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

- 2 Design a poster, web page or PowerPoint presentation that explains the most important weapons used in the Middle Ages.
- 3 Using what you have learned about knights in the previous subtopic (3.7 The knight) and medieval warfare in this subtopic, write a short paragraph exploring why mounted soldiers (knights) became less and less useful in battles as warfare technologies changed. In preparing your answer, consider the types of weapons and how they changed, as well as the formations that were used.

3.9 Castles

3.9.1 Building a castle

During medieval times, castles were built to protect the monarch or lord's land. They had many features, such as high walls, that made it very difficult for enemies to invade. However, if conquered, castles could then be used by invaders to help control the land they had taken. Castle walls were so effective in the Middle Ages that they were even built around some towns and cities.

The first castles appeared in the eleventh century. They were usually made from timber and sat on a high mound called a **motte**, which was surrounded by a ditch. If the castle was near a river, the ditch could be filled with water to create a **moat**. The innermost tower was called the **keep**. **Palisades** and walls called baileys protected the keep. By the end of the eleventh century, timber was replaced with more durable material such as stone or brick.

The easiest place to build a castle was on flat ground. However, castles were often built on hills or cliffs. High positions enabled castle occupants to look out over and control the surrounding countryside. Such positions were also easier to defend because attackers had to advance uphill. There were also great advantages in building castles on islands in rivers or lakes. Castles were built along the Rhine River in Germany to force merchants transporting goods along the river to pay taxes. Such positions also ensured a supply of water to fill a castle's moat and for drinking during long sieges.

motte A mound upon which a castle was built

moat water-filled defensive ditch surrounding a castle

keep innermost tower of a castle

palisade tall fence made of pointed timber stakes driven into the ground

SOURCE 1 The ruins of Corfe Castle, in Dorset, England. The square tower is a Norman keep. The destruction was the result of cannon fire during the English Civil War in the mid-seventeenth century.



3.9.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Complete the following sentences by choosing the correct words from the alternatives in brackets:
 - a The first castles appeared in the (eleventh/tenth) century.
 - b The innermost tower was called a (motte/keep).
 - c The bailey was a (wall/moat).
- 2 What were early castles built of?
- 3 Why were castles often built on a steep hill?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 4 Draw a diagram of a Corfe Castle in **SOURCE 1**, recreating it from its ruins, as the motte and bailey castle it was. Label the keep, the palisade, the motte and the bailey.

3.9.2 Attacking a castle

Attacking a castle was no easy task. As their design became more sophisticated, more features were added. For example, **concentric curtain walls** meant that attackers who broke through one wall were faced with another and were trapped in the space between them. Marienburg Castle in modern-day Poland had five curtain walls. Drawbridges could be lifted above the moat, blocking access to the main gate. All manner of missiles could be launched at attackers, including arrows and rocks. Even boiling oil could be tipped through 'murderholes' in the roof of the gatehouse surrounding the main entrance. In turn, attackers responded by using siege engines, including battering rams and hide-covered siege-towers on wheels. It was not unusual for a siege to last many months. Defenders kept an ample supply of food in the castle keep and sunk wells in the inner courtyard to ensure a protected water supply.

concentric having a common centre.

curtain wall outer wall surrounding an inner wall in a castle

SOURCE 2 A castle under siege

A The gatehouse was heavily defended. If attackers got in, defenders could shower them with rocks, red-hot sand or boiling water through a hole in the ceiling (called a murderhole).

B A battering ram made of a huge, often reinforced timber beam would be driven against a castle gate or lower wall to try to break through.

C Battlements lined the top of castle walls.

D A castle was often surrounded by a ditch, sometimes filled with sharpened stakes (palisade) or water.

E Sometimes castle walls sloped outwards at the base. This added strength to the walls and reduced the effectiveness of battering rams.

F Missiles could be dropped on attackers through holes in the floor of the battlements known as machicolations.

G The trebuchet, introduced to Europe from the Arab world, was a type of counterweighted catapult. It was used to hurl huge rocks weighing up to 90 kg against castle walls, and to toss rotting animal bodies over the walls.

H The ballista was a giant crossbow that fired flaming bolts over castle walls.

I A mangonel was a type of catapult used to hurl smaller objects (e.g. heads, smaller rocks or piles of dung) over castle walls.

3.9.2 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Why did some castles have a series of concentric curtain walls surrounding the keep?
- 2 What was a 'murderhole' used for?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 3 Study **SOURCE 2**. Which features of the castle and its defenders would be most

effective in holding back the attack? Which methods of attack appear to be most effective? Give reasons for your answers.

- 4 How likely do you think it is that the attackers in **SOURCE 2** will succeed in breaking into the castle? Why?

3.9.3 A lord's home is his castle

The castle may have been a fortress, but it was also a home. A castle was usually owned by a lord or the Church. It had all the requirements of a fortress, such as troop quarters, stables and an armoury. However, if owned by a lord, it also had facilities for the comfort of his family.

By the end of the Middle Ages, castles were no longer as effective or desirable. The feudal system, which until then had encouraged the lord to show his strength by having a castle, was fading. Also, developments in the cannon meant that castle walls could no longer protect against invading armies.

3.9.3 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Give two reasons why castles were built.
- 2 How was the castle a symbol of the feudal system?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 3 How does **SOURCE 1** support the idea that castles eventually went out of fashion as military fortresses?

3.9 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

IDENTIFYING CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

- 1 Describe the common methods used to attack and defend castles.
- 2 Describe the best places to build a castle and explain why.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 3 List the features seen in **SOURCE 1** that supports the accuracy of the castle illustrated by a modern artist in **SOURCE 2**.

- 4 Find out what it means to have a 'licence to crenellate'? What did it entitle the holder of the licence to do?
- 5 Use the internet to research information about the construction of a British eleventh century castle and one from the fifteenth century, then compare and contrast the two. What differences were introduced and what remained the same?

3.10 The power of the medieval Church

3.10.1 The authority of the Church

The Roman Catholic Church was the one common institution found throughout western Europe. Its rituals were similar across the continent. It even used a common language, Latin, although no-one other than the clergy spoke this old Roman language any longer. Everyone was expected to live according to Church law and attend **Mass**. The **sermons** of the priest, often delivered in the **vernacular** language rather than Latin, reminded parishioners of their Christian responsibilities.

The head of the Roman Catholic Church was the Pope. As God's representative on Earth, he was very powerful. His **cardinals**, **archbishops** and **bishops** supported the Pope's **edicts**, advised lords and kings, and had key government positions. Below this upper class of clergy were the parish priests, nuns and monks, and friars. These lesser clergy took the Church's message to the people in the villages. They also collected the taxes on which the Church's wealth depended. At the village level, this tax was called a tithe. The tithe required that 10 per cent of a person's income, or of what they produced, such as grain, eggs and livestock, should be paid to the Church.

Anyone who was believed to be acting against the interests of the Church could be excommunicated. This meant they could no longer attend Mass and receive the Christian **sacraments**. Worse, they were told they would go straight to hell. The Church made sure that the fear of hell, with its fires and devils, was instilled in everyone.

Mass Roman Catholic church service

sermon moral or religious lecture delivered by a priest

vernacular everyday language spoken by a particular group or class

cardinal leading clergyman who is a member of the Pope's Council, or Sacred College, and who has the power to elect the Pope from among his own group

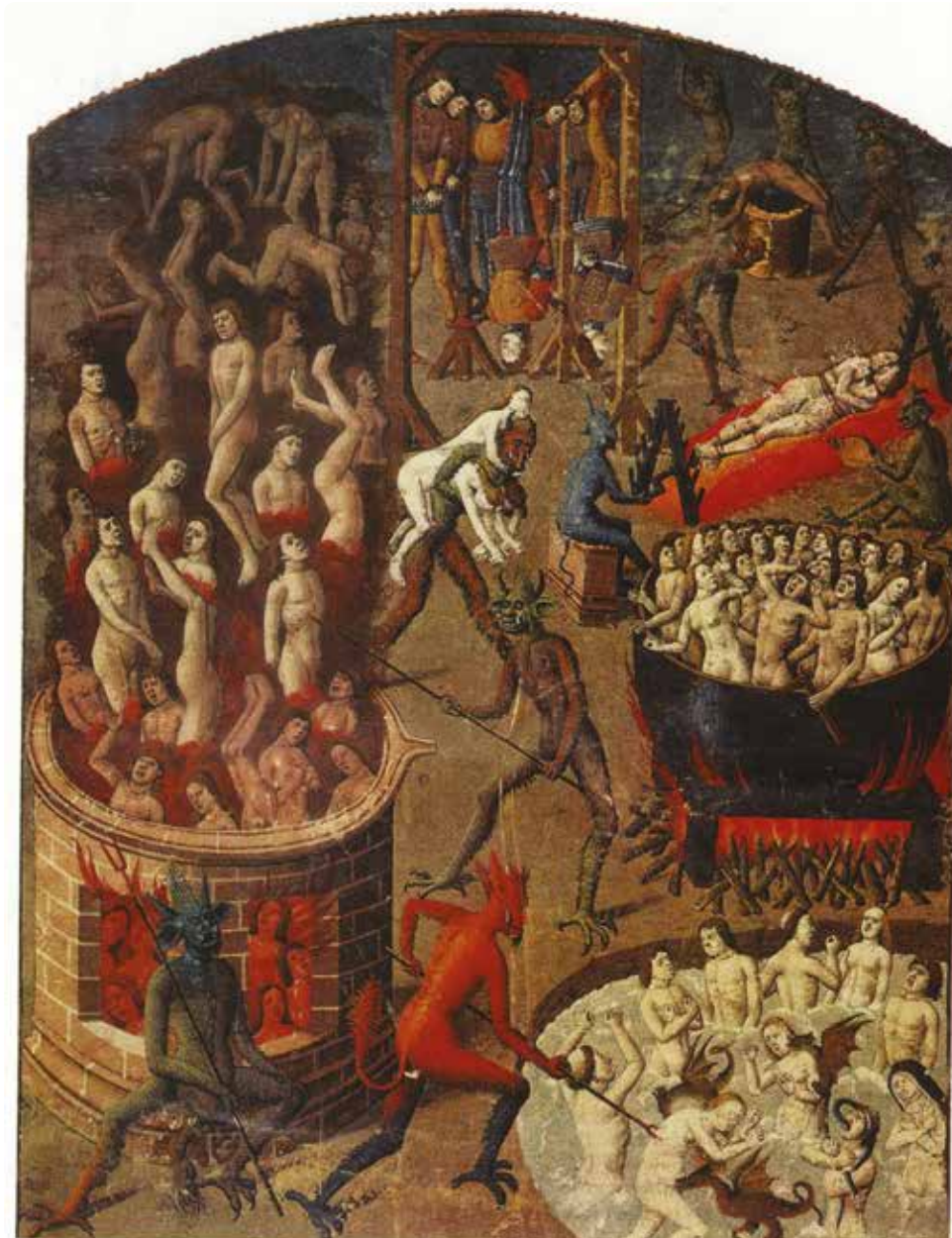
archbishop head bishop

bishop clergyman who governs a diocese, a large church district

edict order issued by a monarch or other person in authority

sacrament sacred Christian ceremony; in the Catholic Church, for example, baptism and marriage

SOURCE 1 A medieval painting depicting what happens to people when they go to hell



3.10.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Which religious institution dominated western Europe during the Middle Ages?
- 2 What language was used in the medieval Mass?
- 3 Who is the Head of the Roman Catholic Church and what power did he have?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 4 Write a detailed description outlining what is happening in **SOURCE 1**. What effect was a painting like this intended to have on the villagers?

3.10.2 The parish church and the cathedral

Almost every village had a parish church. Often it was both the largest building and the only one built of stone or brick. The parish church was built using peasant labour. Although unpaid for their efforts, the parishioners would have felt a sense of achievement and communal ownership.

The church walls, and sometimes the stained glass windows, depicted scenes from the Bible, especially the life of Jesus. This helped teach Bible stories to the mostly illiterate congregation. In an age before clocks, the bells in the church tower helped people keep track of the time of day.

The church was not only a place of worship. It was also a community centre, a fairground and a school for those studying for the priesthood.

The bishop's church — the cathedral

Many European cities today have at least one **cathedral**. Some of the greatest cathedrals were built in the Middle Ages.

The word 'cathedral' comes from the Greek word *kathedra*, meaning seat. This refers to the bishop's seat or throne in the back of the church. It is from here that the bishop ran his diocese (which, in turn, was divided into parishes).

The bishop's church was very important. This was reflected in its size and magnificence. The cathedral towered over the other buildings in the town. Many cathedrals took more than a hundred years to build and were completed long after their architects had died.

cathedral main church of a diocese; contains the bishop's throne

SOURCE 2 Canterbury Cathedral, in Kent, England. This is a typical example of Gothic architecture, which can be identified by the pointed arches and highly decorative style.



3.10.2 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 a** Who did most of the work in building the parish church?
b How did this make people feel part of the community?
- 2** How did the Church teach the illiterate the Bible stories?
- 3** What is the origin of the word 'cathedral' and what does it mean?

- 4** Who is responsible for the cathedral and its diocese?
- 5** Why were cathedrals so enormous?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 6** Canterbury Cathedral in **SOURCE 2** dominates the city's skyline even today. How do you think the cathedral would have impressed the ordinary people of Canterbury in the fifteenth century?

3.10 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

ANALYSING CAUSE AND EFFECT

- 1 Identify five ways the Roman Catholic church demonstrated its power over the people of medieval Europe.
- 2 What were some of the methods that the parish churches used to create a sense of community?
- 3 Using the internet and other information sources, explore the significance of medieval

church music, especially Gregorian chants. Explain what your findings tell us about the influence of the medieval church.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 4 Compare and contrast **SOURCES 1** and **2**. Which one do you think was a more effective way of making an impression on the medieval population? Explain your answer in detail.

3.11 Monasteries and convents

3.11.1 Closed communities

Parish priests, monks, nuns and friars played important roles in spreading the faith. They took the Christian message to the remotest villages. This was important, because until then Christianity was practised mostly in the towns, even though most people lived in the country.

Monks lived in small closed communities called monasteries. Only males could join. A monastery included a church, a chapter house (the monks' meeting place), dormitories or cells (where the monks slept), a hospice (where the sick and aged were cared for), a refectory (eating hall), a library, and the **abbot's** quarters. The abbot had complete authority, and strict rules had to be observed. These rules covered daily activities such as religious services, social work, manual labour and copying manuscripts.

Nuns lived in similarly closed communities called **convents**. Girls and women could join a convent, where they too had to observe strict rules. The chief nun was called the **abbess**. Some monasteries and convents were called **abbeys**.

