

Table of Contents

Welcome to Medieval Times	5
Medieval Western Europe Time Line	6
Mapping Medieval Europe	7
Borders of the Medieval World	8
Make a Medieval Textbook	9
It All Began in the Dark	10
The Pyramid of Power	11
Your Place in the System	12
A Day in the Life	13
Medieval Folk	14
Folks Who Left Their Mark	16
Trades Folk	18
Ideas of the Times	21
Events That Shaped History	22
Traditions and Religion	23
The Castle	24
Design a Castle	26
Fortify Your Castle	27
Defend and Attack	28
Medieval Battles	29
Knights of Yore	30
Let the Games Begin!	32
A Trip to the Village	34
Beyond the Castle Walls	35
The Arts	36
Art with a Purpose: The Coat of Arms	38
Gathering and Making Merry	40
A Medieval Festival	42
Entertaining with Song and Story	44
Eat, Drink and Be Merry	46
Compare Then and Now	48

Welcome to Medieval Times



Copyright © 2002—www.arttoday.com

Welcome to Medieval Times in Western Europe—a turbulent period of conquest and change. Historians have divided the years between 476 AD and 1500 AD into Early, Middle and Late Medieval Times to help us better understand the character of the societies that existed during each era.

For hundreds of years Roman law, order and customs had ruled the tribes of Celts, Angles, Saxons, Vandals and Franks in the wild lands of Europe. In 476 AD, this Western Roman Empire fell to invading barbarians and the Middle Ages began, plunked between the Roman Empire that went before and the Renaissance Era that was yet to come.

Medieval Times, or the Middle Ages as the era is also called, didn't begin with a bang. In fact, some historians called the Early Middle Ages (500-1000) the Dark Ages. Law and order gave way to a chaos of warring and confusion that lasted for centuries. The years of struggle extinguished the light of education, advancement and compassion making this period a dark one in history.

By 1000 AD, the true Middle Ages were beginning. A stable society took root. People were cast into roles and depended upon to provide guidance, labor or protection to support the community. Settlements sprang up, a strong church emerged, schools of learning were established and order began to replace chaos.

By the Late Middle Ages (1300-1500) order and stability were crumbling again. A plague altered the power structure, a corrupt church invited change and explorers expanded horizons. Knowledge and circumstance gave rise to discontent and unrest that led to change. By 1400, modern countries were taking shape, common folk were gaining power and peace was spreading. The Middle Ages had paved the way to the Renaissance Era.

Artifact Museum

Historians are like detectives who follow a trail of clues left from the past to help them describe life and explain mysteries of eras gone by.

Think About It

What clues were left from Medieval times for historians to discover?

What to Do

1. Make a model of something you learn about during this unit.
2. Turn a 3" x 5" index card into an information card to identify and describe the artifact. Write on one side only. What does your item reveal about medieval society?
3. At the end of the unit, put the artifacts on display with information cards face-down.
4. The teacher will print a number on the back of each card. Classmates and visitors to your festival will record each number and their guesses regarding the identity and purpose of each item.

Medieval Western Europe Time Line 476-1500

500-1000 AD Early Middle Ages

- 457 Fall of the Western Roman Empire to the Vandals. A time of chaos and ever-changing territory boundaries. The monasteries preserved and controlled learning.
- 800 Charlemagne, “King of the Franks” crowned King of the Holy Roman Empire. Feudalism took hold. Knights became important in battles and society.

1000-1300 AD High Middle Ages

- 1066 William the Conqueror, Duke of Normandy, became King of England—a reign that lasted until 1087.
Feudal system gained strength.
- 1096-1291 Age of the Crusades.
- 1215 King John forced to sign the Magna Carta. The church became very powerful and wealthy.
- 1265 Simon de Montfort called the first Parliament, a meeting of the king, knights and barons.
- 1286 Alexander III of Scotland died and Edward I of England began attempts to take control of Scotland.

1300-1500 AD Late Middle Ages

- 1311-1315 The Great Famine hit Europe. Heavy rains, increased population and limited cultivated land caused many to starve or become ill.
- 1348 Black Death hit Europe killing almost one third of the population, causing a labor shortage and leading people to question their faith.
- 1381 English Peasants’ Rebellion led by Wat Tyler challenges feudalism. Hundred Years’ War between France and England came to an end. Landowners moved from farming to renting land or raising sheep. Exploration brought new ideas and knowledge.
- 1485 The Wars of the Roses ended and Henry Tudor became King Henry VII (1485-1509). During his reign, the Middle Ages came to a close and the Renaissance Era dawned.

Mapping Medieval Europe



Copyright © 2002—www.arttoday.com

By about 1000 AD the Germanic tribes of central Europe began to arrange themselves into the kingdoms that would become the nation-states of modern Europe. The present-day nations of France, England and Germany can all trace their beginnings back to kingdoms founded during this time.

Materials

large world map
atlases with modern and Middle Age maps

Get Started

Help the students find Europe on the world map. Invite them to identify the continent and distinguish current countries and their boundaries.

What to Do

1. Locate Europe in your atlas. Find Rome, Spain, England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, Germany and France. Look at the surrounding bodies of water.
2. Look at a map of Medieval Europe. Can you find at least three differences between this map and the map of present-day Europe in your atlas? Write a list on the back of your map to summarize the differences you noticed.
3. Discuss the differences that you found with the class. How do you think these differences came to be? How have the boundaries changed over time?