

depth study option

Medieval Europe

(c.590–c.1500)

*Europe's medieval period (also called the **Middle Ages**) is commonly regarded as starting in the late 6th century CE. It lasted about 1000 years. A number of factors influenced the societies of medieval Europe. The most important were **feudalism**, **manorialism**, and the spread of Christianity. These factors helped to preserve social order and stability for many centuries.*

By the start of the second millennium (1000 CE), the barbarian raids common in the earlier part of the medieval period had largely ended. Things began to change. Towns sprang up and grew rapidly. Trade grew, increasing a desire for more knowledge of distant lands, and more of their exotic goods. In time, the desire was for the conquest of new territories.

These trends would eventually help to end medieval Europe's longstanding systems of feudalism and manorialism. They would also help to spread the **Black Death** pandemic, and, later, the ideas and attitudes of movements such as the **Renaissance**, the **Reformation** and the **Scientific Revolution**.

Key inquiry questions

- 3.1 How was society in medieval Europe organised?
- 3.2 What developments and achievements influenced life in medieval Europe?
- 3.3 How and why did society in medieval Europe change?

Part of a stained glass window from the Chartres Cathedral, in France, mostly built during the early 13th century

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Medieval Europe

Medieval Europe once made up the bulk of the Western Empire of ancient Rome. The barbarian raids that helped to end the former empire continued on and off until about 1000 CE. With Rome's army gone, people had to find other ways to protect and sustain themselves during this uncertain time. Feudalism and manorialism provided solutions.

Christianity became ancient Rome's official religion in the 4th century CE. Most people in Europe then (and certainly later) were Christians. Christian beliefs and values had many positive effects on daily life, architecture, the arts and the justice system. However, they also provided motivations for war, and justifications for some people's prejudices and fears.

*Social change in Europe was helped by a number of significant events and trends. These included the rapid growth of towns and trade, the Christian-Muslim wars known as the **Crusades** and the devastating **Black Death**. The discoveries of explorers, together with new ways of thinking and new inventions contributed greatly too. By 1500 CE, Europeans saw themselves and their place in the world differently.*



An illustration from the Toggenburg Bible (c. 1411) of two victims of the plague known as the Black Death

1347
Pandemic known as the Black Death arrives in Sicily (the 'gateway' to Europe)

1381
The Peasants' Revolt in England; peasants revolt against strict rules imposed on wage rises and working conditions, following the acute labour shortages caused by the Black Death

c. 1400
Johannes Gutenberg invents the printing press

1491
Henry VIII crowned King of England

1452
Leonardo da Vinci born

Da Vinci's famous sketch 'Vitruvian Man'



1096

Start of the First Crusade, the first of eight wars fought between Christians and Muslims over the next 175 years

1163

Building work starts on the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris

c. 1271

Venetian Marco Polo begins a 25-year exploration of eastern countries (with time spent at the court of the Mongol ruler Kublai Khan)

1187
Under the leadership of Saladin, Muslim forces capture Jerusalem, providing a motive for the Third Crusade

1066

William of Normandy invades England and is crowned King William I of England



Scene from the Bayeux Tapestry depicting Norman cavalry troops disembararking for their battle with Saxon forces at Hastings in England

800

Charlemagne crowned by the Pope as emperor of the Holy Roman Empire

715

Muslim conquest of Spain concluded



Interior of a mosque in Cordoba (Spain), one legacy of the region's former Islamic rule

476

Last Western Roman emperor forced to give up his rule

Source 3.1 Some key events and developments in the history of medieval Europe, c. 590 CE – c. 1500



Source 3.2 A medieval artist's impression of life on a feudal manor

3.1 How was society in medieval Europe organised?

During the 6th century, a new way of organising **society** emerged in Europe. This system later became known as **feudalism**. It would prove to be very important across medieval Europe. Its origins lay in the legacies of the Roman Empire, the spread of **Christianity**, and in the settlement of a number of new peoples in Europe—most importantly, Germanic tribes who arrived during the **early medieval period**. The focus of this chapter is on the medieval societies of **western, southern and central Europe**. These areas include the **modern** countries of France, the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain and Germany.

The influence of new arrivals

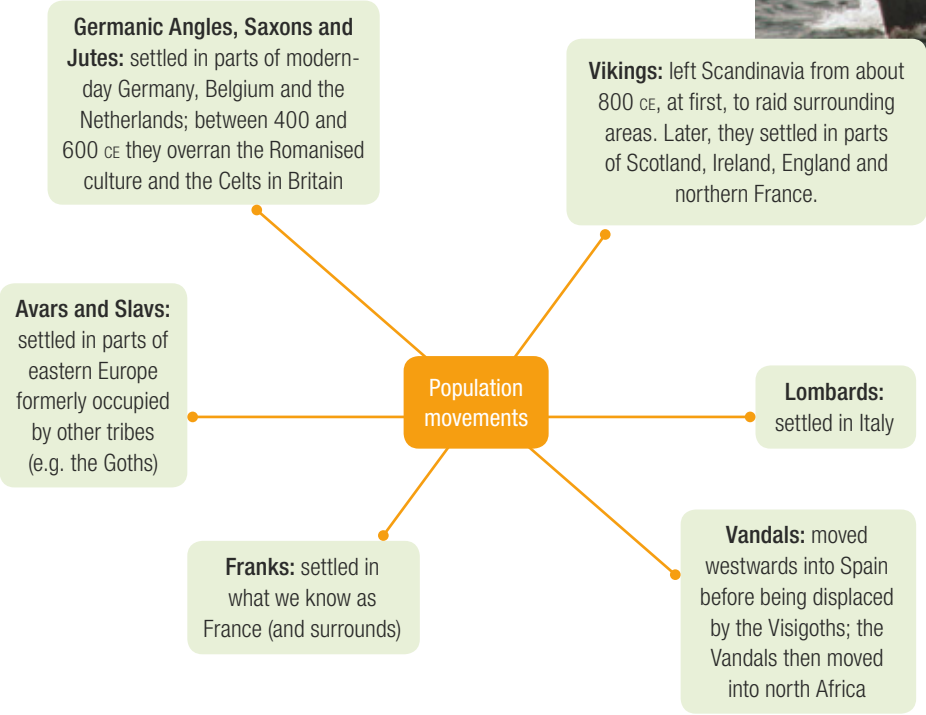
Tribal peoples began moving into western Europe during the 4th century CE (see Source 3.3). Some of these tribes (for instance, the Huns) pushed another tribe out of the land it then occupied. The overall migration tended to be westwards. The ancient Romans called these people moving towards its empire **barbarians** (meaning ‘people from outside our borders’).

At first, Romans generally accepted these people. Many immigrants found work in Roman towns and on country villas. In time, however, the ongoing waves of barbarians helped to end Rome’s Western Empire. Some of these tribal people were warlike and aggressive. They made the region (western Europe) a dangerous place. The system of feudalism that developed began partly as a response to the threats posed by these invaders.