Monasteries and convents spread throughout Europe in the Middle Ages in part because they were efficient instruments for upholding feudal order. A lord granted land to a monastic order because monks and nuns helped him maintain social control over a population that was widely dispersed across the countryside. Some monasteries owned their own villages, whose serfs worked their fields.

abbot chief monk in a monastery

nun member of a closed community of women living under religious vows and rules

convent community of nuns

abbess chief nun in a convent

abbey monastery or convent run by an abbot or abbess

SOURCE 1 *The Death of St Francis*, a painting by the fifteenth-century Italian artist Giotto. St Francis was the founder of the Franciscan order of friars. This painting shows some of them mourning his death.



3.11.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 What are the communities called where monks live?
- 2 What are the communities called where nuns live?
- 3 How did monks and nuns help to support the feudal system?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 4 The friars in **SOURCE 1** are dressed in coarse woollen garments called habits. Many still dress this way today. Why do you think they would have chosen such simple clothing?

3.11.2 The monastic orders

The origins, rules and practices of monastic orders varies widely. The Benedictines were one of the earliest monastic orders. They established many of the rules and customs followed by nuns, monks and friars. **SOURCES 2** and **3** are both Benedictines monasteries, with Cluny Abbey being the largest monastery in Europe during the Middle Ages. At its height in the twelfth century it had about 300 monks, whereas most monasteries had about 30.

There were, and still are, numerous monastic orders with varied purposes and practices. Monasteries of the Cistercians order relied solely on the labour of their own monks. This limited labour force drove the Cistercians to move into new agricultural areas, such as raising sheep on a large scale. Such efforts gained them considerable wealth. The monks themselves, however, in accordance with their order's rule, remained poor.

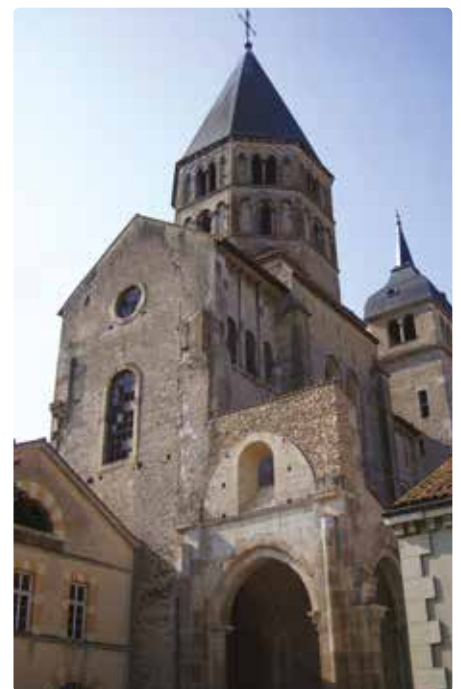
Some orders did not live in small communities. The Franciscans and Dominicans, for example, sent their members out into the larger community as friars. They moved among the people as missionaries. The Franciscans tried to live as Jesus had lived — as poor preachers serving the needy.

SOURCE 2 The pointed, fanned arches of the Great **Cloister** at Canterbury Cathedral in Kent, England. Canterbury Cathedral had an attached monastery run by Benedictine monks.

cloister a covered walkway surrounding a quadrangle



SOURCE 3 Cluny Abbey in Burgundy, France. Its church was the largest in the world until the early seventeenth century, when St Peter's Basilica in Rome was rebuilt.



The Church was almost the sole source of literacy during the Middle Ages. Before the printing press was invented, every book had to be handwritten. Among the tasks performed by monks was the writing and copying (and often decorating) of books by hand. Some of the first universities in Europe began as monasteries. The architecture of such ancient schools of learning as Oxford University in England is based on the layout of a monastery. Even a comparatively recently established school such as Sydney University, with its Great Hall and cloisters, has architecture based on the monastic model.

SOURCE 4 An illuminated letter from the Book of Kells



3.11.2 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Which monastic order did much to establish the rules followed by monks and nuns?
- 2 Upon whose labour did the Cistercian monks depend and what impact did this have on their order?
- 3 Which modern educational institution has its origins in the medieval monastery?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 4 Examine **SOURCE 2**. What sorts of activities do you think monks would do in the cloisters?
- 5 Is **SOURCE 3** a primary or secondary source? Explain your answer. How useful is it to historians?

3.11 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

IDENTIFYING CAUSE AND EFFECT

- 1 Write a brief outline identifying the ways that the monasteries and convents played a role in further spreading the messages of the Roman Catholic Church.
- 2 What were the ways that monks and nuns helped to maintain social control over the people of medieval Europe?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 3 Using a range of sources of information, such as the internet and your school library, explore how illuminated manuscripts like **SOURCE 4** were created.
- 4 Closely examine **SOURCES 2** and **3** and use the architectural features you can see to explain the impressions that would have had on peasant communities living in villages.

3.12 The Crusades

3.12.1 The First Crusade

The Crusades were a series of wars fought throughout Europe and the Middle East between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries. In these wars, Christians fought against non-Christians and **heretics**. The Crusades generally centred on the Holy Land and the main enemy of the Crusaders were the Muslim Turks. The term *Crusader* comes from the Latin word *Crux*, which referred to the Christian cross. However, evidence suggests Crusaders only began calling themselves this as late as the thirteenth century.

Jerusalem is a very important city for Christians, Muslims and Jews. The Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem is believed to be the site of Jesus' tomb. When the Muslim Turks took control of Jerusalem in 1071, they began to harass and even kill visiting Christian **pilgrims**.

In Constantinople, Emperor Alexius I appealed to Pope Urban II to help him fight his Muslim enemies. In 1095, the Pope called upon Christians to fight the Turks and reclaim Jerusalem.

heretic a Christian who holds views that conflict with official Church teachings

pilgrim one who travels to a sacred place to show devotion to his or her faith

SOURCE 2 A map of the Crusades in the Holy Land



Source: Map drawn by Spatial Vision.

SOURCE 1 Extract from call to arms by Pope Urban II at Clermont, France, in 1095

If you choose the right path, you will be forgiven for all your sins. This path is to make war upon the Turk . . . Let those who are going to fight for Christianity put the form of the Cross upon their garments . . . God will be gracious to those who undertake this expedition: those who die will go straight to heaven . . .

SOURCE 3 From an account of one of the Crusaders who took part in the capture of Jerusalem in 1099

With drawn swords our people ran through the city; nor did they spare anyone, not even those pleading for mercy. If you had been there, your feet would have stained up to the ankles in blood. What more shall I tell? Not one of them was allowed to live. They did not spare the women or children. The horses waded in blood up to their knees, nay up to the bridle. It was a just and wonderful judgment of God.

There were various reasons why Christians responded to the Pope's call. These included the chance to gain wealth, power, land and knighthood. They were also promised eternal life in heaven.

The First Crusade was two expeditions. One, known as the Peasants' Crusade, was led by Walter the Penniless. It was a violent rabble beginning with a murder of Jews in Germany. It left a trail of destruction all the way to Constantinople. Being poorly organised, it was wiped out by the Turks after it had set out from that city. The second expedition was led by knights. It successfully defeated the Turks, and took city after city throughout the **Holy Land**, including Nicaea, Antioch and, finally, Jerusalem.

Holy Land land in the Middle East which has significant importance for Christians, Muslims and Jews

Crusader during the Middle Ages, someone who took part in a Crusade, an armed expedition against those believed to be enemies of the Church

The **Crusader** victory did not last. The Turks fought back and the Crusaders alliance with the Byzantine emperor dissolved because each distrusted the other.

myWorldHistoryAtlas Deepen and check your understanding of the topic with the following resources and auto-marked questions:
The Crusades

3.12.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Against whom were the Crusades organised?
- 2 What does the term Crusader stand for?
- 3 Compare the two expeditions in the First Crusade. Can you explain the different outcomes?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 4 Read **SOURCE 1**. What do you believe is the aim of Pope Urban II's speech?
- 5 Using the map in **SOURCE 2** as well as the text, describe which cities the First Crusade captured?

DID YOU KNOW?

Crusaders were often from monasteries. One monastic order was the Knights of St John the Hospitaller. Their cross-shaped symbol is now the logo of the St John Ambulance Society.

3.12.2 More crusades

The Crusades continued over the next two centuries. The Second Crusade (1147–9) began because the Turks had taken the town of Edessa. This crusade did not succeed; the Turks defeated the Crusaders at Damascus.

In 1187, the Kurdish leader of the Turks, Saladin, conquered Jerusalem. This inspired the Third Crusade (1189–92). A lack of unity among Crusader leaders prevented a victory for them, although they were successful in capturing the city of Acre. Despite their defeat, Saladin allowed Christians to visit the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.

The Fourth Crusade (1202–4) started out against the Turks, but ended up as a **pillage** of Christian cities, including Constantinople. The driving issue was commercial rivalry rather than religion.

There were more Crusades in which control of land was lost and won. Jerusalem was recovered by the Christians for a brief time, and the Turks took Acre in 1291. It is generally agreed that the Crusades came to an end when the Turks took Constantinople in 1453 as part of the Ottoman Empire.

SOURCE 4 The siege of Nicaea in 1097, from a thirteenth-century French manuscript, *The History of Outremer*. Outremer was the name by which the parts of the Holy Land captured by the Crusaders became known.



pillage to steal or plunder using force, especially during war

3.12.2 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Who was the Kurdish leader of the Turks during the Third Crusade?
- 2 Who controlled the city of Constantinople at the end of the Crusades?
- 3 Decide whether each of the following statements is true or false.
 - a The Crusades continued over four centuries.
 - b The Second Crusade failed.

- c Despite the failure of the Third Crusade, Saladin allowed Christians access to the Holy Sepulchre.
- d The Fourth Crusade was a success.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 4 The Crusaders in **SOURCE 4** are using a trebuchet to throw their enemies' heads over the walls of the besieged city. Why do you think they are doing this?

3.12 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

ANALYSING CAUSE AND EFFECT

- 1 Explore the reasons that European Christians went on crusades. List them in order of importance (as you see it) and explain each one of them.
- 2 List the four main Crusades mentioned here in order of dates and briefly outline what happened in each one of them.
- 3 After reading this subtopic, can you see any positives in the relations between Muslims and Christians over this period?
- 4 Draw a mind map showing the effects of the Crusades. You may need to research this further.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 5 After reading **SOURCE 3**, write an account of the same day from 1099 from a Muslim Turk's perspective.
- 6 Which sources show evidence of the brutality of the Crusades? What sort of brutal acts were committed by the Crusaders?
- 7 Analyse whose perspective **SOURCES 3** and **4** are from. How reliable do you think they are in telling/showing us about the behaviour of the Crusaders?

3.13 The Age of Faith

3.13.1 Christianity and Islam

Many people assume that the conflict between the Christian crusaders and Islamic Turks was the first point of tension between Christians and Muslims. However, it started much earlier than that. Islam originated in Medina and Mecca in the Middle East early the seventh century. By the eighth century it had spread to North Africa and was the religion of the invaders of southern Spain in 711 CE. Significant tension and conflict between the two monotheistic religions has existed since the early Middle Ages.

Generally speaking, religion does not strongly influence governments today. Many countries around the world are secular, which means they are neutral in regards to religion. It was different in the Middle Ages. In Western Europe, the Christian Church had great influence over rulers. The situation was similar in the Islamic world. Countries were ruled by Muslim leaders called **caliphs**. With religion dominating so much of private and public life, it is not surprising that some historians have called the Middle Ages 'the Age of **Faith**'.

caliph in Islamic countries, the chief civil and religious ruler and a successor to the Prophet Mohammed

faith religious belief and practice

SOURCE 1 Map of the spread of Islam circa 1000 CE



Source: MAPgraphics Pty Ltd, Brisbane

The conflict between Christians and Muslims is most often assumed to have begun with the First Crusade at the end of the eleventh century. But Muslim Arabs had conquered much of Spain, via North Africa, as early as 711 CE. This was a major Muslim inroad into Christian Europe, and wherever the Christian West and the Muslim East met, there was conflict.

3.13.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 What is the name for a Muslim ruler?
- 2 Why have some historians called the Middle Ages the Age of Faith?
- 3 Who conquered much of Spain in 711 CE?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 4 Using the map in **SOURCE 1**, explain the spread of Islam into Spain by around 1000 CE.

3.13.2 Religion in Spain

Spain is a good example of how relations developed between the Christian West and the Muslim East. Muslim Arabs ruled much of Spain for about 700 years. Throughout that period, there was a great exchange of culture between not only the Muslim occupiers and the Christians, but also the Jews, who were a sizable minority in Spain. Even after the Christians reconquered Spain, much of the rich Muslim culture remained. In fact, Muslim music, architecture and many other fields continued to flourish, even after Muslims were forcibly converted to Catholicism. For example, an instrument that would eventually develop into the Spanish guitar was invented by Muslim Arabs. The famous Spanish dance music, flamenco, is also thought to be Middle Eastern in origin.

But just as the Christians tried to subject conquered peoples to their faith, so did the Muslims subject countries they had conquered to Islam. In Muslim Spain, Christians and Jews were tolerated but they suffered discrimination and were made to pay special taxes because their religions were regarded as inferior. When Christians eventually reconquered Spain, they would be much less tolerant. They ruthlessly persecuted Muslims and Jews.

There may have been some appreciation of the refined culture of the Arabic Muslims in Spain. However, as conflict developed between the Christian north and the Muslim south in Spain, new waves of invaders arrived. The Arabic leaders brought in North African fighters (called **Moors** by the Christians). The Moors were a harsher, less tolerant group. An example of their intolerance was the destruction of a splendid palace in Cordoba called Medina Azahara.

moor A member of a north-west African Muslim people of mixed Berber and Arab descent

SOURCE 2 Amad ibn Muammad al-Yammani, a Muslim traveller, commenting on music he had heard while recovering from an illness in the Moorish city of Malaga during the eleventh century

The people are absolutely dominated by their passion for music. One night I awoke ... to ... a breath of sound, tranquil and lovely. I felt that my soul understood this music, and would find repose [peace] in it ... [It] began increasing slowly in volume. I was drawn to it and disposed to listen ... I found myself forgetting my misery in the emotional enjoyment, which almost caused me to imagine that the walls and floor were floating around me.

SOURCE 3 The prayer hall of the Great Mosque in Cordoba, Spain. Begun around 786.



