

Medieval Europe

Lesson 2 Feudalism and the Rise of Towns

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

What are the characteristics that define a culture?

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. *How did Europeans try to bring order to their society after the fall of Charlemagne's empire?*
2. *How did most Europeans live and work during the Middle Ages?*
3. *How did increased trade change life in medieval Europe?*

Terms to Know

feudalism a political order where nobles governed and protected people in return for services

vassal a low-ranking noble under the protection of a feudal lord

fief the land granted to a vassal by a noble

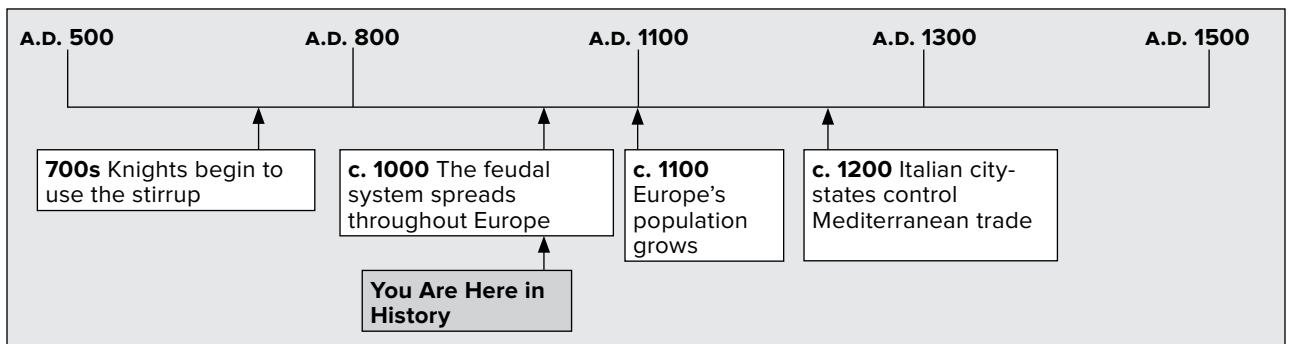
knight a warrior on horseback who fought for a superior

chivalry the system of rules and customs of being a knight

serf a peasant who was tied to the land and its owner

guild a group of merchants or craftspeople

When did it happen?



What do you know?

In the first column, answer the questions based on what you know before you study. After this lesson, complete the last column.

| Now... | | Later... |
|--------|--|----------|
| | What is feudalism? | |
| | What were the knights' responsibilities? | |
| | What was life like in a medieval city? | |

Medieval Europe

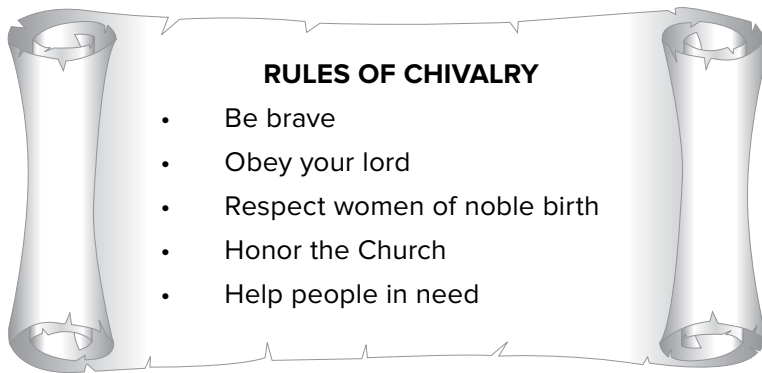
Lesson 2 Feudalism and the Rise of Towns, *Continued*

The Feudal Order

When Charlemagne’s empire fell, Europe no longer had a powerful central government. Nobles who owned land became more powerful than kings. This led to a new system called **feudalism**. Under feudalism, nobles ruled and protected the people. In return, the people worked for the nobles. They fought in the noble’s army or farmed the noble’s land. By 1000, the kingdoms of Europe were divided into thousands of areas ruled by nobles. Most of these feudal territories were very small.

Feudalism was based on loyalty and duty. A lord was a high-ranking noble who had power. A **vassal** was a low-ranking noble who served a lord. The lord rewarded him with land. The land given to a vassal was called a **fief**. Many vassals were **knights**, or warriors in armor who fought on horseback.

Knights lived according to a code called **chivalry**. They were expected to be honest and loyal. Knights trained for battle by holding competitions called tournaments. They were expected to fight fairly.



Nobles lived in castles—tall, stone buildings that served as forts and as homes. High stone walls surrounded the castle. Its buildings contained a storage area, stables for the horses, a kitchen, a great hall for eating and receiving guests, bedrooms, and a chapel. When nobles were away at war, their wives or daughters ran the estates.