The influence of Christianity

One of the most lasting legacies of ancient Rome for Europe was Christianity. At first, Roman rulers made every effort to stamp out Christianity across the empire. But during the 4th century CE, Christianity was declared the official religion of ancient Rome. Like Jews and Muslims, Christians believe in one God. Christians base their beliefs on the teachings of Jesus Christ (and his disciples). They regard Christ, though born a Jewish man, as the son of God.

So, Christianity was well established in Europe when the Western Empire ended. Its ongoing force and relevance was kept alive by the Western Church, today described as Roman Catholic. Christianity influenced feudalism and **manorialism**, as well as the arts, building styles and warfare. It also impacted on medieval Europe’s relationships with other societies.



Source 3.3 Some movements of tribal peoples into and around medieval Europe

Check your learning

- 1 Who were the people whom the ancient Romans called ‘the barbarians’?
- 2 Where did the tribal people known as the Franks settle?
- 3 Who were the Vikings, and how did they affect medieval Europe?
- 4 Explain why most people living in western Europe during the medieval period were Christians.

significance: the Western Church

The Western Church (later the Roman Catholic Church) was a very significant institution in medieval Europe. Its head was the Pope. Seen as God's representative on Earth by believers, the medieval Pope had great religious and political authority, even influencing kings. For example, it was a Pope:

- who declared William the Conqueror's invasion of England in 1066 a Holy Crusade
- who encouraged Europeans to go to war against the Muslims in what is now called the First Crusade.

One of the powers of the Pope was to **excommunicate** (expel from the church forever) wrongdoers—a punishment that medieval Christians greatly feared. An excommunicated

person could no longer go to church; his or her soul was doomed to live in hell.

The Western Church played a dominant role in the life of medieval Christians from birth to death. Its many religious festivals and feasts filled the calendar. Many people were named after Christian saints and martyrs (people who died in the name of their religion). People's lives typically revolved around the activities of the village or town church.

People learned from childhood how the Church expected them to behave, and what they should believe. Obeying the Church's teachings helped to preserve the social order in medieval Europe.

Influence of changing populations and settlements

The exact population of medieval Europe is not known, as records are scarce. Scholars generally agree that it remained fairly constant until about the 10th century. From this time onwards it increased rapidly, boosted by the growth of towns and, possibly, the warmer weather. (Between about 950 and 1250, the weather in Europe was warmer than it had been before. It is known as the Medieval Warm Period.)



Source 3.4 St Peter's Basilica, the heart of the Roman Catholic Church both in medieval times and today

Then, in the mid 14th century, the **Black Death** struck. It killed about 25 million people, about a quarter (or more) of the population. This rapid rise and fall in the population over about 300 years would have affected society in terms of demand for food and shelter, jobs and the available labour force.

Rural settlements

Most of medieval Europe's population lived in small farming villages and settlements sprinkled around the countryside. The focus of these was usually the castle or manor house of a feudal lord, or a Christian monastery. Forests or stretches of open country typically separated these settlements. As the population increased, these areas in between were often cleared and converted into farmland.

Towns and cities

During Europe's early medieval period, there were very few big cities. Rome was probably the largest city; London and Paris were much smaller. By around 1500, the population of Paris was about 200 000. Medieval towns and cities were mainly centres of trade.



Source 3.5 The Holy Roman Empire in medieval Europe c. 1000 CE



Source 3.6 A medieval woodcut of the European town of Pisa, Italy. Note the fortified wall around the city.

Check your learning

- 1 The population of Europe fell dramatically in the mid 14th century.
 - a Explain one of the main reasons why this happened.
 - b What impact do you think such a massive loss of life might have had on the society? Think, for example, how it might have affected families, life, trades and professions, religious centres, jobs and farms. Draw a concept map to outline your thinking.
- 2 What was the main function (or activity) of most medieval towns and cities?
- 3 Look closely at Source 3.6. If you were a person living in Pisa in the Middle Ages, describe in a diary entry what you might see in a day's walking.
- 4 Compile a fact sheet on the religious order of monks known as Benedictines. You will need to do some research. Your fact sheet can include illustrations.



Source 3.7 Medieval portraits of former Visigoth kings in Spain



Source 3.8 An artist's impression of Pepin the Short, the father of Charlemagne and Carloman I

Influence of medieval monarchies

Monarchies were another significant factor in organising the society of medieval Europe. The monarch (generally called a king or queen) inherited the right to rule through birth. Monarchs owned all the land in the kingdom. They also decided how it would be distributed and used by the people. Christian monarchs were seen to rule by divine right (that is, with the will of God).

The tribal peoples who settled in Europe after the fall of the Western Roman Empire formed small **kingdoms**. A number of Visigoth kingdoms, for instance, were set up in what we know as Spain and Portugal. The Franks set up their kingdom in what we know as France.

Kingdom of the Franks

The kingdom of the Franks was one of the most important kingdoms in medieval Europe's early history. During the 8th and 9th centuries, it was dominated by the Carolingian kings. They were a powerful military force in the region. They also had a close relationship with the Western Church.

Source 3.9 The Carolingian kings

King	Period of rule
Pepin the Short	752–768
Carloman I	768–771
Charles I (Charlemagne)	768–814
Louis the Pious	814–840

The Carolingian kings came to power at a time of great **instability in the region**. They created a single kingdom out of **much of western Europe** and played a key role in **converting tribes** such as the Saxons to Christianity. The Carolingian monarchy was at its most powerful **during the reign of Charlemagne**.

New kingdoms

The Carolingian monarchy did not last long after Charlemagne's death. His son, Louis the Pious, and grandson, Charles the Bald, ruled an empire increasingly at war with itself. By 887, the Frankish Empire had largely been reduced to a number of small kingdoms. These laid the foundations of what we know today as France, Germany and Italy.

Charlemagne's descendants remained in power in what is now France until 987. Charlemagne's heirs also established their own kingdoms in Italy and Germany.

Arrival of the Vikings

The decline of the Carolingian monarchy was helped by the arrival of the Vikings, between about 850 and 1050. Initially, they came to raid, attacking coastal centres and monasteries in England, Ireland, Scotland and coastal France. In time they settled in the areas they had previously attacked. They built new towns, like Dublin, the capital of Ireland, and set up their own kingdoms, such as the Danelaw in England (see Source 2.51).



Source 3.10 An artist's impression of the Viking attack on Paris in 885 CE

significant individuals

Charlemagne

Charlemagne, or Charles the Great, (742–814 CE) was one of the most important kings in medieval Europe. The son of Pepin the Short, he and his brother Carloman inherited the Frankish kingdom when their father died. After Carloman’s death in 771, Charlemagne reigned in his own right.

He was active in overseeing his kingdom and regularly travelled throughout it. He also set up a network of messengers to report back to him on what was happening. Under his rule, his kingdom rose to dominate western Europe.



Source 3.11 An artist’s impression of Charlemagne

Charlemagne, the man

Much of what we know about Charlemagne was written by Einhard, a member of Charlemagne’s close inner circle. Einhard’s account was written at the request of Charlemagne’s son sometime between 817 and 836.