3.13.2 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Name the three main religious groups in Spain during the Middle Ages.
- 2 List two elements or products of Spanish culture today which are Middle Eastern in origin.
- 3 Were other religions permitted in Muslim Spain?
- 4 Which two groups were discriminated against with taxation?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 5 Examine **SOURCE 2**. What impression does Amad ibn Muammad al-Yammani have of the Moorish music he hears?
- 6 Look closely at the repeated architecture in the Prayer Hall of the Great Mosque in **SOURCE 3**. What impressions would this give the worshippers and what techniques were used to obtain these impressions?

3.13.3 Shared learning

While much of the learning of ancient Greece and Rome had been lost in the West during the Early Middle Ages, it was kept alive by Muslim scholars. One of the greatest libraries in history was established in Muslim Baghdad in 832 CE. Called the House of Wisdom, it held copies of manuscripts and books on the arts, sciences and many other topics. It was a meeting place for academics and intellectuals for hundreds of years. Islamic societies also built hospitals for the sick, and their scholars led the world in studies of medicine, sciences and mathematics. The Crusades gave European Christians the opportunity to gain an insight into the learning of the Islamic East. As in Spain, Europeans became influenced by Islamic culture, including poetry and architecture. European scholars were no doubt impressed by Muslim schools as it was about this time that the great universities of Europe were established. The challenge posed by Islamic learning was at least partly responsible for this development.

And did the Islamic East have anything to learn from Europe? As it turns out, the Europeans, who appeared rough and barbaric to the Muslims, had little to offer at this point in history. Their contribution to government, learning and invention lay far in the future.

SOURCE 4 From Usamah ibn Mequidh, a twelfth-century Arab writer and soldier. Muslims referred to Crusaders as 'Franks' because many Crusaders came from the part of Europe that was once the Frankish Empire (near modern-day France and Germany).

When I come to tell stories about the Franks [Crusaders] I cannot help but glorify and praise Allah (exalted is He!), for I see them as animals possessing the virtues of courage and fighting, but nothing else; just as pack animals have only the virtues of strength and carrying loads.

SOURCE 5 Details of the Alhambra, a magnificent fortress and palace built by the Islamic rulers of Granada in the mid-fourteenth century



DID YOU KNOW?

The Muslim world also adopted and further developed ancient technologies. An example is the astrolabe, an instrument invented by a Greek scholar about 150 BCE to locate and predict the positions of the Moon, the planets, the Sun and other stars. Medieval Muslim scholars made improvements to the astrolabe that enabled it to be used for navigation at sea and to find the direction of Mecca, the holy city in the Arab empire that Muslims were required to face during prayer.

3.13.3 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 How was much of the ancient Greek and Roman knowledge kept alive during the early Middle Ages?
- 2 In what fields did Islamic scholars lead studies in the world during medieval times?
- 3 How much did the Muslims learn from European culture in the Middle Ages? Explain.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 4 Examine **SOURCE 4**.
 - a What positive things does Usamah ibn Mequidh have to say about the Crusaders?
 - b What negative things does he have to say?
 - c Why do you think Usamah ibn Mequidh would make such negative remarks about the Crusaders?
- 5 What does **SOURCE 5** tell historians about the Islamic rule in Granada in the mid-fourteenth century? Explain how it does this.

3.13 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

DETERMINING HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

- 1 What were the achievements of the Islamic East during medieval times? How does this contrast with Christian Europe of the same time?
- 2 Write a short paragraph where you evaluate whether you agree that there was greater tolerance in Muslim Spain during the Middle Ages than was expected for that time.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 3 Using **SOURCES 2** and **4**, explain whether the medieval Muslim travellers and soldiers saw themselves as the brutal infidels that the Christian crusaders saw them as. Use short quotations from the sources to back up your statements.
- 4 Examine **SOURCES 3** and **5** closely. What features of these buildings justify their reputations as magnificent examples of medieval Islamic architecture?
- 5 Use the internet and/or your library to find out more about the great Mosque at Cordoba (**SOURCE 3**). Some questions you could answer are:
 - When was it originally built and by whom?
 - What are some of its impressive features?
 - What is it being used for today?

3.14 Towns and trades

3.14.1 The growth of towns

By about the eleventh century, Europe was a relatively peaceful place. People felt free to risk living beyond the security of the manor. In time, a network of towns sprang up, particularly along trade routes. These towns became the focus for the rise of a new social group — a **middle class** of merchants.

Personal loyalty to a lord in exchange for a **fief** was a basic principle of feudalism. As barbarian raids stopped, as food stocks increased, and as money rather than personal services began to be given to lords in exchange for rights and privileges, the feudal system began to break down.

People began to drift away from the manors to start new lives in towns, many of which had developed near castles. Some people learned new skills such as spinning, weaving, baking, leather work, music, acting, ale brewing, armour construction, ropemaking, butchery, banking, cloth dyeing and stonemasonry.

As towns grew, large walls were built around them. Near these walls were the cramped homes of the poor — mostly wooden and many storeys high. Most houses were coated with a highly flammable paint made of pitch and linseed oil. Pitch was a black, tarry substance used to seal cracks in buildings and boats. The homes of the wealthy were in the town's centre.

The town's lanes were crooked and narrow. They were lit only by people's lanterns and candles, and had no footpaths. They became smelly, rat-infested rubbish dumps, splattered with food scraps, bones and sewage. Open drains stank from cloth dyes and the blood of

middle class a social class between the privileged nobility and the poor peasants. It typically comprised merchants and wealthier craftspeople.

fief a gift, usually land, given by a lord to a vassal (or tenant) in exchange for loyalty and service

slaughtered animals. Townspeople tramped through this muck to reach the town's central marketplace. It bustled with the activity of traders, musicians, actors, jugglers, pickpockets and beggars.

SOURCE 1 A young boy's experience on entering the marketplace in the English town of Shrewsbury in 1241. This extract is from *Falls the Shadow*, a novel by Sharon Penman, Penguin, 1989, p. 132.

Church bells pealed out the hour ... Men wandered the streets shouting 'hot meat pies' and 'good ale' ... itinerant [wandering] pedlars hawked [tried to sell] their goods, offering nails, ribbons, potions to restore health ... People gathered in front of the cramped, unshuttered shops, arguing prices at the tops of their voices. Heavy carts creaked down the streets ... Dogs darted underfoot, and pigs [shuffled] about in the debris dumped in the centre gutter.

3.14.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 What was the basic principle of feudalism?
- 2 What was the initial change that meant that food stock increased and money could be exchanged?
- 3 Why were the new towns quite frequently destroyed by fire?
- 4 Where did the poor usually live in the town? Why?
- 5 Where did the wealthier people usually live? Why?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 6 Read **SOURCE 1**.
 - a Describe features of medieval towns that would have made them dirty, noisy and unhealthy.
 - b What would you need to know about this source in order to judge its reliability?

3.14.2 Rise of the merchant class

Adventurous European merchants began looking for more distant markets. They travelled to Asia, northern Africa and the Middle East with goods such as iron, timber and copper. They returned with exotic silks, furs, spices, gold and precious stones. They visited trade fairs in Europe, where both goods and ideas were exchanged. It is thought, for example, that the windmill was first heard of from traders from Iran, and soap from traders from China.

Long-distance trading was risky. There were robbers and sea pirates. As well, merchants had to deal with clever money lenders. To protect themselves and their profits, merchants often formed partnerships and shared responsibilities. This led to the formation of companies, which in turn created new jobs.

By the latter part of the Middle Ages, this new merchant class had become a very powerful force in medieval society.

Growth of apprenticeships

The demand for skilled workers was growing. Apprenticeships began to be set up to train young people in particular trades. Most were seven-year agreements, and were strictly controlled by guilds.

Guilds

The standard of work in each skilled craft was also controlled by its **guild**. These associations were formed by artisans to protect their interests, settle disputes between employers and skilled workers, and to set wages and prices. In some ways they were like modern trade unions; however, unlike trade unions, guild members included employers.

SOURCE 2 Medieval illustration of stonemasons, who were highly respected craftspeople



guild an association of people engaged in a particular trade or craft for the mutual benefit of its members

Merchants also had guilds. The most powerful merchant association was the Hanseatic League, which controlled many trading ports around the Baltic Sea, and trading outposts as far away as Russia, Italy and England. The Hanseatic League was so powerful during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries that it minted its own money and wrote its own laws. In the fourteenth century, it even waged war against the King of Denmark.

SOURCE 3 As shown in this medieval painting, businesspeople usually sold their goods from the ground floor of their home. Family, servants and apprentices lived on the upper floors.



3.14.2 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 To where did the more adventurous European merchants travel?
- 2 What did they take with them to trade and with what did they return?
- 3 What were the risks associated with long-distance trading?
- 4 How long were the new apprenticeship agreements?
- 5 What is a guild?
- 6 Describe the major role of guilds.
- 7 What was the Hanseatic League?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 8 Describe the medieval trades that you can see in **SOURCES 2** and **3**.

3.14 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

IDENTIFYING CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

- 1 Describe the factors that led to the decline of feudalism.
- 2 Explain what the growth of trade and skilled crafts had to do with the growth of towns.
- 3 Explore the growth in power of the merchant class and guilds. Identify the impact that this would have on the lords and their knights.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 4 Imagine that you were a peasant who left your manor to come to a town. Use the

sources and information in this subtopic to write a paragraph describing what you see as you enter the town and make your way to the marketplace. Keep in mind that there are probably many things that you would find remarkable.

- 5 If you had been a young town dweller in the Middle Ages, to what trade would you like to have been apprenticed? Give reasons for your choice.

3.15 Living conditions and medical science in the fourteenth century

3.15.1 Living condition in medieval cities

The High Middle Ages (c.1100–1300 CE) in Europe was a period of rapid population growth and relative prosperity. It saw the expansion of towns and cities. Many of these were filthy and overcrowded, providing ideal conditions for the spread of disease. Medical science at the time was totally inadequate and unprepared for the plague that was to come.

Medieval cities such as London, Paris and Florence grew very rapidly during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, with little thought given to proper planning or healthy living conditions. Most houses were small, containing only one or two rooms. Privacy was not a particularly high priority, and even members of reasonably well-off families would all sleep in the same room. Amongst the poor, it was not unusual for as many as a dozen people to all sleep on the floor together. In country villages, they would often be joined by their livestock. If someone became ill, it was physically impossible to isolate them from other members of the family. So if one member of the family became sick, it was likely that all would catch the same illness.

Hygiene and sanitation

In a small village, the removal of rubbish and human waste was relatively simple, but in an overcrowded town it became a more difficult problem. The streets were narrow, usually with a drain running down the middle that was meant to carry waste away. However, these drains regularly filled up and so the waste remained. Often the drains fed into the same rivers and streams from which people drew their drinking water. While breathing in foul air or drinking contaminated water could not spread the Black Death, cases of gastric diseases such as **dysentery** and diarrhoea were common. If the body was weakened because of such diseases, the plague could take hold more easily, and death was likely to occur much sooner.

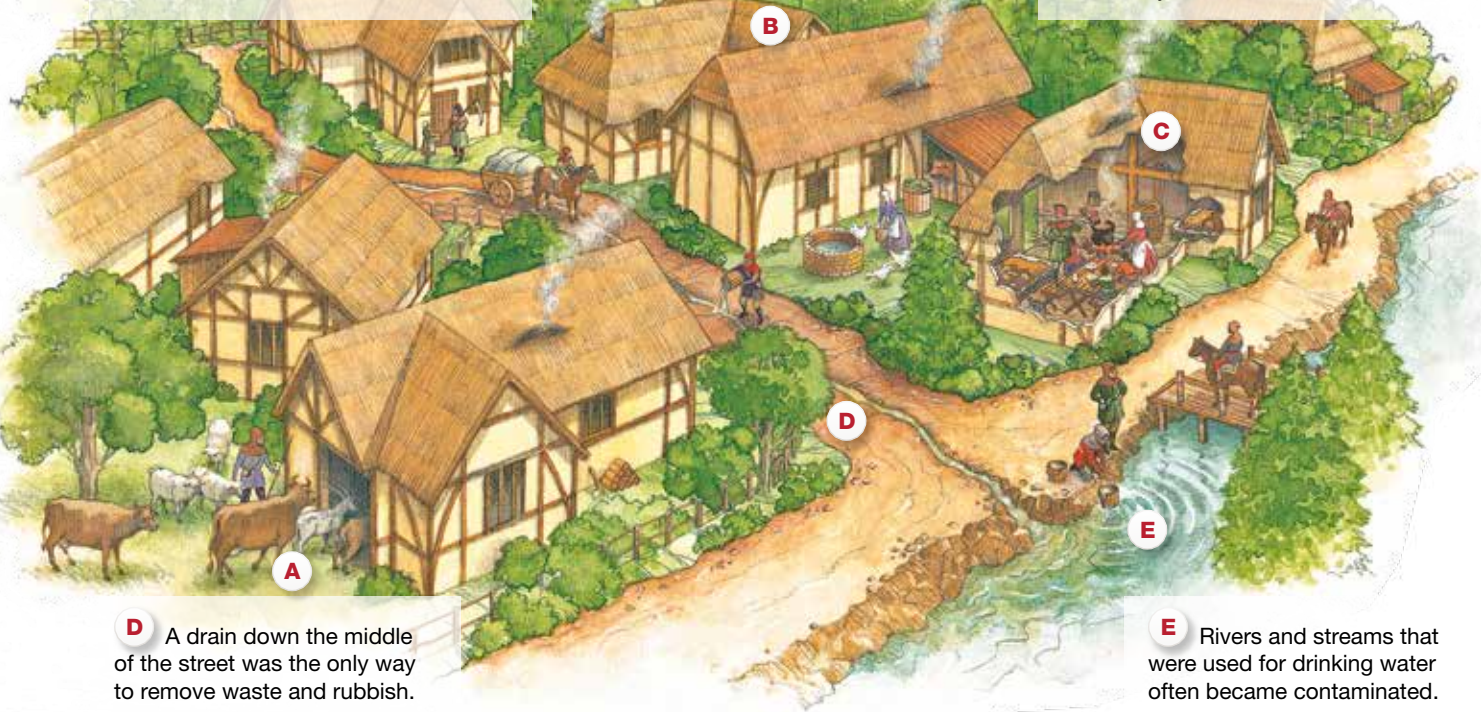
dysentery a severe, infectious bowel disease

SOURCE 1 Medieval houses and towns were generally very unhealthy places to live.

A The presence of domestic animals and straw on the floor allowed rats and other vermin to flourish.

B Houses were close together, allowing for the easy spread of disease.

C Houses were very small, providing little opportunity to isolate sick family members.



D A drain down the middle of the street was the only way to remove waste and rubbish.

E Rivers and streams that were used for drinking water often became contaminated.