The Medieval Manor

The fiefs of the Middle Ages were divided into farming communities called manors. The lord ruled the manor. Peasants worked the land.

There were two groups of peasants—freemen and serfs. Freemen paid the nobles for the right to farm the land.

AbC Defining

1. What is the difference between a *vassal* and a *knight*?

Marking the Text

2. Circle what people did in exchange for the protection of a noble.

? Comparing

3. Which parts of a castle were like a fort? Which were more like a home?

✓ Reading Check

4. What were the rules of behavior that knights followed?

Medieval Europe

Lesson 2 Feudalism and the Rise of Towns, *Continued*

Defining

5. What is a *serf*?

Analyzing

6. Why might a serf run away from a manor?

Marking the Text

7. Circle the inventions or changes that helped medieval peasants grow more food.

Reading Check

8. How did the lives of freemen and serfs differ?

They had legal rights and could move when and where they wished. Most peasants were **serfs**. *Serfs could not* leave the manor, *own property*, or marry without the lord's permission. However, lords could not sell the serfs.

Lords protected their serfs. In return, serfs worked long hours and gave their lord part of their own crops. It was not easy for serfs to gain freedom. They could run away to the towns. If a serf stayed in a town for more than a year without being captured, he or she was considered free. By the end of the Middle Ages, many serfs were allowed to buy their freedom.

| Freemen | Serfs |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • paid nobles for the right to farm land • had rights under the law • could move when and where they wished | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>could not own property</i> or go to court • could not leave or marry without permission • had to give part of their crops to their lord • at first could not buy freedom |

New inventions made farming better. The most important was a heavy-wheeled plow with an iron blade. It easily cut through thick clay soil. The horse collar let a horse pull a plow. Horses could pull plows much faster than oxen, so peasants could plant more crops and grow more food. In addition, peasants learned to rotate their crops. They planted only two of their three fields at a time. This kept the soil healthy, and more food could be grown.

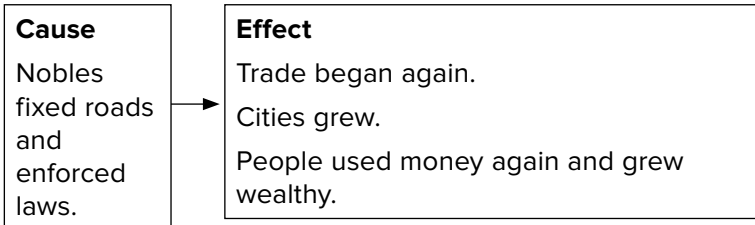
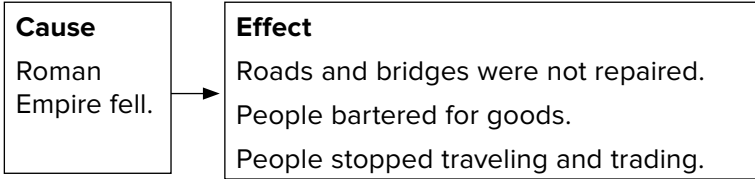
The Growth of Towns and Cities

When the Roman Empire fell, almost all trade in Western Europe stopped. By 1100, feudalism had made Europe safer. Trade began again. As trade increased, towns grew. Many cities became wealthy. Venice and other Italian cities began trading with the Byzantine Empire. Soon Italian cities became the centers of trade in the Mediterranean.

Towns in Flanders were the centers of trade for northern Europe. Flanders is a region in Belgium today. Merchants from all over western Europe met there to trade their goods for fine wool.

Medieval Europe

Lesson 2 Feudalism and the Rise of Towns, *Continued*



Towns were usually built on land owned by nobles. They tried to control town business. Townspeople wanted to make their own laws. As people grew wealthier, they forced nobles to give them basic rights. Over time, medieval towns set up their own governments.

Trade encouraged people to make things. Soon these craftspeople organized **guilds**, or business groups. Each craft had its own guild. Guilds set standards of quality for products, and they set prices. They also decided who could join a trade and what training was involved.

Medieval cities could be unpleasant and even dangerous places to live. The streets were narrow and often dirty and smelly. If a fire started, a medieval city easily could be destroyed. Yet a city was also a place where people could earn a living. In addition to running their households, city women often helped their husbands. Sometimes when a master craftsman died, his wife continued his trade.

Check for Understanding

List two characteristics of serfs.

1. _____
2. _____

List two ways that increased trade changed life in medieval Europe.

3. _____
4. _____



Explaining

9. Why did trade resume after feudalism began?



Reading Check

10. How did guilds affect the way medieval townspeople made a living?



11. Place a two-tab Foldable along the dotted line to cover the Check for Understanding. Write the title *Medieval* on the anchor tab. Label the top tab *Manors* and the bottom tab *Trade*.

On both sides of the tabs, list words and short phrases that describe each aspect of medieval life.