Source 3.12 Some of the things Einhard said about Charlemagne

[Charlemagne] was large and strong, and of lofty stature ... the upper part of his head was round, his eyes very large and animated, nose a little long, hair fair, and face laughing and merry. Thus his appearance was always stately and dignified, whether he was standing or sitting ...

... was temperate [measured] in eating, and particularly so in drinking, for he abominated [hated] drunkenness in anybody ... While at the table, he listened to reading or music.

... had the gift of ready and fluent speech, and could express whatever he had to say with the utmost clearness. He was not satisfied with command of his native language ... [he] was such a master of Latin that he could speak it as well as his native tongue.

... cherished [valued] with the greatest fervour [passion] and devotion the principles of the Christian religion, which had been instilled into him from infancy.

Charlemagne, the conqueror

Charlemagne engaged in many wars. His victories expanded the territory under his control. He was helped by the armies of his loyal supporters. Charlemagne had earlier given many of these men grants of land, as was a common practice of Germanic tribal chiefs. This was done partly so they could support themselves, and equip themselves to help Charlemagne in battle. It also encouraged their ongoing loyalty and support.

Source 3.13 Some of Charlemagne’s major campaigns and victories

Year/s	Military campaign and/or outcome
772	Begins campaigns against the Saxons
773–774	Defeats the Lombards
788	Defeats the Bavarian kingdoms
789	Campaigns against the Slav kingdoms
790s and beyond	Campaigns against the Muslim Moors in Spain
796	Defeats the Avars
804	Defeats the Saxons
811	Draws up a peace treaty with the Danes



Source 3.14 An artist’s impression of Charlemagne leading his troops over the Alps on a military conquest

Charlemagne, the leader

Charlemagne did not just lead in battle. He was also a leading thinker, introducing many political and social reforms. For example, he set up a common system of currency, reintroducing coins as the means of exchange. He also encouraged the arts and education. So important was this contribution that the period of Charlemagne’s rule is often described as the Carolingian Renaissance. His leadership encouraged many new developments in literature, building and the visual arts.

Charlemagne, the Holy Roman Emperor

Charlemagne had always had a close relationship with the Western Church. In 799, he came to the aid of Pope Leo III. The Pope, accused of adultery, had fled Rome. His accusers had threatened to gouge out his eyes and cut off his tongue. Charlemagne escorted the Pope back to Rome and forced his reinstatement.

Pope Leo III was understandably grateful to Charlemagne. But the Pope also wanted the Church to be a strong force in Europe (as the Roman Empire had been). This was especially so given the tensions and divisions in Europe at the time.

On Christmas Day in 800, the Pope crowned Charlemagne as Holy Roman Emperor. This act blended the legacy of ancient Rome with the Germanic model of sacred kingship and with Christianity. It also confirmed Charlemagne’s status as the most powerful king in the Christian world.

Charlemagne’s death

In 813, Charlemagne crowned his son Louis the Pious co-emperor. Shortly after, according to Einhard, Charlemagne died on 28 January. He had ruled for 47 years.



Source 3.15 A medieval bust of Charlemagne, Holy Roman Emperor

- 1 Consider Einhard’s account of Charlemagne (see Source 3.12). Why might you need to be cautious about the truth of Einhard’s account?
- 2 Explain who each of the following were: Charlemagne’s father, his brother, his son.
- 3 Decide on three reasons why you think Charlemagne deserves to be considered a significant individual.
- 4 How did giving grants of land to his closest supporters benefit Charlemagne?
- 5 Why do you think the Pope decided to crown Charlemagne as the Holy Roman Emperor?
- 6 Find out which modern European countries were once part of the Holy Roman Empire. (*Hint*: Refer to Source 3.5, and compare it with a map in a modern atlas.)



Source 3.16 A scene from the embroidered linen panel called the Bayeux Tapestry (made around 1080) showing the Norman cavalry attacking Saxon foot soldiers

The Normans

In France, the Vikings also established a strong base. In 911, their leader Hrolf defeated Charles the Simple (a descendant of Charlemagne), forcing the Franks to pay heavy penalties. But the Frankish king reached an agreement with Hrolf. He gave him a **fief** (a grant of land), in a region of Western France. It was called Normandy, the land of the Northmen. In return, Hrolf promised to stop raiding, and to convert to Christianity. He also changed his name to Rollo. And so Rollo became the first Duke of Normandy, a **vassal** of the Frankish king.

In their new kingdom, the Vikings adopted and refined some of the political and cultural practices of the Franks. This included the language, and customs such as granting of fiefs. By the early 11th century, the Normans had carved out another kingdom in southern Italy.

The Normans in England

The Normans also had a long-standing interest in England. Emma, the sister of Richard II of Normandy (970–1026), had married Ethelred II, the then English king. Their son, Edward the Confessor, born in 1005, became King of England in 1042. During his reign, many Normans became involved in English politics.

When Edward died in 1066, a number of people wanted to rule. One contender, Harold Godwinson (son of Godwin, the powerful Saxon Earl of Wessex) declared himself king. Some sources claim that Edward might have promised Harold the throne on his deathbed.

William, Duke of Normandy (another contender), was not happy. Later that year, he invaded England. His army defeated Godwinson's army at the Battle of Hastings. King Harold was killed, shot in the eye with an arrow. William (often now known as William the Conqueror) was then declared King William I of England.

contestability: Edward's heir

Some medieval sources say that Edward the Confessor was such a devoted Christian that he chose not have sex when he married in 1045. Therefore, there was no natural heir.

Other scholars contest this. They say he always planned to have a child with his wife, Edith, until he argued with the Earl of Godwin in 1051. Their dispute was triggered by a disagreement over who should be appointed as the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Some argue that Edward always intended that William of Normandy (his relative through marriage) would be his heir, and that he had said so in 1051. Others say his rightful heir was Edgar Aethling, the grandson of Edward's half-brother Edmund Ironside (c. 990–1016). (Edmund had been England's king for six months in 1016.) Yet barely a mention is made of Edgar in English history.

In the end, the dispute over who should be king of England when Edward died was settled by William of Normandy with his decisive victory at the Battle of Hastings in 1066.



Source 3.17 An 18th-century artist's portrait of William, Duke of Normandy

After 1066, King William I and his Norman nobles began imposing their rule on the English. Many of the former **Anglo-Saxon** nobility fled to Denmark, Scotland and Wales. William claimed their lands, giving some to the Church and some to his loyal followers as a reward.

The Normans built castles in their new kingdom to protect their territory and help to enforce their rule. They also introduced the system of feudalism already common across mainland Europe.

evidence: the *Domesday Book*

Much of what historians know today about medieval England soon after the arrival of the Normans is based on evidence from the *Domesday Book*.

The *Domesday Book* is actually two books. They are now held in London's National Archives. The *Domesday Book* documents information collected after King William I ordered a survey (in 1085) of all the land in England. He wanted to know its value so he could work out what taxes he could collect from the people. Details of over 13400 separate sites are listed in the book.