Life expectancy

Although the average life expectancy in Australia today is about 82 years, most people did not live this long in medieval times. Death from infectious disease was common and children were the most likely victims. Close to a quarter of all babies died within the first year of life. Less than half of all children would reach the age of ten. Those who passed the age of ten had a reasonable chance of reaching adulthood and perhaps living to around 40 years of age. Only a small minority lived to what we would regard as old age.

3.15.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- Describe the living conditions of the poorer people in medieval cities.
 - How did these living conditions contribute to the increased likelihood of illness?
- What caused an increased risk of diseases such as dysentery and diarrhoea in overcrowded towns?
- Of all the babies born in medieval times, approximately what proportion could be expected to reach adulthood?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- Using **SOURCE 1**, list three reasons why people living in medieval times were at greater risk of disease than we are today.

3.15.2 Medical science in the Middle Ages

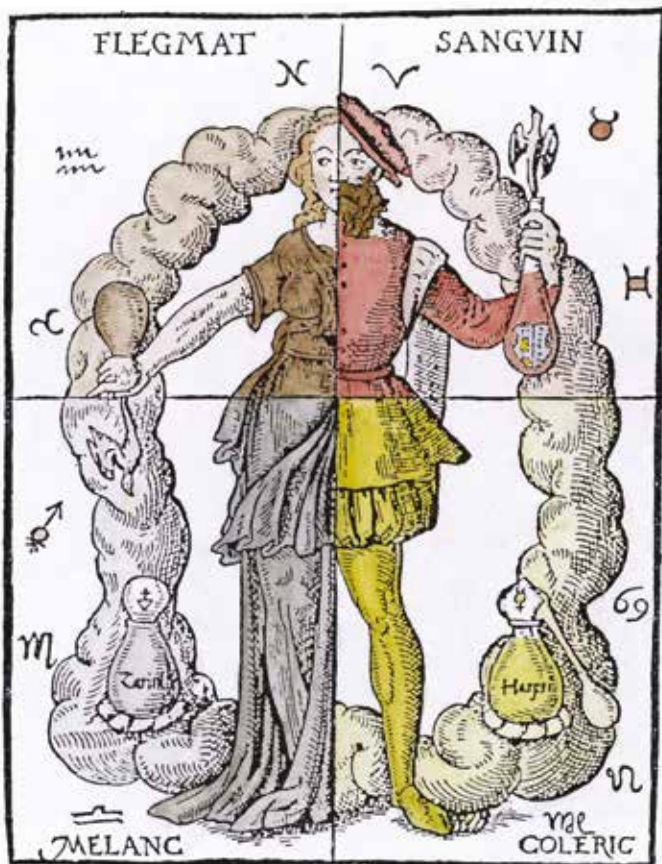
Medical knowledge in the Middle Ages was based largely on ancient knowledge and had not advanced much for a thousand years. Doctors relied largely on the theories of ancient physicians such as Hippocrates and Galen. In the fourth century BCE, the Greek physician Hippocrates was one of the first to determine that illness was not a result of a curse from the gods. He promoted

the idea that illness and disease were part of nature and could be influenced by factors such as diet and a person's living habits. Nevertheless, he was completely unaware of microscopic organisms as a cause of disease. The Greek physician and philosopher Galen lived in Rome in the second century CE. Because human dissections were illegal under Roman law, Galen carried out anatomical dissections on various animals. He proposed theories on the operation of the brain and the nervous system, as well as on the circulation of the blood throughout the body. Although many of his theories were later proved to be incorrect, they were the definitive word on medical science in Europe. Medieval doctors refused to accept any idea that was not consistent with Galen's theories and so were not willing to accept any new evidence relating to the causes or spread of disease.

Treating the sick

The treatment of illness and disease in the Middle Ages was based more on superstition and ignorance than on any genuine medical knowledge. Medieval doctors believed that the body contained four 'humours' or aspects that influenced a person's state of health (see **SOURCE 2**). These humours were black bile, yellow bile, phlegm and blood. While they were in balance, the body would be healthy. Illness occurred when these humours were out of balance in the body. In these circumstances, one common cure was to drain blood from the body through a process of bloodletting (see **SOURCE 3**). Applying leeches to the body to suck the blood was an alternative method of restoring the body's balance (see **SOURCE 4**). Herbal medicines were also popular, but often contained poisons, and so were sometimes more dangerous than the disease. Surgery was usually carried out by barbers, and was rarely successful. Amputations of injured or diseased limbs were the most common form of surgery. Because of the strong religious beliefs of the time, most people believed that prayer was the most effective way of dealing with serious illness.

SOURCE 2 This sixteenth-century diagram illustrates the four humours that medieval doctors believed determined the health of the body.



SOURCE 3 Bloodletting, as shown in this fifteenth-century artwork, involved the draining of a measured amount of blood from a vein believed to be connected to the diseased organ in the body.



SOURCE 4 In this illustration from Boccaccio's *Decameron*, doctors apply leeches to a royal or aristocratic patient.



3.15.2 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Why had there been no significant advances in medical knowledge in Europe for over a thousand years?
- 2 What medical treatment was offered by barbers at this time?
- 3 How did most people in the Middle Ages attempt to deal with illness?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 4 Explain the purpose of the medical treatments in **SOURCES 3** and **4**.
- 5 **a** How do we know the patient in **SOURCE 4** was an important person?
b From the reactions of the other people in **SOURCE 4**, what can you identify as one of the patient's symptoms?

3.15.3 Life suddenly gets harder

The growth in population throughout Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries quickly led to most of the best farming land being overworked. By the beginning of the fourteenth century, the quantity and quality of crops were in decline. This raised the threat of famine. To make matters worse, there appears to have been a change in weather patterns early in the fourteenth century, with the winter of 1306–07 the coldest experienced in over 300 years. As the colder and wetter weather

took hold, farming conditions became worse, with the years 1315–17 bringing crop failures and widespread famine. The 1320s and 1330s saw frequent famine conditions continue as the weather and overworked soils brought regular crop failures. By the 1340s the standard of health of much of the European population was very poor, with little resistance to serious disease. It was to this ravaged population that the Black Death was to bring unprecedented death and destruction.

SOURCE 5 An extract from a blog post written by a historian working on a book about the impact of the king, Edward II, in the mid-1310s.

The Sempringham annalist says ‘there were great floods of water throughout England, and the wheat was destroyed, and the hay also, and there was great famine and great dearth of wheat throughout the land’. He gives the price of a quarter of wheat as twenty-four shillings and more, a quarter of barley as sixteen shillings and a quarter of oats as twenty shillings, many times the usual price. Such bread as was available could not satisfy hunger, as the grain was soaked from the endless rain and had to be dried in ovens before it was cooked, and contained minimal nutrients.

3.15.3 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 What happened in the first half of the fourteenth century in Europe to make people more susceptible to disease?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 2 **SOURCE 5** is written by a historian. Read it carefully and answer the following questions.
 - a Is this a primary or secondary source? Explain your answer.
 - b What is an ‘annalist’? (You may need to look this up.)
 - c The historian quotes a medieval source. Is this a direct quotation? Explain your answer by offering reasons.
 - d Does it verify the information given in this section?

DID YOU KNOW?

Modern anaesthetics were unknown in medieval times, so the patient was wide awake during surgery. One mixture used to try and dull the pain was known as ‘dwale’ and it consisted of lettuce juice, gall from a castrated boar and assorted herbs such as bryony, henbane and hemlock. All these plants were poisonous and could have killed the patient. Cuts and wounds from surgery were treated by cauterisation. This was a process of applying hot irons to the wound to seal it and prevent further loss of blood.

3.15 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

IDENTIFYING CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

- 1 Describe the contributions made by Hippocrates and Galen to medieval medical knowledge.
- 2 Identify how the lack of medical advances led to inadequate medical treatment in medieval times.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 3 Examine **SOURCES 2, 3** and **4** closely. Using what you can see, explain how the sick were treated in medieval times.
- 4 Each of the four humours depicted in **SOURCE 2** was associated with a number of other natural and human characteristics. Using the resources available to you from the internet and/or your library, find out the following:
 - a What were the names of each of the humours?
 - b What elements in nature was each humour associated with?
 - c How were the humours believed to have influenced a person’s personality and mood?
 - d When did this belief lose popularity?

DETERMINING HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

- 5 Evaluate the challenge that the lack of medical knowledge brought to medical society.

3.16 The Black Death

3.16.1 Origins of the Black Death

In 1347 something terrible happened across three continents — something that changed the course of history. This event is known as the Black Death or the **plague**. The Black Death was a disease that spread across the known world and wiped out whole towns and villages. In Europe alone, between 1347 and 1352, one-third of the population may have died as a result of this **pestilence**.

plague fatal epidemic disease; usually used in reference to the bubonic plague

pestilence fatal epidemic disease

What was the nature of the Black Death? Where did it come from, and how did it spread? And how did it change the course of history?

It is believed that the Black Death originated in Mongolia in the early fourteenth century. It spread along trade routes and via military expeditions. In 1346 the Tartars, a people descended from the Mongols, were besieging the Black Sea port city of Caffa, a trading colony of the Italian city of Genoa. Then the Tartar troops started to fall sick and die. Weakened by disease, they used trebuchets to hurl infected dead bodies over the walls of Caffa in an attempt to inflict the same pestilence on the city's inhabitants. Some historians and medical scientists cite this event as possibly the first instance in history of **biological warfare**. Some people escaped from Caffa on ships for Italy. They may have escaped the Tartars, but not the Black Death, as it accompanied them on their ships. At least one such ship is recorded as having reached the Italian port of Messina, with dead or dying crew on board. This was probably not the only way the Black Death reached Europe, but it is the best documented. The Black Death spread right across Europe and North Africa.

biological warfare

method of warfare based on infecting the enemy with deadly disease

SOURCE 1 The spread of the Black Death across three continents



Source: Map drawn by Spatial Vision.

myWorldHistoryAtlas Deepen and check your understanding of the topic with the following resources and auto-marked questions:
Black Death

3.16.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 What is another name for the Black Death?
- 2 Where did the Black Death probably originate?
- 3 How did the Black Death enter the Black Sea city of Caffa?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 4 Using **SOURCE 1**, write a short paragraph explaining how the Black Death spread across Europe, Asia and Africa.
- 5 In which continent did the Black Death have the most impact? Why do you think this might be?

3.16.2 What was the Black Death?

The Black Death had three variations. Its most common form was bubonic plague, named for the buboes (stinking, pus-filled swellings) that appeared on the victim's body (see **SOURCE 2** and **3**). The second form was pneumonic plague, which affected the respiratory system, and the third was septicemic plague, which affected the blood. Fever and vomiting were common symptoms. In its final stages, victims' skin turned purple-black and their nervous system was affected. This slurred their speech and they staggered about in convulsions. Observers called this phase the *danse macabre* — 'the dance of death'. The source of the disease was bacteria found on the fleas of black rats. Such rats were common on ships and in towns such as Messina. In the unhygienic conditions of medieval Europe, plague-ridden rats bred rapidly and the fleas were able to move to other animals and to people.

SOURCE 2 From *The Decameron*, a collection of stories by Giovanni Boccaccio, written between 1350 and 1352, when the plague was ravaging his country, Italy, along with the rest of Europe. Boccaccio's stories are told by characters who have fled the plague to isolate themselves in a villa in the countryside. In real life, those who took such action — and Boccaccio was one of them — did sometimes survive. But only the rich had this option.

... [The] deadly pestilence ... showed its first signs in men and women alike by means of swellings either in the groin [area between the belly and thigh] or under the armpits, some of which grew to the size of an ordinary apple and others to the size of an egg (more or less), and the people called them [buboes]. And from the two parts of the body already mentioned, in very little time, the ... deadly [buboes] began to spread indiscriminately over every part of the body; then, after this, the symptoms of the illness changed to black or livid [bluish] spots appearing on the arms and thighs, and on every part of the body — sometimes there were large ones and other times a number of little ones scattered all around ... [Almost] all died after the third day of the appearance of the previously described symptoms (some sooner, others later), and most of them died without fever or any other side effects.

SOURCE 3 Plague victims in Perugia, Italy — from a sixteenth-century manuscript



3.16.2 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 What are buboes?
- 2 Describe the three variations of the Black Death?
- 3 What have we since discovered was the source of the disease and what carried it?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 4 Read **SOURCE 2** and examine **SOURCE 3**. On which variation of the Black Death did most descriptions and paintings focus? Why do you think this was so?
- 5 What is the person in the bottom right of **SOURCE 3** holding and for what reason?

3.16.3 Medieval treatments for the Black Death

The details of the Black Death were not understood during the Middle Ages. Doctors knew nothing about the cause of the plague or how to treat it. All sorts of treatments were offered. They believed that stench was a cause of the disease, and offered patients sweet-smelling flowers and pot-pourri to smell. Some believe this is the source of the children's nursery rhyme 'Ring around a rosie, a pocketful of posies, a-tishoo a-tishoo, we all fall down'. Other doctors lanced buboes to draw out 'bad blood'. But this helped only to spread the disease.

SOURCE 4 A doctor dressed up to fight the Black Death, as shown in a seventeenth-century manuscript



contagion the spreading of disease

leper person stricken with leprosy, a bacterial disease that causes ulceration of the skin, deformities and a loss of sensation

As if doctors' remedies were not bad enough, panic and superstition made things even worse. Many believed that the plague was God's punishment for their sins, like the plagues described in the Bible that had ravaged Egypt in the time of Moses. One extreme response was made by a group called the Flagellants. They travelled from town to town publicly whipping themselves in the hope of receiving God's forgiveness for their sins and deliverance from the pestilence. However, with the blood from their whipped backs flowing freely, all this did was help spread the disease. Pope Clement VI ordered that these groups be disbanded. Clement, incidentally, may have come closest to an effective method of protection from **contagion**. His adviser, Guy de Chauliac, sat the Pope between bonfires for many days so he could breathe the purified air. Given that fleas dislike such heat, this may have helped save the Pope's life.

Of all the remedies attempted during the period of the Black Death, cleanliness and hygiene were generally the treatments that were overlooked. This is because no-one connected the plague to the rats, which carried the pestilent fleas. Few bathed regularly or changed their clothes, and people continued to live in dirty, cramped cottages, often with their livestock. No-one thought of clearing the dung heaps in the middle of manor-house courtyards, and people continued to use the streets as dumps for their household waste. Such conditions attracted the flea-ridden rats. As the rats bred and died in the squalor of medieval towns and villages, the fleas continued to infect the human population. And so, more than any other factor, it was the living conditions in medieval times that encouraged the spread of the deadly catastrophe that was the Black Death.

Inevitably, minority groups were blamed for spreading the plague. Some thought **lepers** were to blame, and many of them were hunted down and murdered. Jews were accused of deliberately poisoning wells. Despite the fact that the plague did not distinguish between Jews and Christians, thousands of Jews were murdered. Many were burned alive.

SOURCE 5 Minority groups, including the Jews, were blamed for the Black Death and were persecuted, as shown in this sixteenth-century illustration.



3.16.3 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Why did medieval doctors offer patients sweet-smelling flowers and pot-pourri to smell as a cure for the Black Death?
- 2 Who were the Flagellants?
- 3 How did Pope Clement VI successfully avoid catching the Black Death?
- 4 What was the main factor that encouraged the spread of the disease?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 5 Imagine you are the doctor in **SOURCE 4**. Explain why you are dressed in such outlandish clothes.

3.16.4 Effects of the Black Death

Within four years, at least a third of Europe's population had perished. Many villages were deserted and never repopulated. It would take another 200 years for the population of Europe to reach the size it had been in 1347. A **catastrophe** on such a scale must have had a major effect on society and the economy.

The feudal system itself was weakened as a result of the Black Death. With a shortage of workers, serfs began to demand wages and lower rents for their labour, and freemen, who were already paid, demanded higher wages. In some cases in England, workers' wages tripled during the time of the Black Death.

The power of the Church was weakened too. Partly, it lost respect in failing to protect the people through prayer. But also the clergy lost many of its own members. Monasteries were closed communities and some lost almost all their educated monks. There were few priests left to perform Mass and conduct weddings and funerals. The Church desperately needed new clergy and was forced to accept novices with no education.

Farming changed. With fewer peasants to work the fields, grain production went into decline in England and other European countries. Farmers turned increasingly to livestock such as sheep that required fewer workers on the land.

SOURCE 6 As shown in this Italian fresco, increased wages led to a growth in markets and in the number of merchants offering goods for sale.



catastrophe a disaster on a vast scale

DID YOU KNOW?

One of the most recent pandemics of bubonic plague occurred about 1900. It originated in China, and spread to Australia, among other places. This time, however, medical and other authorities knew how to respond. Exterminators were sent into Sydney's Rocks area, which was a slum in those days, to wipe out rats. Suspected plague carriers were taken to the Quarantine Station at Manly. The disease was thus contained.

3.16.4 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 What percentage of the European population died from the Black Death?
- 2 List three effects that the Black Death had on medieval society.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 3 How does the Black Death appear to have contributed to the development of markets, such as that shown in **SOURCE 6**? How would you describe the people at this market?

3.16 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

IDENTIFYING CAUSE AND EFFECT

- 1 One historian has suggested that without trade the Black Death may never have happened. Explain whether or not you agree with this statement, giving evidence to support your opinion.
- 2 Examine the three main effects of the Black Death on medieval society discussed in this subtopic. Which one do you think was the most significant? Explain why.
- 3 Why do many historians believe the Black Death changed the course of history?

DETERMINING HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

- 4 Evaluate the responses of the different groups of people at the time to the Black Death and its effects on society. Pay particular attention to the Flagellants and the minority groups. How did they behave and what were their reasons for doing so?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 5 Analyse the map in **SOURCE 1** carefully. Which places did not suffer from the Black Death? Using a modern atlas to find out any physical features or population information, create a hypothesis explaining why these features may have prevented the Black Death from reaching them.
- 6 How does **SOURCE 2** support **SOURCE 3** as evidence?

3.17 How did the Black Death change society?

3.17.1 Changes to medicine, sanitation and public health

Between 1347 and 1351, the Black Death had a brutal effect on life in Europe and the area surrounding the Mediterranean Sea. Despite all the devastation, there were also some positive changes in the following years, many of which occurred as a direct response to the horrors of the plague.

The failure of medieval medicine to successfully treat the victims of the plague led to changes in the practice of medicine in the years following the Black Death. Before this time, hospitals

were places where sick people were sent to be isolated. When people entered a hospital, all their possessions were disposed of because no-one expected them to survive. During the period of the Black Death, doctors began to try to cure patients placed in hospital, and this practice continued after the plague had gone. Some hospitals began to develop relationships with universities and collect libraries of medical texts. An increased emphasis on medical knowledge led to more dissections of human corpses, and so improvements in the knowledge of anatomy and surgical practices soon followed.

In a number of places, authorities became more aware of the need to take responsibility for the health of the population. In Italian cities such as Venice and Milan, public health boards were set up to deal with the plague, and these continued after the disease had moved on. These boards gradually gained extra powers and became a valuable means of preventing the spread of illness. In London, the city council brought in regulations to clean up the city. Laws to prevent littering, the employment of street sweepers and heavy fines for dumping waste in the river were all implemented in the years following the Black Death.

SOURCE 1 As shown in this fifteenth-century illustration, the desire of doctors to find out more about the human body led to an increase in dissections, which improved knowledge of human anatomy.



3.17.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 How did the experience of the Black Death change the ways in which hospitals operated?
- 2 What did an increase in the dissection of human corpses lead to?
- 3 What does sanitation mean?

- 4 Describe an example of action taken to improve sanitation and public health after the plague had ended.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 5 What aspects of the illustration in **SOURCE 1** lead to the conclusion that they still did not understand about infection control?
- 6 Describe what is happening in **SOURCE 1**.

3.17.2 Changes to the power structures in society

Religion

The devastation of the Black Death weakened the influence of the previously all-powerful Catholic Church. The inability of religious leaders to deal with the plague through prayer and the fact that so many priests had died of the disease led to many people losing some respect for the Church. In the 1360s and 1370s, an English **theologian** John Wycliffe wrote a number of works critical of the papacy and of the role of monasteries in society. He gained a strong following among people whose recent experiences had led them to question the power and influence of the Catholic Church in society. Many of Wycliffe's followers were executed for **heresy**.

theologian a person who is considered to be an expert in religious matters

heresy any religious opinion that differed from that of the Roman Catholic Church

Political unrest

The huge decline in the numbers of peasants and agricultural workers meant there were fewer people left to perform these tasks. This meant that peasants were able to demand higher wages. However, these demands were often resisted by those in power. Peasants and workers in various parts of Europe rose up to demand their rights in the years following the Black Death. In France in 1358, a group of workers called the Jacquerie rose up in revolt to try and improve their working conditions. In 1378 a group of workers in the wool industry, who were known as the *ciompi*, led a revolt in Florence where they managed to force some democratic government reforms for a brief time. In England, causes of the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 (see 3.18 The Peasants' Revolt) can be traced back to the changes in society that resulted from the Black Death.

SOURCE 2 The Jacquerie uprising in 1358 was an attempt by French workers to improve their conditions.



Language

In England before the Black Death, most educated people spoke Latin or French, which were the languages of the ruling classes. The death of large numbers of educated monks and other scholars meant that schools had to resort to English as the language of instruction. By the 1380s, poets such as Geoffrey Chaucer were publishing their works in what is now referred to as Middle English (see **SOURCE 3**). Chaucer is considered by many to be the father of English literature. Once English became the common used language, all knowledge was open to the ordinary people as well.

SOURCE 3 The decline in the use of Latin and French in England led to increased use of a form of English, such as in this extract from the *Wife of Bath's prologue* by Chaucer.

And whom I sawgh he wolde never fyne
To reden on this cursed book al night,
Al sodeinly three leves have I plight
Out of his book right as he redde, and eke
I with my fist so took him on the cheeke
That in oure fir he fil backward adown.
And up he sterte as dooth a wood leon
And with his fist he smoot me on the heed

That in the floor I lay as I were deed.
And whan he sawgh how stille that I lay,
He was agast, and wolde have fled his way,
Till atte laste out of my swough I braide:
"O hastou slain me, false thief?" I saide,
"And for my land thus hastou mordred me?
"Er I be deed, yit wol I kisse thee."

3.17.2 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Why did many people begin to lose respect for the Catholic Church after the Black Death?
- 2 Who was John Wycliffe and what was his perspective on the Catholic Church?
- 3 What was the result of the decline in the number of peasant and agricultural workers?
- 4 How did the decline in the number of workers give them the strength to challenge those in power?
- 5 What were the languages used by scholars and educated monks in England before the Black Death?

- 6 Why did English take over from Latin and French other languages after the plague?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 7 What appears to be happening in **SOURCE 2** and why did this event take place?
- 8 Where else did similar uprisings take place?
- 9 Read through **SOURCE 3**.
 - a Who is considered by many to be the father of English literature?
 - b In what form of English is Chaucer's poetry written?

3.17 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

IDENTIFYING CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

- 1 Create a chart where you have 'Before' on one side and 'After' on the other, and explore the changes brought about by the Black Death.
- 2 Categorise the changes that you have identified in question 1 as positive or negative for the common people in the Middle Ages.

DETERMINING HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

- 3 At the end of the worst of the Black Death in 1351, what were the challenges that remained?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 4 The extract in **SOURCE 3** from Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* is written in what we now call Middle English. Although it is a form of the language that is unfamiliar to us, it is still recognisable as English.

- a Identify the words in the poem that are the same as modern English words.
 - b Identify the words that are similar to modern English words and give their equivalent.
 - c List any words that seem completely unrecognisable. Suggest possible meanings for these words based on the context.
 - d After analysing the language, summarise what you think this poem is about.
- 5 Imagine that you are a literate Londoner who has lived through the events from 1347 to 1351. It is now 10 years later and you are looking back on the changes brought about to your society. Write these in a letter to your cousin who lives in the north of England.

3.18 The Peasants' Revolt

3.18.1 What caused the revolt?

It has already been mentioned in this topic that there was a serious revolt among the peasants in England in 1381. Along with the Black Death and the growth of the merchant class in the towns, this event did much to weaken the feudal system. What made the revolt so serious was its scale: there are no reliable figures on how many peasants were involved (50 000 is sometimes suggested), but the uprising caused such dread among the powerful that the king himself sought refuge for fear of his life.

The trigger for the revolt was the **Poll Tax** of 1380, the third such tax imposed in four years. The Poll Tax was intended to restore a treasury that had been drained by the costs of fighting the French in the Hundred Years' War. Price increases causing hunger and shortages led to despair and anger in the population.

The long-term causes of the revolt went back to the Black Death. We learned that one of the results of the Black Death was a labour shortage that allowed the peasants to demand higher pay. Traditionally, peasants had been tied to the manor. Now, with a vastly reduced population, they left their villages in search of better pay and conditions in other manors. In 1351 a law called the Statute of Labourers was passed. It aimed to put a stop to peasants' free movement around the countryside and to cap their wages at 1346 levels. Naturally, peasants greatly resented this law. Many risked punishment by ignoring it. Tensions grew, but the Poll Tax of 1380 turned the peasants' anger into open rebellion.

The outbreak

The Poll Tax returns of 1380 showed that very little of the tax had been collected, so the tax collectors were sent out again. They were instructed not only to collect the tax — in some cases for a second time — but to extract payment for those who didn't turn up. This caused outrage among the peasants. In May 1381, at the village of Fobbing in Essex, one collector and his men were beaten up and driven out. When the Chief Justice was sent to sort out the villagers, he too was driven out.

What happened next was made possible only by the free movement of peasants around the countryside. In early June, word about what had happened in Fobbing spread across Essex and Kent. Peasants from across both counties gathered together into one angry mob. Manor houses were burned down, tax and debt records were destroyed and some wealthy landowners were killed or humiliated by being forced to be the servants of their new masters, the peasant rebels. By June 10, the city of Canterbury was seized by the rebels. With the Archbishop of Canterbury absent in London, they appointed a poor monk as the new archbishop and attacked rich visitors.

The peasant revolt was not entirely a disorganised mob. Several of their number came forward as leaders — in particular, Wat Tyler, Jack Straw and a parish priest, John Ball. Tyler was able to exercise some control over what would otherwise have been a mob without direction. John Ball preached against the leaders of his own Church because he felt that they were helping the lords to **exploit** the poor.

Poll Tax a tax levied on every person, regardless of age, sex or income

exploit use dishonestly to one's own advantage

SOURCE 1 Speech given by John Ball in 1377

Why are those whom we call lords, masters over us? How have they deserved it? By what right do they keep us enslaved? We are all descended from our first parents, Adam and Eve; how then can they say that they are better than us . . . At the beginning we were all created equal. If God willed that there should be serfs, he would have said so at the beginning of the world. We are formed in Christ's likeness, and they treat us like animals . . . They are dressed in velvet and furs, while we wear only cloth. They have wine, and spices and good bread, while we have rye bread and water. They have fine houses and manors, and we have to brave the wind and rain as we toil in the fields. It is by the sweat of our brows that they maintain their high state. We are called serfs, and we are beaten if we do not perform our task . . . Let us go to see King Richard. He is young, and we will show him our miserable slavery, we will tell him it must be changed, or else we will provide the remedy ourselves. When the King sees us, either he will listen to us, or we will help ourselves.

3.18.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 What was the Poll Tax and why was it imposed?
- 2 Briefly outline two long-term causes of the Peasants' Revolt.
- 3 What was the trigger for the revolt?
- 4 How did the peasants show their dislike of the Poll Tax in the early part of the revolt?
- 5 **a** Which city did the rebels take over before setting out for London?
b Why did they appoint a new archbishop?
- 6 Who were the leaders of the Peasants' Revolt?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 7 Read **SOURCE 1**. What would the following groups have thought of what John Ball he said in his speech?
a The peasants
b The nobles
c The king

3.18.2 The events and consequences

The rebels then set out for London to appeal directly to the king, Richard II, at the time only a boy of 14. Evidently the King's Council were taken by surprise, because there were few guards to defend the city. With the rebels in the city by 13 June, along with many sympathisers among the Londoners themselves, fear spread among the ruling classes. Property was damaged, and some merchants were killed. Wat Tyler probably ensured that the rebels for the most part remained peaceful.

The king agreed to meet with the rebels the next day. The King's Council wanted to avoid meeting them inside the city, with its flammable timber buildings, narrow streets and lack of guards. So they met outside the city gates at a place called Mile End. The king declared that he agreed to their demands, pardoning the rebels, abolishing the Poll Tax and reducing land rents. A group of peasants, however, were not satisfied. They attacked the Tower of London, capturing and beheading three people — the Archbishop of Canterbury, the King's Treasurer and John Legge, who had created the Poll Tax. The rebels impaled their heads on stakes and paraded them around the city in triumph. Richard hid himself away, fearing a similar fate.