Information was gathered about:

- the extent of land and who owned it
- who lived on it (e.g. vassals, peasants)
- its natural resources (e.g. fish-stocked rivers, forests)
- its built resources (e.g. buildings, mills, farm equipment).

The books were written in Latin, the language then used for all official documents in both mainland Europe and England. (The everyday language of England's Norman rulers was an early form of French.) The scribes who prepared and copied the *Domesday Book* were monks, highly skilled at speaking and writing Latin.



Source 3.18 One of the volumes of the *Domesday Book*

Source 3.19

In the vill [tiny village] in which St Peter's Church is situated the abbot (the head of an order of monks) of the same place holds 13½ hides [between about 250 and 800 hectares]. There is land for 11 ploughs. To the demesne [land owned by the lord] belongs 9 hides and 1 virgate [a quarter of a hide], and there are 4 ploughs. The villeins [peasants who could choose, or not, to work on a land's manor] have 6 ploughs ... [There is] meadow [grazing land for animals and where hay was often grown] for 11 ploughs, pasture [where cattle and sheep grazed] for the livestock of the vill, woodland for 100 pigs, and 25 houses of the abbot's knights ...

Translated extract from the *Domesday Book* for the land of St Peter of Westminster

The influence of feudalism

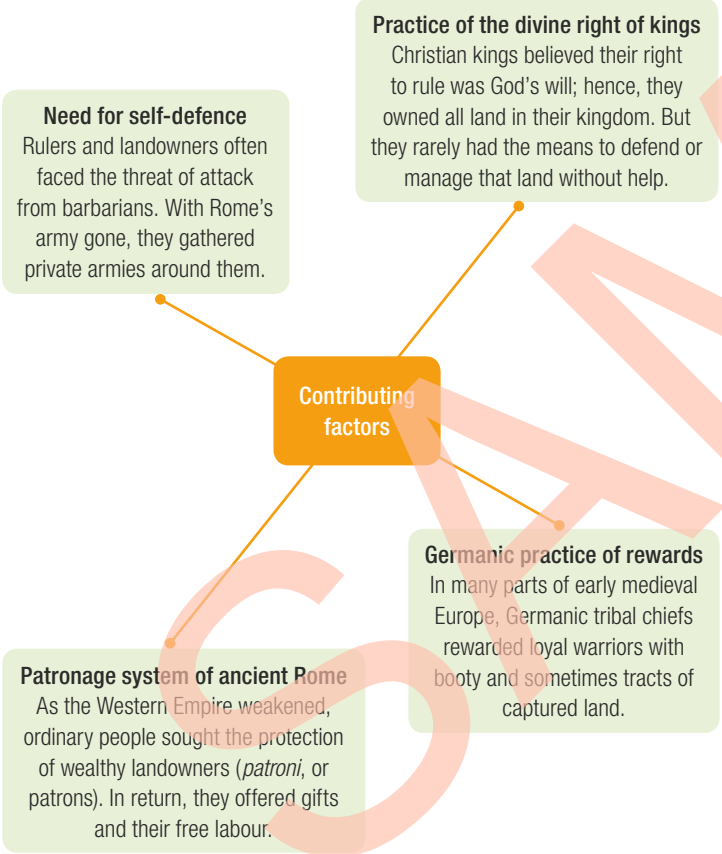
Feudalism was necessary in medieval times because of several factors (see Source 3.20). During a time of great instability, a system of mutual obligations ensured that everyone was taken care of and that society was stable and safe.

Feudalism was a way of organising a society through a hierarchy. A hierarchy is any system that classifies members of that system from top to bottom. In a feudal society, everyone from the king to the poorest peasant had specific duties and obligations (obligations are required actions and behaviours). Every relationship was between a **lord** and a vassal: a person socially above another was lord to the vassals beneath him, and each vassal served the lord above.

How feudalism worked

It is important to remember that feudalism was not simply a top-down structure, where the people at the top could tell the people below what to do. Obligations were two-way (or mutual). For example, a king, as lord, had an obligation to the people directly below him (the vassals). He provided land (known as a fief) to the nobles below him. Each noble also had an obligation to the king to provide military support and loyalty. The nobles, in turn, had obligations to their knights below them, and so on. See Source 3.22, which illustrates the typical organisation of a feudal manor and the roles of its inhabitants.

In Australia, people can change their social positions relatively easily. You might choose to go to university and become a doctor, or you may choose to have a trade and become an electrician. If you do well in your education and training, chances are you will live well. In a feudal system, however, a person could almost never change social position. People died in the same social position they were born into. If a man was born at the bottom of the social pyramid, he could not move up. A peasant, for instance, could not become a noble, no matter how hard he worked or how intelligent he was. See Source 7.3 which illustrates the feudal hierachy.



Source 3.20 Some factors that led to the rise of feudalism in Europe

Check your learning

- 1 Explain how the Normandy region in northern France came to be ruled by the Vikings.
- 2 Why might the following people have thought they were legitimate contenders for the English throne in 1066: William of Normandy, Harold Godwinson, Edgar Aethling?
- 3 Explain how feudalism, a European system, came to be introduced into England.
- 4 Why is the *Domesday Book* such a historically significant document?
- 5 List some of the information the *Domesday Book* documented about the land of St Peter of Westminster.
- 6 In your own words, explain the relationship between a vassal and a lord.
- 7 Based on the information provided, draw a diagram to depict how you think feudalism worked.
- 8 What was a fief?
- 9 What is hierarchy? Do we have hierarchies of any kind in Australia today? Explain.