The following day, on 15 June, Richard met the rebels again outside the city, this time at Smithfield. In the course of the negotiations, a fight broke out involving Wat Tyler. He was

SOURCE 2 The death of Wat Tyler as Richard II addresses the crowd. Illumination from a medieval manuscript.



struck with a sword by the Lord Mayor. Afterwards he was beheaded, and his head ended up on a stake. The king again agreed to the rebels' demands and, with their leader dead, they dispersed. The king's promises were soon revoked, however. Richard claimed they had been made under threat and so were not lawful. John Ball was hung, drawn and quartered. The four parts of his body were displayed in other towns as a warning against continuing the rebellion. Jack Straw was also beheaded. His head accompanied Wat Tyler's, displayed on London Bridge. And so the Peasants' Revolt came to a violent end.

Results of the Peasants' Revolt

Despite being brutally crushed, the revolt had struck fear into the hearts of the privileged classes, particularly the lords and bishops. The rebels' demands were not met, yet the Poll Tax was not pursued again. Nor did the king's government try to continue controlling the wages landowners paid their peasants.

Above all, this brief taste of freedom helped to weaken the feudal system, which was becoming increasingly outdated.

SOURCE 3 From a chronicle written at the time of Wat Tyler's death

[one of the King's retinue] . . . said aloud [to Wat Tyler] that he knew him for the greatest thief and robber in all Kent . . . and for these words [Tyler] tried to strike him with his dagger . . . [The] Mayor of London, William Walworth, reasoned with . . . [Tyler] . . . and arrested him. And because he arrested him . . . [Wat] stabbed the Mayor with his dagger in the stomach in great wrath. But, as it pleased God, the Mayor was wearing armour and took no harm, but like a hardy and vigorous man drew his cutlass [a sword with a curved blade], and struck back at . . . [Tyler], and gave him a deep cut on the neck, and then gave a cut on the head. And during this scuffle one of the King's household drew his sword, and ran [Wat] two or three times through the body, mortally wounding him . . . [He] fell to the ground half-dead. And when the commons [peasant rebels] saw him fall, they began to bend their bows and shoot, wherefore the King himself spurred his horse, and rode out to them, commanding them that they should all come to him to Clerkenwell Fields . . . Wat Tyler] had been carried . . . to the hospital for poor folks . . . And the Mayor went thither and found him, and had him carried out to the middle of Smithfield . . . and there beheaded. And thus ended his [Wat Tyler's] wretched life. But the Mayor had his head set on a pole and borne before him to the King . . . [who] thanked the Mayor greatly for what he had done.

DID YOU KNOW?

In modern times, British prime minister Margaret Thatcher's government tried to introduce a Poll Tax in 1990. Like the Poll Tax of 1380, it also caused widespread anger and riots, and had to be dropped. Many believe it led to Thatcher's downfall a year later.

3.18.2 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 What indication is there that Wat Tyler was a charismatic and powerful man?
- 2 How did the king act in the part he played in the rebellion?
- 3 Who were the three public figures that the rebels captured and beheaded? What did they represent?
- 4 Examine the methods used to execute the leaders of the revolt. Why were they killed in these ways?
- 5 What was the ultimate achievement of the revolt for:
 - a the peasants
 - b the king?
- 6 Why is the revolt believed to have weakened the feudal system in the long run?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 7 In what ways does **SOURCE 2** support **SOURCE 3** as evidence for what occurred during the second meeting between the king and the rebels?
- 8 What view do you think **SOURCE 3** takes of the rebel leader Wat Tyler? Whose side do you think the author of this chronicle takes? Explain your answer with evidence from the passage.

3.18 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

ANALYSING CAUSE AND EFFECT

- 1 Create a timeline starting with the Statute of Labourers and ending with the clash between the king and the rebels that explores the sequence of events.
- 2 Examine why the revolt failed. State which event you think was the turning point for the peasants.

IDENTIFYING CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

- 3 Explore the reasons why historians sometimes see this as a significant event as Britain move towards democracy.
- 4 What developments stemmed from this event in British history?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 5 Read **SOURCES 1** and **3**. They are both intended to persuade people. Explain who they were trying to persuade, what they were trying to persuade them to believe and what techniques the authors used? Which one do you think was more successful?
- 6 Examine **SOURCE 2** closely. What aspects do you think the painter made up? How do you know this?

3.19 Joan of Arc

3.19.1 The life of Joan

In 1430 Joan of Arc was publicly burnt at the stake. Her crime? Listening to, and obeying, what she said were the voices of saints. Yet these same ‘voices’ helped this uneducated teenage girl bring about the coronation of a French king. Some 500 years later, in 1920, the Catholic Church declared her a saint.

Jehanne d’Arc (or Joan of Arc as we call her today) was born in 1412 in the small French village of Domrémy. Her simple life as the obedient daughter of a peasant farmer changed when she was 13. She began, she said, to see visions of saints and hear their voices. One day, they told her to drive the English armies from France and take France’s **dauphin**, Charles VII, to the city of Rheims to be crowned as king.

It was three years before Joan decided to leave home and carry out the instructions she had been given. At first, her story was not believed. Eventually, she convinced the governor of the neighbouring town that she had to talk to Charles VII. Travelling there in men’s clothing, she was taken to his castle by six men.

dauphin name given to the oldest son of the French king

SOURCE 1 The only contemporary image of Joan of Arc, although it is probable that the artist, Clement de Fauquembergue, had not met Joan at this stage. The sketch was a personal note in the margin of the record he was making of the day when he heard of the victory in Orleans.



SOURCE 2 A miniature of Joan of Arc painted around 1450–1500 CE. She is holding her sword and her standard, on which is Jesus with an angel on each side.



Supporters of Charles VII may have wanted to believe this strange young woman. The so-called **Hundred Years' War** had made them weary of fighting. But Charles VII wanted to be sure. He asked members of the Church Council to question her. They reported they '... had found nothing in her that was not of the Catholic faith and entirely consistent with reason'.

Joan soon had the army she wanted. She rode to Orlean, dressed in white armour and on a white horse, where she drove the English back across the Loire River. It was here she earned her nickname, The Maid of Orlean. A series of amazing military successes followed, which turned her into a folk hero. On 17 July 1429, her dream came true: she stood beside Charles VII in the Rheims Cathedral when he was crowned King of France.

Hundred Years' War
a series of campaigns and battles over territory between the English and the French, and between warring French princes

3.19.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 What sort of family background did Joan have?
- 2 According to Joan, what did the voices tell her to do about:
 - a the English armies that occupied parts of France
 - b the dauphin, Charles VII?
- 3 Why did people not believe her at first?
- 4 What conclusions did the Church Council make when they questioned her?
- 5 Why did Joan become a folk hero?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 6 Examine **SOURCE 1**. Although it is a contemporary sketch, the artist, Clement de Fauquembergue, had not met Joan. What do you see as historically accurate in his sketch and what is not?
- 7 **SOURCE 2** was painted sometimes soon after Joan's death. What is the artist trying to convey about Joan in his image?

3.19.2 A fiery death

Once he was king, Charles VII lost interest in Joan. Nevertheless, she continued to lead her army. In May 1430, she was captured and was soon a prisoner of the English. She was held captive in Rouen for eight months, living on little more than bread and water. The English hated her, but they also wanted to damage the reputation of the new French king. They decided they could do this by proving Joan was a witch. When that failed, they tried to prove that she had gone against the Church by listening to 'voices', which, she said, told her to wear male clothing.

Joan's trial lasted over three months. No-one defended her. Yet this girl who had never been to school remained fearless and clear-headed in the face of constant questions. She finally gave in when threatened with being burned alive, and said she would stop wearing men's clothes. But she was tricked into putting them back on. That was all the authorities needed: she was declared a heretic.

SOURCE 3 Extract from the court transcript, in which Joan is being questioned

Joan: I know well enough. I recognise them [the saints] by their voices, as they revealed themselves to me; I know nothing but by the revelation and order of God.

Q: What part of their heads do you see?

Joan: The face.

Q: These saints who show themselves to you, have they any hair?

Joan: It is well to know they have.

Q: Is there anything between their crowns and their hair?

Joan: No.

Q: Is their hair long and hanging down?

Joan: I know nothing about it. I do not know if they have arms or other members. They speak very well and in very good language; I hear them very well.

Q: How do they speak if they have no members?

Joan: I refer me to God. The voice is beautiful, sweet and low; it speaks in the French tongue.

Q: Does not Saint Margaret speak English?

Joan: Why should she speak English when she is not on the English side?

SOURCE 4 On 30 May 1431, Joan was tied on top of a pile of wood in the market square of Rouen, and burnt alive. She was 19 years old. Her last word was 'Jesus'.



3.19.2 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 How did Charles treat Joan once he was made king?
- 2 Why did the English hate Joan?
- 3 How did they treat her?
- 4 Why did the English burn Joan at the stake?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 5 Examine **SOURCE 3**. How can you tell that the questioner in the court was against Joan?
- 6 We know that Joan appealed to God. What evidence is there in **SOURCE 4** that her English executioners also appealed to God — in other words, justified burning her at the stake in the name of God?

3.19 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

DETERMINING HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

- 1 How many years after she was burned at the stake was Joan made a saint by the Catholic Church? As a class, discuss why so much time might have passed.
- 2 Evaluate what Joan of Arc's story tells you about the public role of women in medieval times? Consider her wearing of men's clothes.
- 3 Some people believe that Joan might have been suffering from some form of mental illness or epilepsy. What evidence do we have to suggest whether she really heard

holy voices, or was just unwell or confused, or else a clever political activist? State your evidence to back up your perspective.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 4 In real life, Joan did not have the benefit of anything like a defence lawyer. Using **SOURCE 3** as a guide, prepare a series of questions you would ask Joan at her trial as her defence lawyer.
- 5 Using **SOURCES 1** and **2**, explain what the key features were that symbolised Joan of Arc to people of the fifteenth century and what they represented.

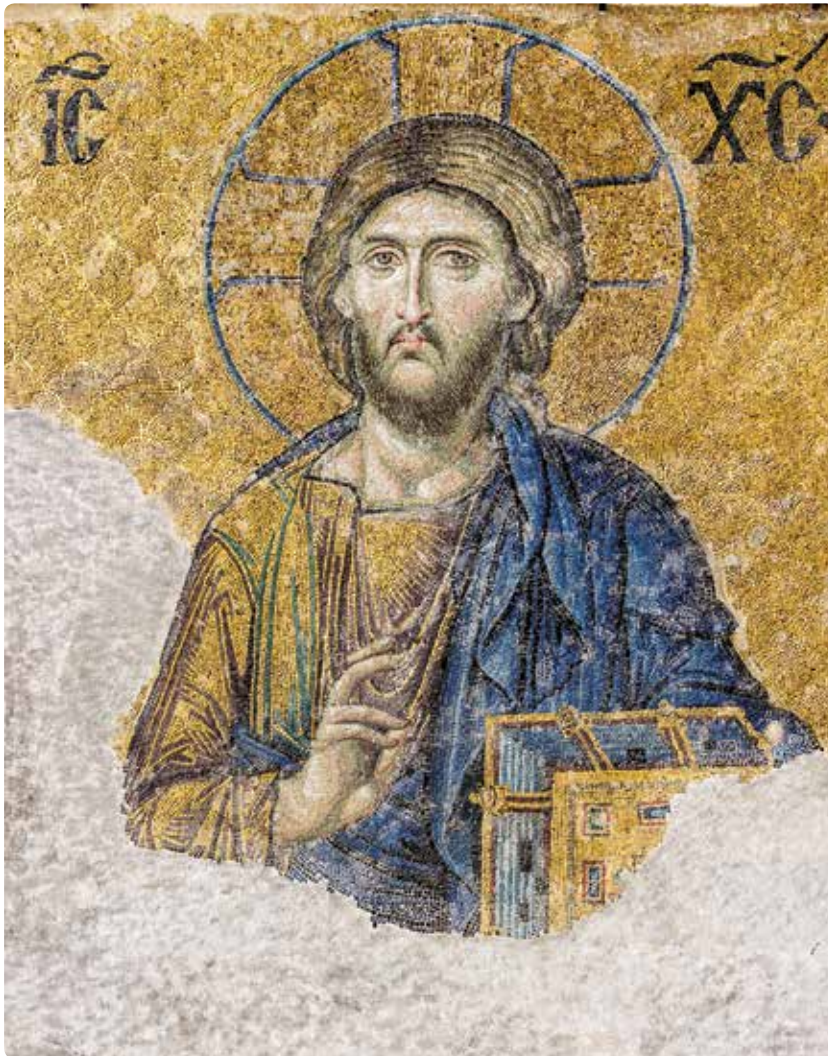
3.20 The heritage of medieval Europe

3.20.1 The Byzantine Empire

Most modern European nations did not exist before the Middle Ages. France and Germany, Poland and Hungary, Sweden and Denmark, Russia and Spain: all of these nations have their origins in the Middle Ages. Many of their languages too developed in this period. The English language first emerged after the Angles and Saxons invaded Britain in the fifth century CE, but it was only after the French-speaking Normans invaded England in 1066 that the English language, with many words of French origin added to it, began to take the form with which we are now familiar.

Some European nations had origins in the ancient Greek and Roman world. But the traditions they developed belong to the Middle Ages. For example, Greece has its roots, including its language, in ancient times. However, much of what is today traditional in Greece belongs to the culture of the Byzantine Empire. The Byzantine Empire was an important power in the Middle Ages. Although it inherited Roman culture, transplanting it to the eastern Mediterranean world, it replaced the old Roman language, Latin, with Greek and adopted the Orthodox Christian faith.

SOURCE 1 A very famous Byzantine mosaic of Christ Pantocrator from the Hagia Sofia in Constantinople, created in the twelfth century.



3.20.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 What was the main language and religion of the Byzantine Empire?
- 2 What was the culture that the Byzantine Empire inherited?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 3 Mosaics and icons flourished in Byzantine art. Look at **SOURCE 1** and answer the following questions.
 - a Who is the main figure? How would you know this if you did not have the caption?
 - b What is an icon and what were the common figures painted in them? You may need to research this answer.
 - c How does this source reinforce what you have learned in the section? Does it raise any questions?

3.20.2 New nations emerge through Christianity

Many of the modern nations of Europe emerged at more or less the time they adopted the Christian faith. What is now Russia, Ukraine and Belarus, but was then a single state called Kiev Rus, adopted Orthodox Christianity in 988 CE. The centre of Orthodox Christianity was the Byzantine capital, Constantinople. The Byzantine emperor was the head of the Orthodox Church. We have already seen that the centre of the Roman Catholic Church, which dominated western Europe, was Rome, and its head was the Pope. Most western and northern European countries adopted the Roman Catholic faith around the same period — at the end of the early Middle Ages. Christianity came to Denmark in 965, to Poland in 966, to Hungary in 1000 and to Sweden in 1164 (although one Swedish monarch had been baptised as early as 1000). Christianity was adopted in England somewhat earlier. It first reached English shores in 597, and had spread across the whole country within a century.

SOURCE 2 St Mary's Cathedral in Sydney. The cathedral is Roman Catholic, which was the dominant religion in western Europe in the Late Middle Ages. Its style is Gothic, which is medieval in origin, yet it was built in nineteenth-century Australia!



Why rulers adopted Christianity

The Christian faith attracted many rulers in the later part of the Early Middle Ages. Firstly, its spiritual message had a universal appeal. Now that rulers were aware of cultures other than their own, the old local gods may have seemed limited compared with the Christian faith, which embraced the whole world. Secondly, the clergy were an educated elite. They were often the only people who could read and write, so could offer the ruler valuable support. Finally, the Church was a truly international institution with influence that stretched across many lands. In short, adopting Christianity added to a nation's influence in the Middle Ages. To be Christian was in the interests of any ruler.

3.20.2 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Where was the centre of the Roman Catholic Church and who was its head?
- 2 In what period did most of the western and northern European countries adopt Christianity?
- 3 List three reasons why the Christian faith was so attractive to many rulers of this period?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 4 Examine **SOURCE 2**. Why do you think St Mary's Cathedral in Sydney was built in the Gothic style, which was an architectural style of the Late Middle Ages?

3.20.3 Feudalism and the modern world

As a system of government, feudalism could not survive beyond the Middle Ages. Its existence depended on the inequality between a large class of peasants and a small class of wealthy, powerful families. The centre of government was a king who often enjoyed absolute authority. In Australia there is no class of peasant farmers and no nobility, so it would be impossible for feudalism to exist here. Even so, our Head of State is an English monarch. Although we have a constitution that allows us to vote for a new government headed by a prime minister, that same **constitution** still acknowledges the role of an English monarch whose office originated hundreds of years ago in the Middle Ages.

constitution written rules outlining how a country will be governed

SOURCE 3 A meeting room of the European Parliament, a body created to represent the common interests of European nations. Almost all its member states and candidate states have their origins in the Middle Ages.



3.20.3 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 On what was the existence of the feudal system based?
- 2 What is the connection between modern Australia and medieval England?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

- 3 Refer to **SOURCE 3**. Find out which countries are member states and candidate states of the European Parliament. How many of these states first emerged in the Middle Ages? Try to also find out when they emerged as nations.

3.20 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

IDENTIFYING CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

- 1 Describe the significant changes to Europe over the medieval period. Which ones do you think were most important? Explain why.
- 2 How did the lives of the people change over this period?
- 3 Create a timeline and place on it the approximate dates when the following nations adopted the Christian faith: Poland, Hungary, Denmark, Sweden, England and Russia. Using the internet or your library, try to find out why England was so different from the others.

3.21 SkillBuilder: Interpreting medieval art as sources

online only

Why is analysing artwork useful?

Artwork can tell us a great deal about a particular period or event. It may also tell us what ideas, beliefs or activities people felt were important enough to express in artwork.



Go to your learnON course to access:

- An explanation of the skill (Tell me)
- A step-by-step process involved in developing the skill with an example (Show me)
- An activity to allow you to practise the skill (Let me do it)
- Questions to test your application of the skill (Applying skills)

3.22 Review

This final subtopic provides a range of opportunities for you to review and respond through:

- i revising and checking your historical knowledge
- ii demonstrating your ability to apply historical concepts and skills.

Go to your learnON course to access:

- A key chronology of events relevant to the topic
- A summary of the key knowledge presented in the topic
- A 'Big Questions' activity
- A multiple choice topic test
- Short answer or extended writing responses

online only



on Resources

Interactivity

Medieval Europe timeline

Create a visual timeline of key events in medieval Europe (c. 590–1500).

int-2945

3.21 SkillBuilder: Interpreting medieval art as sources

3.21.1 Tell me

What are works of art?

Works of art may be one type of primary source. Throughout this chapter we have examined various primary sources: artworks, monuments, buildings and written sources. Artworks include paintings, sculptures, bas reliefs and mosaics. Art styles changed significantly throughout the Middle Ages, and differed from kingdom to kingdom.

Why is analysing artwork useful?

Artwork can tell us a great deal about a particular period or event. It may also tell us what ideas, beliefs or activities people felt were important enough to express in artwork. For example, an elaborately carved altarpiece in a church tells us that much attention was given to expressing the Christian faith during the Middle Ages.

3.21.2 Show me

How to analyse a work of art

A useful way to approach the task of analysing a work of art is remembering to use ‘the three Cs’ — content, context and comment.

Content

The content is what the artwork actually shows. Look at it very carefully and make sure you note all the details. For example, you might need to look for particular symbols or gestures. Think about how you would describe the image to someone who has not seen it; that way you can be sure you have looked at it thoroughly.

Context

Context refers to what was happening at the time the artwork was created — the historical background. Try to find out about the origin and purpose of the artwork: who created it, and why? Is it a primary or a secondary source? Knowing this can reveal as much as the artwork itself. The detail from the Mariacki altar in **SOURCE 1** was created by an artist called Wit Stwosz. The artist and his team were commissioned to create this altarpiece for the Church of Our Lady in Krakow, Poland. During the Middle Ages, artists were frequently employed to create artworks with religious themes. This altarpiece shows various saints, the ascension of the Virgin Mary into Heaven and scenes from the life of Jesus. At the time of its creation in the Late Middle Ages, it was the largest altarpiece in the world.

Comment

You should question the value of every source. Why is it useful? Does it give you raw information or does it show only a particular point of view? Are there any limitations to the source — that is, is there anything the illustration cannot tell you? Do you think it is a reliable source? Why or why not?

Remember, the origin and purpose of any historical source will always influence its value and limitations.

If you ask these questions each time you analyse an artwork, you’ll be on your way to becoming an effective historian. In the following example, the three Cs have been applied to **SOURCE 1**.

Content. One of the scenes on this altarpiece shows the arrest of Jesus. Except for the central figure of Jesus, the figures have the sort of attire that would have been familiar to the artist. In short, they are dressed like people from late fifteenth-century Europe, not like people from the time of Jesus in the Roman Empire almost 1500 years earlier. The soldier does not look like a Roman soldier of the first century CE. He is a knight of the Late Middle Ages. The buildings in the background are also from the late fifteenth century. Before modern times, and before the science of archaeology, little was known of how people in past societies dressed, or how artefacts looked. So if an artist created a scene from a past era, he showed the clothes and objects as they were in his own time and place.

Context. The Church was a powerful and important institution in medieval Europe. Great expense went into embellishing churches with works of art such as this. Artists were commissioned to undertake such projects and employed people to help them in their task.

Comment. Can we trust this image? We can clearly trust that it represents how important religious artworks were to the Church in The Middle Ages. We cannot trust that it is an accurate image of how things looked at the time of Jesus. However, as students of the Middle Ages, we can trust that the artist used models from his own time to create these images. Thus we can say that, for the most part, it is an accurate image of how people looked in late medieval Europe. It shows knights' armour, head-dresses, coats, belts and other attire common to the time and place where the artist lived and worked.

SOURCE 1 A detail from the Mariacki altar in the Church of Our Lady in Krakow, Poland, showing the arrest of Jesus. It was carved by Wit Stwosz in the late fifteenth century.



3.21.3 Let me do it

Look at **SOURCE 2** and analyse it by completing the tasks below.

SOURCE 2 A French illustration depicting nuns looking after the sick



1. Describe what is happening in the artwork.
2. What impression is the artist trying to make about the subject of the artwork (the nuns)?
3. What are the figures doing? What are the various activities? Can you identify the different roles among the figures?
4. What sort of problems in dealing with historical sources do your answers to the above questions highlight?

You have learnt some of the history behind **SOURCE 1** and the sort of information it presents. This helped assess its usefulness as a source. You should now be able to think about the effectiveness of **SOURCE 2** as a historical source by answering the following questions.

5. It is fairly certain that **SOURCE 2** was created under the direction of Church authorities. Perhaps members of the clergy created it. How might that influence the way the nuns are presented?
6. If this was the only source available on the role of nuns in the medieval Church, what conclusions might you draw? Would all your findings be accurate?
7. Why must historians be careful when looking at sources such as this?

The types of questions you have asked about **SOURCE 2** can be used for any medieval artwork — in fact, they can be used to analyse artwork from any era. Keep them in mind whenever you are looking at history through artwork.

3.21 APPLYING SKILLS

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

Based on your work interpreting sources on medieval Europe, answer the following questions:

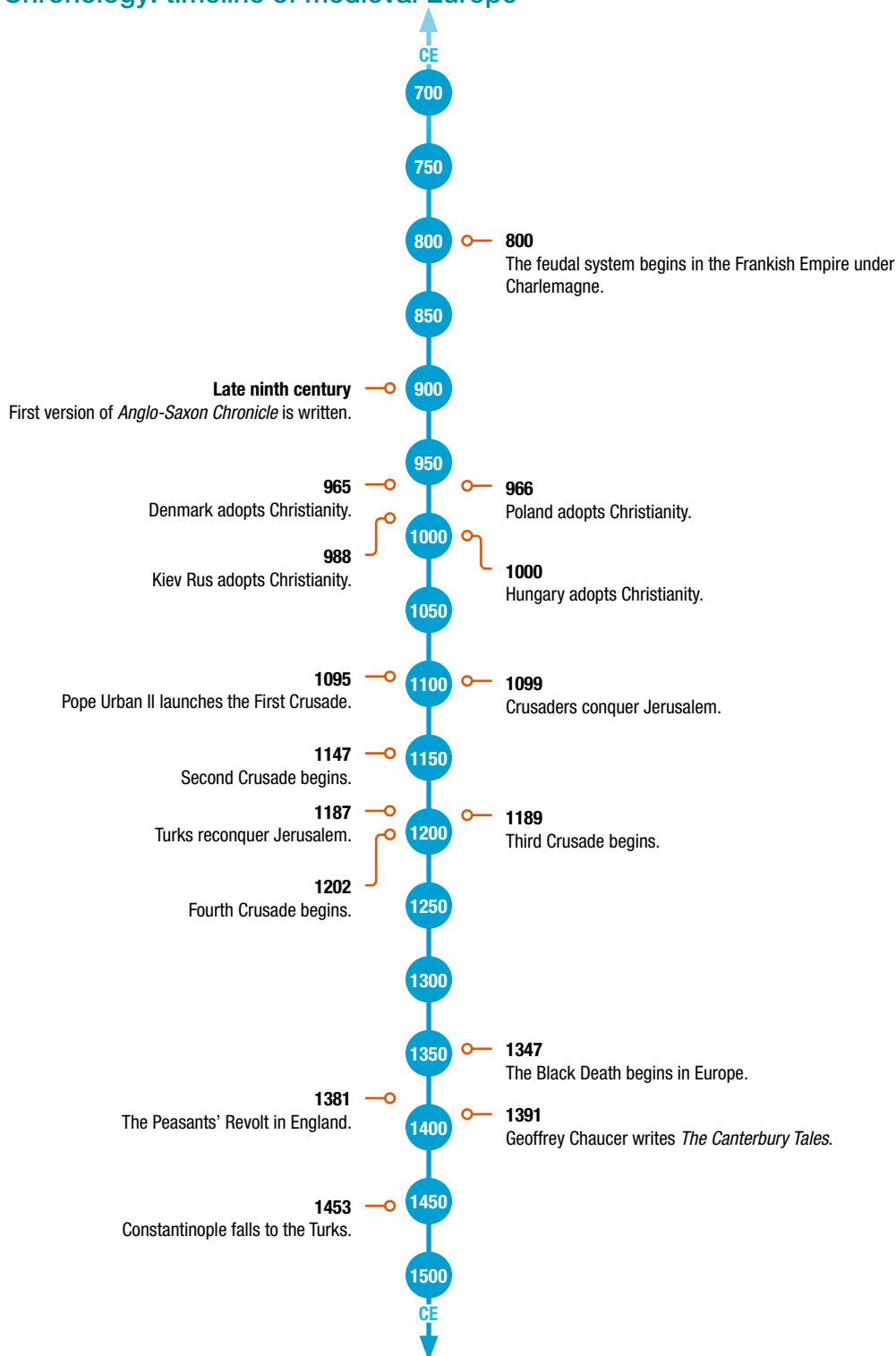
- 1 What types of artworks are categorised under the term 'medieval artworks'?
- 2 What does it mean to explore the content of an artwork?
- 3 Explain what exploring the context of a medieval artwork requires historians to do.
- 4 How can analysing medieval artwork be useful to historians?

3.22 Review

In this topic we looked at changes in Europe during the Middle Ages. Some of these changes were due to the way society and government was organised. The monarch's position was the most powerful in the social and political order called feudalism. Most people belonged to the peasant class. During this period the Church became very powerful and influential. The feudal system lasted for centuries, but towards the end came under pressure as a result of the social changes brought about by the Black Death and the growth of towns and a middle class of merchants.

3.22.1 Review

Chronology: timeline of medieval Europe



on Resources

Interactivity Medieval Europe timeline

Create a visual timeline of key events in medieval Europe (c. 590–1500).

int-2945

Key knowledge: summary

3.2 Examining the evidence

- Much of what we know about medieval Europe is from different types of evidence that provide us with information.
- Sources from medieval Europe include artwork, written sources and artefacts, monuments and buildings.

3.3 The impact of the ‘barbarian’ invasions

- After the fall of Rome in 476 CE, people believed that Europe fell into chaos and darkness. Now, however, it is recognised that, although it was a time of great instability with old empires being dismantled and much migration, there were also important developments taking place.
- Some of the changes that took place were: the system of feudalism, the rise of monasteries as centres for learning and the move towards modern English.

3.4 Early medieval Christianity

- After Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, it spread widely and became the principal religion across Europe.
- By early medieval times, the Pope was the head of the Christian Church and communities of religious men had formed, called monasteries. These religious men devoted their lives to God and played important roles in the local communities, such as running schools and hospitals.
- The spread of Christianity was, in large, due to the work of missionaries, who were committed Christians that travelled spreading the word of God to pagan tribes. They spread across Europe and many were later declared saints in recognition of their efforts.