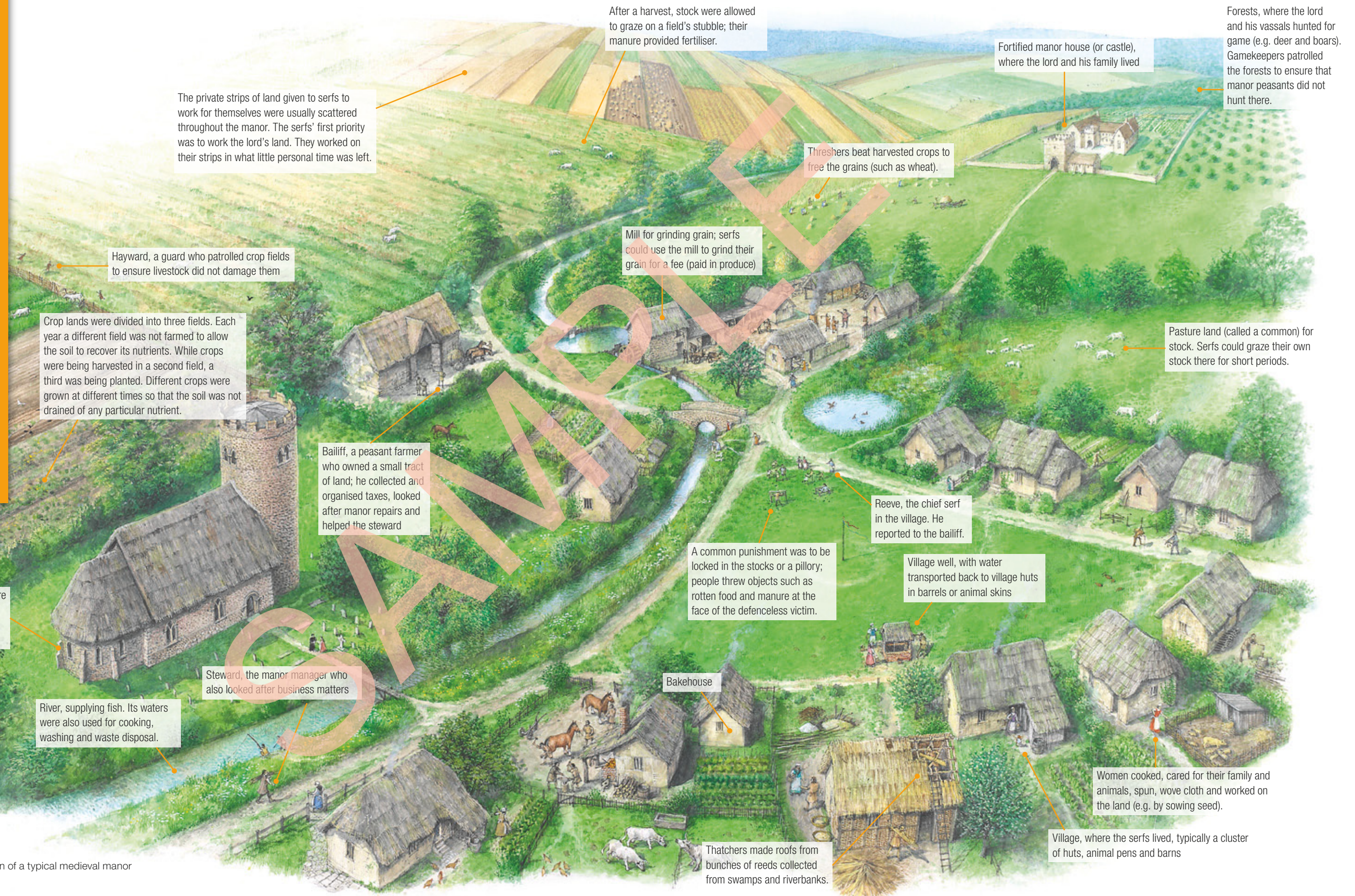


Source 3.21 A 12th-century artist's impression of a knight swearing allegiance as a vassal to his lord in return for favours such as a fief

The feudal manor

Under feudalism in Europe, land not belonging to the ruler or the Church was mostly divided into manor lands. Each manor was owned by a noble or knight who might have been given it by his lord as a fief. Manor lands were made up of the demesne (the lord's land) and the land **serfs** farmed to meet their own needs.

Manorialism was the economic system that supported feudalism. Under this arrangement, the lord of a manor provided serfs on his estate with a place to live and the means to survive. In return, they provided him with their free labour. They also provided taxes (a portion of what they produced on the small strips of land they farmed themselves). Most serfs were not free to leave the estate and had to have the lord's permission to do many everyday tasks.



After a harvest, stock were allowed to graze on a field's stubble; their manure provided fertiliser.

Fortified manor house (or castle), where the lord and his family lived

Forests, where the lord and his vassals hunted for game (e.g. deer and boars). Gamekeepers patrolled the forests to ensure that manor peasants did not hunt there.

The private strips of land given to serfs to work for themselves were usually scattered throughout the manor. The serfs' first priority was to work the lord's land. They worked on their strips in what little personal time was left.

Threshers beat harvested crops to free the grains (such as wheat).

Mill for grinding grain; serfs could use the mill to grind their grain for a fee (paid in produce)

Hayward, a guard who patrolled crop fields to ensure livestock did not damage them

Crop lands were divided into three fields. Each year a different field was not farmed to allow the soil to recover its nutrients. While crops were being harvested in a second field, a third was being planted. Different crops were grown at different times so that the soil was not drained of any particular nutrient.

Pasture land (called a common) for stock. Serfs could graze their own stock there for short periods.

Bailiff, a peasant farmer who owned a small tract of land; he collected and organised taxes, looked after manor repairs and helped the steward

Reeve, the chief serf in the village. He reported to the bailiff.

A common punishment was to be locked in the stocks or a pillory; people threw objects such as rotten food and manure at the face of the defenceless victim.

Village well, with water transported back to village huts in barrels or animal skins

Village church and grounds, where religious services, marriages, funerals, school tuition and local markets were held

Steward, the manor manager who also looked after business matters

River, supplying fish. Its waters were also used for cooking, washing and waste disposal.

Bakehouse

Women cooked, cared for their family and animals, spun, wove cloth and worked on the land (e.g. by sowing seed).

Village, where the serfs lived, typically a cluster of huts, animal pens and barns

Thatchers made roofs from bunches of reeds collected from swamps and riverbanks.

Source 3.22 A modern artist's impression of a typical medieval manor



Source 3.23 A medieval artist's impression of a banquet at a manor house

Those who worked

Peasants made up the largest single group in medieval European society. They undertook the bulk of the physical work, most of which was related to farming. Their labour produced the food and other goods needed by the wealthy (such as furniture and armour). They also provided much of the income of the rich through the rents and taxes they paid. Peasants lived hard lives that were usually short.

Farm work was difficult. Everything had to be done by hand, and tools were basic. These included sickles and scythes, which are large, curved, sharp-edged knives used to cut down hay and long grass and to harvest grain crops.

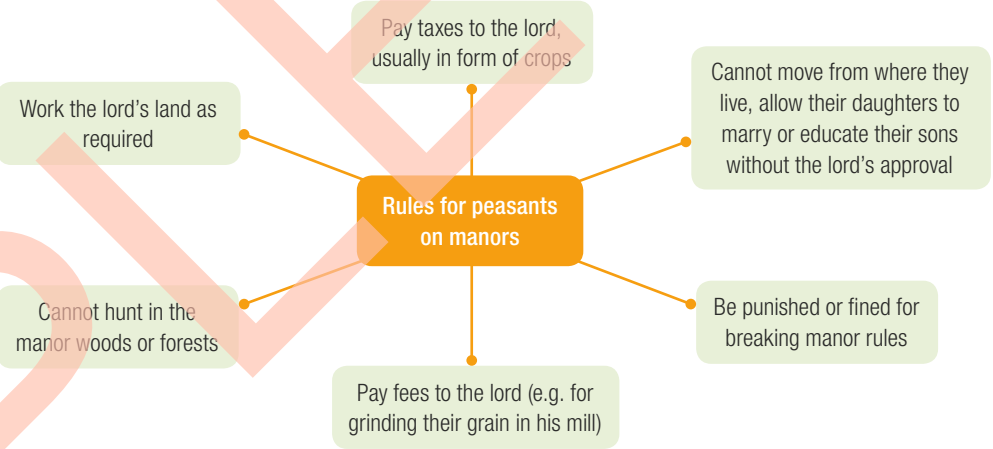
People went to bed early and woke up at dawn. For the peasants, there were few human comforts, especially when the weather was bad. Survival depended on working hard and staying healthy. Little time was left for leisure.

Those who prayed

The Pope and the Western Church (hereafter called **the Church**) were supported by a large network of Christian workers, including cardinals, archbishops, bishops, deacons, abbots, monks, nuns, village priests and friars. Some of these people (abbots for instance) were often given fiefs by a monarch. By acquiring land and by collecting the tithes (payments) from the people, the Church became very wealthy. It did not have to pay taxes.

Monks and nuns

Devout Christians in medieval Europe often chose to serve God as monks or nuns. Their lives were controlled by their vows of chastity (no sexual relationships), obedience and poverty. They devoted their lives to serving God and their superiors. This meant praying many times a day (including late at night and early in the morning), caring for the poor and sick, attending to their religious duties and living a simple life. To help them keep their vows and show their devotion, monks and nuns lived apart from the community. Monks lived in monasteries and nuns in nunneries.



Source 3.24 Rules for peasants working on manors



Source 3.25 A medieval artist's impression of the life of a manor peasant (from top left through to bottom right, representing the 12 months of the year)



Source 3.26 A 16th-century artist's impression of monks creating manuscripts

The legacy of medieval monks

In medieval society, monks were usually the only people who could read and write. Some were historians. Others kept control of important documents for feudal lords. Many others copied and/or translated important manuscripts such as Arabic medical texts and the Bible. They played a very important role in preserving ancient documents and texts that would otherwise have been lost to us today.

Those who fought

As a group, knights made up only a small percentage of the population. In feudal society, though, they played a particularly important role. Through the feudal arrangement, many were given grants of land (for example by their lord, who was sometimes the monarch). With that came the responsibility to protect the people. For that, they would receive income in the form of food and supplies. They were also expected to provide the monarch with military support.

Living conditions

In the medieval world, the lives of the wealthy and the poor were very different. These differences reflected the divisions in society at the time.

Home life of the wealthy

The rich included kings and queens and their extended families, feudal lords and their ladies and the families of knights. The Church, too, had great wealth. When not fighting wars, the wealthy led mostly comfortable lives, often in manor houses and castles (see Source 3.29).

In peace time, castles were the settings for feasts (see Source 3.23), workshops, markets, romance, raising and entertaining children, crafts and music. They were also the focal point for military training, the day-to-day running of the manor and for administering justice.



Source 3.28 The restored bedroom of the French king Henri III in the Château de Blois. Often, the beds of the wealthy had blankets, sheets, feather pillows, fur covers and linen curtains. Tapestries covered up draughty cracks in the stone walls of castles.

focus on ...

continuity and change: becoming a knight

The tradition of being knighted continues in Britain today, although many aspects of the ceremony have changed. Medieval **knights** were typically knighted for their military bravery. British knights these days might be recognised for their achievements in business, politics or entertainment. (For instance, the musician Mick Jagger of the Rolling Stones is a knight.) As in medieval times, knights are called 'Sir'; their wives are called 'Lady'.

The knighting ceremony, today as in medieval times, is called an investiture. Today's monarch taps the person to be knighted on each shoulder with a sword, as was typically done in medieval times. However, instead of being given spurs and a sword to mark the occasion, modern knights receive a medal. Unlike medieval knights, modern knights do not have prepare for 24 hours by praying and fasting (called a vigil). There is another change, too: women can now also receive this honour. They are called 'dames'.



Source 3.27 A man being knighted by Queen Elizabeth II

Check your learning

- 1 Refer to Source 3.25. The 12 months of the year are depicted, in order, in the panels, reading from left to right and from the top row down. Based on this source, what might be a task that a European peasant typically did in each of the following months: February, July, December?
- 2 How did their Christian beliefs influence how monks and nuns typically lived their lives?
- 3 Explain why being knighted is an example of continuity and change.

Typical day for a wealthy family

A typical day for the lord's family began when the sun rose. By then, servants were preparing meals and had lit the fires in the kitchen and great hall (see Source 3.29). The noble family would wash in tubs (often with the help of servants), dress and complete their toiletries. They would visit the cold and breezy garderobe (toilet seat that opened directly above a stinking cesspit or moat below). The chamberpot kept in the bedroom was typically used for toilet visits during the night. Strips of torn fabric were used as toilet paper.

After breakfast, the lord and lady would usually visit their private chapel. The lord's tasks for a day might include making decisions about the manor, receiving rents, presiding over a manor court and planning to visit another castle he owned. At night, there might be a feast for an important visitor (another lord or even the king!) or to celebrate something special, such as the end of a **tournament**.

The medieval castle

Castles were often built within a lake for security reasons. Other castles were built on islands, or on the tops of hills or cliffs.

Drawbridge; could be raised for security reasons

Access bridge; anyone wanting to enter the castle would be visible to the guards for quite some time before they reached the gate

Portcullis (gate)

Men worked pulleys to lower the drawbridge and raise the portcullis

The castle gate and gatehouse were always guarded.

Garrison, where soldiers lived, which would be packed with soldiers in time of war.

Garderobe (toilet)

Main bedroom of the lord and his wife

The private quarters of the lord and his family, called the solar. This was a bit like a family room or lounge. It was often next to the great hall.

The great hall, with its often straw-lined floor, served many purposes. It was a banquet hall, a court, a place to receive visitors, and a meeting place. In the early days of castles, it was also a bedroom for the lord and his family.

Freshwater well, which might tap into an underground spring

Garden, growing food such as herbs and vegetables

In the kitchen, cauldrons (big iron pots) hung over open fires and spits; sometimes a cauldron might contain a number of different dishes, each packed separately. The scullery, where dishes and pots were washed, was often outside.

Stables

Workshops, where craftspeople such as blacksmiths, furniture makers, cobblers, armour makers and potters made their goods for the castle occupants and were trained.

Dungeons (underground prison cells)