3.5 The feudal system

- Feudalism, a method of ordering society, was expanded and developed over the period that Charlemagne ruled in Europe.
- The system was based on the king giving land to the wealthier nobles and lords in return for their loyalty and taxes.
- With the land, the nobles and lords gained power over the peasants who lived and worked there, which gave them an income.
- Below the nobles were the knights, who were their sub-tenants. In return for land, they gave loyalty to the lord, fought for him and paid tax they earned from their peasants.
- The feudal system was an effective way to maintain social order.
- Towards the end of the Middle Ages things began to change in relation to the feudal system, as the towns and cities grew.

3.6 Life on the manor for men, women and children

- Quality of life in the Middle Ages depended largely on what position a person held in the feudal system. The nobility, knights and barons all lived reasonably comfortable lives with privileges. The clergy generally lead simple and scholarly lives. Peasants, though, had few rights and life was very hard.
- Men did all the farm work, which was mainly physical labour.
- Most peasants had no formal education.
- Women had few rights, even those of different classes. Their purpose was to provide children. Most peasant women also did farm labour work such as food preparation, looking after livestock and weaving.
- Children were also regarded as sources of labour as soon as they were old enough to help.

3.7 The knight

- Two important developments in the Middle Ages that allowed for the appearance of the mounted warrior, or the knight, in battle were the stirrup and a heavier breed of horse that could carry a man in full armour.
- The Battle of Hastings is one of the earliest recorded battles with knights, where William of Normandy’s loyal lords fought alongside him.
- Knights tended to be wealthy, as it was expensive to breed warhorses and own good armour.
- Over the few hundred years that knighthood was at its peak, the armour developed from chain mail to whole suits of armour. Weapons were heavy iron swords, maces, battle axes and lances.

- By the end of the Middle Ages, weaponry and warfare had developed so that opponents could easily take a knight down during a battle and so the days of knights were over.

3.8 Medieval warfare

- Medieval warfare was a clash of arms for power and wealth.
- Armies would fight hand to hand in tightly grouped formation, using weapons such as swords, pikes, axes and maces.
- Archers with crossbows and longbows would also be used and mounted knights would try to break up the enemy's formations.
- Missiles were used to try to break the walls of a town or castle, with trebuchets and early cannons hurling rocks and other materials at the enemy.

3.9 Castles

- In medieval times, castles were built to protect the monarch or lord's lands, as well as for them to live in.
- Early castles were motte and bailey design: a keep built on a high mound, surrounded by a ditch or moat. The high position gave them the advantage when they were being attacked.
- During the Middle Ages castle designs became more and more sophisticated, with heavy concentric walls, battlements and drawbridges.
- Within the castle there were troop quarters, stables, armouries, living quarters, kitchens and dining halls.
- By the end of the Middle Ages, feudalism was declining, castles were no longer effective as a show of strength and weaponry had developed so that they no longer stood up to an attacking army.

3.10 The power of the medieval Church

- The Roman Catholic Church was the one common institution found across Western Europe and everyone was expected to live by Church law and keep its rituals and customs.
- As God's representative on Earth, the Pope was a very powerful figure and ruled with the upper class of clergy, his cardinals, archbishops and bishops.
- The lower clergy took the Pope's messages to the people in the villages through their sermons.
- Every village had a parish church built with peasant labour, which was the centre of their community. The more powerful churches, the seats of the bishops, were called cathedrals.

3.11 Monasteries and convents

- Parish priests, monks, nuns and friars played an important role in spreading Christianity to even the most remote village.
- Monks lived in small closed communities called monasteries and nuns lived in similar communities called convents.
- The daily practices of the Orders within which the monks and nuns lived varied greatly.
- The Benedictines were one of the earliest orders and established the rules and customs followed by many later nuns and monks.

3.12 The Crusades

- The Crusades were a series of wars fought between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries throughout Europe and the Middle East between Christians and non-Christians. They generally centred on the Holy Land and the control over Jerusalem.
- The first Crusade started after the Pope called upon Christians to fight the Turks and reclaim Jerusalem in 1095.
- In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, there were a number of Crusades and control of the Holy lands went back and forth between the Christians and the Muslims.
- Eventually the Crusades came to an end when the Turks took Constantinople in 1453 as part of the Ottoman Empire.

3.13 The Age of Faith

- The tensions between Islam and Christianity began in medieval times and developed in intensity during the crusades.
- Muslim Arabs ruled much of Spain for about 700 years and much of the current Spanish culture comes from that time, such as flamenco guitar and architecture.

- The Muslim Arabs were quite tolerant of other religions, something that was not reciprocated when the Catholics eventually reconquered Spain.
- Much of the knowledge gained from Ancient Greece and Rome was kept in Muslim libraries during the medieval period.
- Islamic scholars led the world in many fields including medicine, sciences and mathematics and the West was influenced in many areas such as architecture and poetry.

3.14 Towns and trades

- As trade routes became more established and Europe became more settled and peaceful, a network of towns sprang up giving rise to a new social group, the merchants.
- Merchants travelled to distant markets in Asia, the Middle East and Africa and returned with goods and ideas to be exchanged.
- The new merchant class became quite powerful.
- As the demand for skilled workers grew, young people were trained in particular trades in apprenticeships.
- The standard of work by tradesmen was overseen by a guild, which was an association formed to protect the trades own interests. The merchant guilds become quite powerful, controlling trading ports and routes for themselves.

3.15 Living conditions and medical science in the fourteenth century

- The rapid expansion of towns and cities meant that they grew without consideration about sanitation and healthy living conditions. As a consequence, the towns were overcrowded and filthy, with waste in the streets and contaminated drinking water.
- Dysentery was very common.
- General life expectancy was quite low, with a high level of infant mortality from infectious diseases.
- Medieval science was rudimentary and treatment of the sick was based on suspicion and ignorance.
- In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the population grew quite quickly.
- At the beginning of the fourteenth century, there were some very cold years that led to the failure of crops and widespread famine. By the 1340s the ravaged population had very little resistance to disease.

3.16 The Black Death

- It is believed that the plague that hit Europe in 1347 began in Mongolia and spread along the trade routes and via military expeditions to other continents.
- The plague was known as the Black Death and was a highly contagious deadly disease that struck its victims quickly, eventually wiping out around one-third of the population of Europe between the years of 1347 and 1352.
- The most common form was the bubonic plague.
- Fuelled by panic and superstition, medieval treatments were at best ineffectual and at worst dangerous. Generally cleanliness and hygiene were the treatments that were overlooked.
- Sadly, in their ignorance, it was a time where people looked for someone to blame for what happened. Some minority groups were blamed, such as Jews and lepers.

3.17 How did the Black Death change society?

- The Black Death had a brutal effect on medieval life between the years of 1347 and 1352. Although more than one-third of Europe's population was killed, there were also a number of positive changes.
- Doctors started looking for more ways to cure patients when they were sick and the authorities began to be more aware of the need for better sanitation and town hygiene.
- Due to the death of so many educated people who used to communicate in French and Latin, English became more widely used in literature and scholarship.
- The feudal system, which was already in decline, was put under extreme pressure as the loss of so many workers meant that peasants had more power to negotiate their conditions and wages.
- There were a number of workers' revolts demanding government reform.
- The power of the Church was greatly diminished. Because the Church had not been able to stop the plague, people started to believe that perhaps they were not the all-powerful institution that they once believed they were.

3.18 The Peasants' Revolt

- The Peasants' Revolt was an uprising by the English peasants in response to the Poll Tax of 1380. This was a tax on the people by the monarchy to restore the treasury after the cost of fighting the French.
- There had been food shortages and hunger so the enforced collection of the Poll Tax cause outrage and spurred a group of peasants to raise against the government and storm to London, destroying tax and debt records as they went.
- Several leaders emerged, such as Wat Tyler, Jack Straw and the parish priest John Ball.
- The rebels marched on London hoping to speak with the King.
- The rebels met the king outside London at Mile End and the King agreed to several of the demands. However, some were not satisfied and they attacked the Tower of London, killing several of the King's officials connected with the Poll Tax.
- Ultimately, the rebellion was quashed by the King's troops and punished with death. Despite this outcome, the Peasants' Revolt did much to weaken the feudal system and raise the leaders' awareness of the needs of the people.

3.19 Joan of Arc

- Joan of Arc was born in 1412 in a small French village and was the daughter of a simple peasant farmer.
- At the age of 13, Joan began to have visions of saints who told her to drive the English from France and help the dauphin, Charles VII, to take his throne.
- Although she was not believed at first, eventually, disguised in men's clothing, she was taken to meet Charles VII.
- Many people were weary of the war and wanted to believe that they could stop the fighting.
- Joan soon led an army and had a series of military successes against the English, and in 1429 she stood beside Charles when he was crowned King of France.
- Once he was king, Charles lost interest in Joan and she was captured by the English, tried as a witch and burned at the stake in 1431.
- She has since been recognised by the Catholic Church and is a saint.

3.20 The heritage of medieval Europe

- The medieval period in Europe established many nations that did not exist before and laid the groundwork for the modern world.
- The Byzantine Empire took over the eastern part of Europe and adopted the Orthodox Christian faith with its centre in Constantinople, while the Roman Catholic Church, with its centre in Rome, dominated western and northern Europe.
- Christianity was attractive to the European rulers who adopted it and it unified many diverse groups of people of the time.
- Feudalism and its absolute power of the monarch and nobility was widespread in the early medieval period but as the world changed, it weakened and by the end of this period, the early seeds of constitutional democracy were sown.

Key knowledge: multiple-choice topic test

1. Which of the following was *not* a weapon used by knights?
 - a. Mace
 - b. Lance
 - c. Cannon
 - d. Sword
2. Which of the Roman Catholic clergy was the most powerful?
 - a. Cardinal
 - b. Priest
 - c. Bishop
 - d. Monk
3. The main work of early Christian missionaries was to:
 - a. persecute the pagans.
 - b. spread the word of Christianity to pagans.
 - c. eliminate the snakes in Ireland.
 - d. travel across Europe to pagan tribes.

4. Consider the following two statements about the Black Death.
 - I. Medieval people did not know what caused the plague.
 - II. The plague probably originated in Asia.
 - a. Statement I is true and Statement II is false.
 - b. Statement II is true and Statement I is false.
 - c. Neither Statement I nor Statement II are true.
 - d. Both Statement I and Statement I are true.
5. What was the goal of the Peasants' Revolt?
 - a. To behead the King
 - b. To meet with the King
 - c. To refuse to pay the Poll Tax
 - d. To march to London
6. Which of the following is *incorrect* in relation to the Crusades.
 - a. There were more than four Crusades.
 - b. The Crusades were generally centred on the Holy Land.
 - c. Crusaders were promised eternal life in heaven.
 - d. The most successful Crusade was the Peoples' Crusade.
7. What is an illumination?
 - a. A light in the altar of a church
 - b. A decorated holy manuscript
 - c. A new idea
 - d. A stained glass window
8. Which of the following was *not* a social group in the feudal system?
 - a. Clergy
 - b. Lords
 - c. Peasants
 - d. Pagans
9. Which of the following statements does *not* describe why historians once called the medieval period 'the Dark Ages'?
 - a. They believed that ignorance triumphed over learning and order.
 - b. There was a long period of coldness and darkness causing famine.
 - c. It was a period of great instability.
 - d. Many Roman architectural structures were destroyed or abandoned.
10. Which of the following was *not* a defence feature of a medieval castle?
 - a. Brewery
 - b. Moat
 - c. Palisades
 - d. Bailey

SOURCE 1 English population, 1250–1700 CE. Estimates based on parish records.

Year	Population (millions)
1250	4.23
1290	4.75
1300	4.73
1315	4.69
1348	4.81
1351	2.60
1377	2.50
1400	2.08
1450	1.90
1490	2.14
1560	3.02
1600	4.11
1650	5.31
1700	5.20

3.22.2 Respond

Using historical sources as evidence

1. Examine **SOURCE 1**.
 - a. Approximately how many people were killed by the Black Death in England?
 - b. What evidence is there that the plague returned to England regularly over the next three hundred years?
 - c. Approximately how long did it take for the English population to recover to the level it had reached before the Black Death?
 - d. The statistics in **SOURCE 1** are estimates based on records in parishes where reliable records were kept. These statistics assume other parishes without reliable data had similar death rates. Do you think this is a good method for estimating population growth? Give reasons for your answer.
 - e. Do the figures in the table support the view of historians that the Black Death weakened the feudal system? Explain your answer.

SOURCE 2 A medieval illustration influenced by the Black Death



2. Examine **SOURCE 2**.
 - a. What do the skeleton-like figures represent?
 - b. Which social class do you think each person in the painting might belong to? Give a reason for your answer.
 - c. What message does the painting convey about medieval European religious beliefs?
 - d. Why did paintings of this type become more common after the Black Death?
3.
 - a. Referring to **SOURCES 1** and **2**, which is a primary source and which a secondary? Give reasons for your answers.
 - b. Which source do you find more useful in explaining the impact that the Black Death had on the attitudes of the medieval European population? Explain why.
4. What questions would you have about the accuracy and reliability of **SOURCES 1** and **2**? How could you verify them?

Identifying continuity and change

5. As the feudal system declined and people moved away from rural villages, the Middle Ages saw the growth of towns and cities.
 - a. Identify the common features of medieval towns that you can see in **SOURCE 3**.
 - b. Choose one of the features from part (a) and explain its purpose in more detail.
 - c. What challenges of sanitation and hygiene might the town in **SOURCE 3** have had?
 - d. Using **SOURCE 4**, suggest some ways they could have tried to solve the sanitation and hygiene problems.
6. Using a table format, make a list of the positives and negatives of living in the village or town for medieval people. Once you have completed the table, write a paragraph on medieval life in the town and country.

SOURCE 3 A medieval woodcut showing the city of Genoa, Italy. This artwork was created in the fifteenth century.



SOURCE 4 Early thirteenth century sanitation measures from the City of London

Concerning dung

No-one is to throw straw, dust, dung, sawdust, nor any other unpleasant material into the streets or lanes. Rather they are to have them removed by the rakers or others to places designated for the dumping of such dirt, under penalty of 2s. [for default, payable] to the Chamber.

Concerning rakers

There are to be [appointed] rakers capable of cleaning refuse out of the various wards. They ordain that the constables and the beadle are to help them collect their salary from ward residents.

Concerning pigs and cows

No-one is to raise pigs, bulls, or cows within their houses, under penalty of seizure of the same to the Chamber.

Responding to the big questions

At the beginning of this topic several big questions were posed. Use the knowledge and understanding you have gained through your study of the subtopics to answer them:

1. How was society organised during the Middle Ages and who held the most power?
2. What were some of the significant developments during this era?
3. What was the relationship between Islam and the West and did this change at all over the period?
4. Who were some of the significant individuals and groups in this time and what impact did they have?
5. What were the challenges that people faced in medieval times?