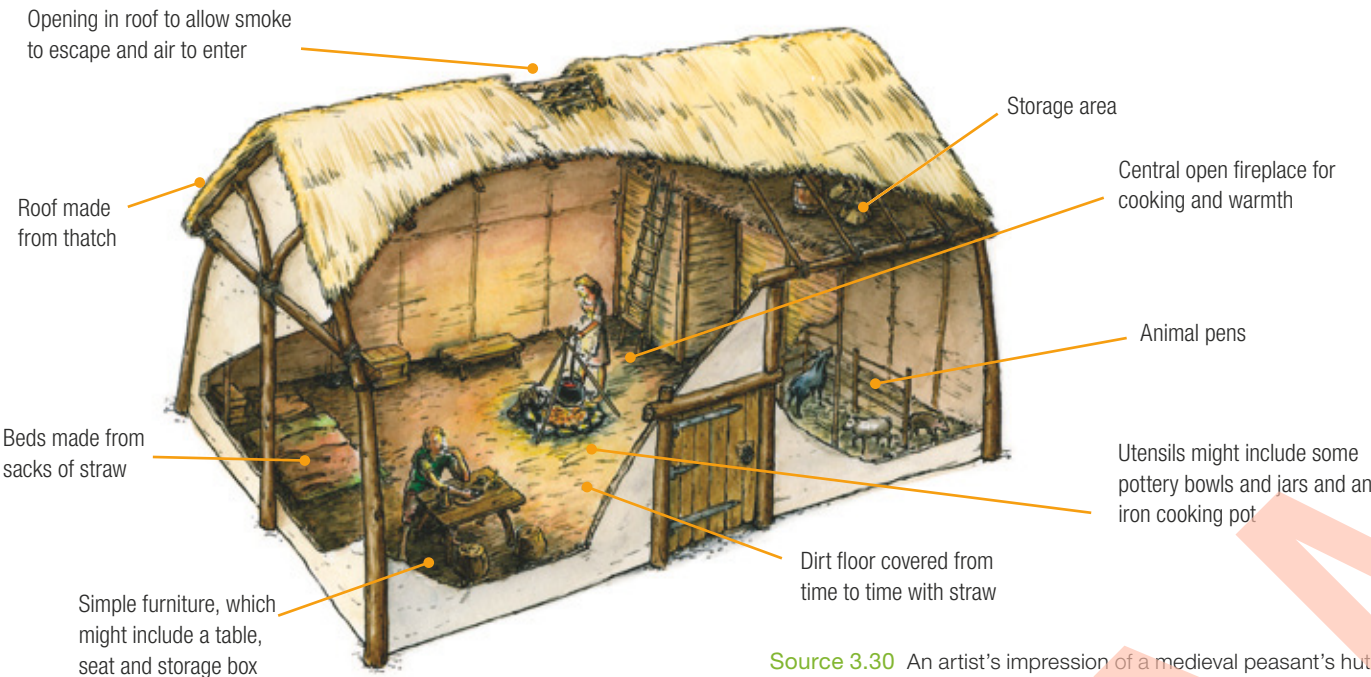
The basement room of a castle tower would be used as a cool room where food (e.g. salted meat and bags of grain), wine and equipment were stored.

Source 3.29 A modern artist's impression of 'home sweet home' for many wealthy and powerful families in medieval Europe

Home life of the poor

Home for peasant farm workers was a one- or two-roomed hut shared with domestic animals such as chickens and pigs (see Source 3.30). It might typically be one of a number of such huts on a feudal manor (see Source 3.22). The hut was usually dirty, sooty, smelly and dark. Walls were mostly a mixture of mud, manure and sticks (called wattle and daub). They might be painted white with lime. Roofs were made from thatch. Windows were narrow openings that could be boarded up in winter. The toilet was a hole in the ground outside.

Conditions for peasants who lived in the cramped houses of medieval towns were not much better than those of peasant farmers. Those peasants who worked as servants in manor houses and castles lived in more secure and pleasant surroundings. However, their daily lives were hard like those of other peasants, with few personal comforts.



Source 3.30 An artist's impression of a medieval peasant's hut

Town life

Towns were usually small, with populations of only a few hundred. Some grew into larger cities. The wealthy townspeople might live in larger houses, often towards the centre. The poor lived in dirtier, more cramped quarters. Narrow cobbled or dirt streets separated the rows of wooden buildings with thatched roofs. The buildings were serious fire risks: they were made of highly combustible material and people lit fires and candles in them for warmth and light.

Check your learning

- 1 Write a short definition for each of these terms: garderobe, solar, garrison, portcullis, cauldron, thatch, wattle and daub.
- 2 Work with a partner. Write a short account of a typical day in the life of either a wealthy family living in a castle, or a poor family living in a manor village. Compare your accounts.
- 3 You are a tourist operator who is able to go back in time (with the people on your tour coach!) to visit the working medieval castle shown as Source 3.29. Decide the order in which you will show people around. Write the outline of the script you will use in showing them around.

Fashions and toiletries

By the 11th century in Europe, there were great differences between the clothing worn by the rich and the poor. In fact, laws were passed to enforce this difference. Gold and silver material and purple silk could be worn only by royalty. Only noblewomen could wear elegant veils and have dresses made from satin and velvet. Only the rich could afford toiletries, perfumes and incense.

The clothes of the wealthy were custom-made by tailors. Although there was a range of fashion trends during the Middle Ages, women typically wore long, trailing garments, often with elaborate sleeves and ornate headgear. Wealthy men commonly wore tunics, stockings, decorated cloaks and fancy hats. The clothes of the poor were, by contrast, drab and dull in colour. They were crudely cut, and made from coarse cloth woven by peasant women from hand-spun wool or linen.

The body beautiful

Cleanliness was valued by medieval people, even though they did not understand the health reasons for keeping clean. For the poor, personal hygiene might mean washing in a dish of cold water. Wood was a scarce resource for peasants and it was not to be wasted on unnecessary heating. On special occasions, peasant women might freshen up their hair and clothes with the scent of flowers.

Only the wealthy could afford the luxury of a long, hot bath, called a 'stew'. Scented oils, rose petals or herbs such as rosemary and spearmint were added to the water. The wealthy could also afford to pamper their bodies. Costly perfumes were imported from places such as Arabia. Oils were extracted locally from plants such as jasmine, blackcurrants, apricot kernels, roses and violets. Dried herbs such as mint, rosemary and cinnamon were burnt to purify and sweeten the air. Source 3.34 describes a preparation for sweet-smelling hair for medieval ladies.



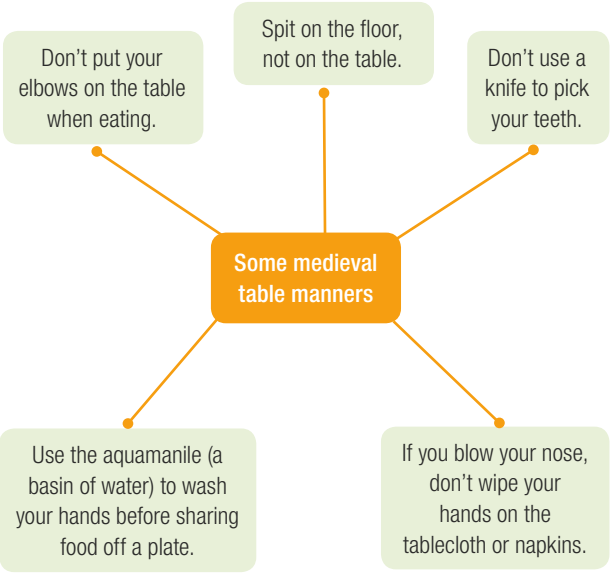
Source 3.31 An artist's impression of a range of garments worn by rich and poor—including the king—in 11th-century England



Source 3.32 An artist's impression of a medieval man enjoying a 'stew'



Source 3.33 A medieval-style soup, such as might have been seen at a medieval wedding or special feast



Source 3.35 Some medieval table manners

Source 3.34

Take some dried roses, clove, nutmeg, watercress and galangal [a root plant a bit like ginger]. Let all these, powdered, be mixed with rose water. With this water let her sprinkle her hair and comb it with a comb dipped in this same water so that [her hair] will smell better. And let her make furrows in her hair and sprinkle on the above-mentioned powder, and it will smell marvellously.

Translated extract from the 12th-century writings of Trotula di Ruggiero, the most significant female physician of the Middle Ages

Eating the medieval way

There were no supermarkets, refrigerators or ovens in medieval times. People killed their own animals and preserved meat by salting, smoking or pickling it. Spices were used to disguise the taste of rotten meat. (Sometimes, too, dogs were used to ‘test’ it.) Vegetables were commonly dried or pickled. Grain was ground into flour to make bread. People used spoons, knives or their fingers to eat; most ate off thick slices of bread called trenchers. Table manners were basic (see Source 3.35)

Eating habits of the rich

The rich ate the meat of both domestic and game animals (such as deer, wild boars, larks, pheasants). There was also fish, fruit, soft cheese, eggs, coloured jellies, vegetables, sauces and soups, salads, white bread, pies and tarts, and ornate sweet dishes called subtleties. Food was washed down with ale, wine or mead.

Banquets were held on important religious feast days, and to mark events such as marriages, coronations, special birthdays, tournaments and the arrival of important guests. The important people (that is, members of the lord’s family and/or guests) sat at a higher table than other diners. Feasts often lasted for hours. In between the many courses, diners were entertained by acrobats, minstrels, troubadours, storytellers, jugglers and jesters. Any leftover food was given to the poor who waited expectantly at the castle gates.

Eating habits of the poor

The poor ate a simpler and less varied diet than the rich. It included grainy bread, seasonal vegetables and fruit (for those with access to gardens and fruit trees), milk, hard cheese, porridge made from oats or barley and perhaps some nuts from the forests. Most peasants ate their main meal for the day while working in the fields. They ate little meat, as they were too poor to own many animals, and hunting for game in the lord’s forests was forbidden. If they lived near the sea or streams, there might be some fish. One of the simple joys for peasants in towns was to gather at the tavern for a few ales after a day’s work.

Check your learning

- 1 Describe one way in which a woman after the 11th century in Europe might ‘advertise’ that she was wealthy in the way she dressed.
- 2 List some ways in which wealthy women and poor women might have kept themselves smelling sweet.
- 3 Compare and contrast the diets of the rich and poor. Which diet do you think was healthier? Justify your view.
- 4 Most people in medieval Europe could not read. Prepare an illustrated manual on table manners that diners attending a medieval banquet could check.

Medieval entertainment

Many pastimes in medieval Europe were the privilege of the wealthy. These included the multi-course banquets and, for the men, activities such as hunting, falconry and playing chess. Wealthy women might embroider, stitch tapestries or listen to minstrels.

Hunting and falconry

The wealthy obtained their meat by hunting with dogs (usually on horseback) or with falcons. Both activities showed off their social privilege. Hunts were typically conducted in the woods and forests of manor estates, forbidden to the poor. Sometimes, women, riding side-saddle, would be part of the hunting party. The poor hunted for rabbits and birds in the fields.

Falconry, or hawking, involved using trained birds such as eagles, falcons and hawks to catch prey such as pigeons and hares. The type of hunting bird used indicated a person’s status: eagles, for example, were only owned by kings. Appearing in public with a bird of prey on a leather-strapped wrist was a sign of a person’s wealth and social status.

Entertainment for the poor

For the poor, entertainment might include the public spectacles of jousts and tournaments. There were special feasts (such as at harvest time) put on by the lord of the manor. There also were the processions, ceremonies and holy day feasts and festivals associated with events of the Church calendar .

Other entertainments included dancing (including the popular *carole*), dice throwing, ball games, wrestling and hammer throwing. Many of the games played by medieval children (such as hopscotch and hide-and-seek) are still played today.



Source 3.36 This 16th-century painting by Bruegel (Pieter the Elder) depicts a wide range of games played by medieval children

3.1 How was society in medieval Europe organised?

Remember

- 1 In your own words, define each of the following terms: feudalism, manor, vassal.
- 2 Look at Source 3.1. How many *full* decades were there between the start of the One Hundred Years War and the year in which King Henry VIII was crowned King of England?
- 3 How did the waves of various tribal people who migrated into Europe before about 1000 CE affect the society (in general terms)?
- 4 Consider how people worked in medieval Europe.
 - a Who did most of the work?
 - b What sort of work did the majority of these people do?

Understand

- 5 Explain the relationship between the Battle of Hastings in 1066 and the beginnings of a feudal system in Britain.
- 6 How do you think a medieval ruler's position might have been strengthened by giving fiefs to those who provided loyalty and support?
- 7 Look at Sources 3.22, 3.25 and 3.30. Based on these (and what you have read), write down ten reasons why you think that a medieval serf would typically have had a hard life.
- 8 What did 'having a stew' mean in medieval times? What social class might engage in this activity? Why?
- 9 Decide on three questions you would ask a medieval monk or nun to help you understand better why they chose to live the lives they did.

Apply

- 10 Think about all the factors that have helped to make you who you are. Think about how these factors help to control your behaviour and your social roles. Think, too, about how they are related. Represent these thoughts in a concept map.
- 11 Work in groups to construct a model of either the hut of a poor medieval family or the bedroom of a wealthy medieval noble or king. Share responsibilities, including research, preparing materials, assembling the diorama and presenting it to the class.

- 12 Look carefully at Source 3.22. If you were one of those collecting information for the *Domesday Book*:

- a what information would you record for this manor, based on what you can see (estimate approximate dimensions)?
- b what questions would you ask the lord of the manor in order to gather information on things that are not evident?

Analyse

- 13 With a partner, identify as many medieval games and activities as you can in Source 3.36. These might be those that you recognise as a set game, or ones that you can only describe by what you observe.

Evaluate

- 14 Decide what you think would be the two best and two worst things (in each case) about living in a castle and living in a medieval town.
- 15 Based on what you have learned so far about the society of medieval Europe, conduct a class debate (sharing all tasks involved in research, preparing for and delivering the debate) on the following topic: that living as part of the society of medieval Europe was, overall, a better way of life than living in today's Australian society.

Source 3.37 Artist's impression of a medieval hawking expedition. Small hoods were placed over the heads of hunting birds to keep them calm until they were released for the hunt.



Create

- 16 Refer to Source 3.31. Design your own version of a new outfit to be worn by one of the representatives of the society of 11th-century England shown in this illustration. Your finished garment needs to be in the same general style.
- 17 Use either Source 3.37 or 3.38 to inspire your account of a day spent hunting or hawking in medieval times. Your account might be one of the following:
 - a letter you write to someone about your experience
 - a poem or song that reflects on your experience
 - a series of labelled sketches (comic-book style) that detail the key events of the day.



Source 3.38 This 15th-century illustration shows the end of a hunt for a wild pig or boar. Dogs of different breeds were used, hunting for prey such as deer, wolves, bears and foxes—as well as wild pigs.



Source 3.39 Canterbury Cathedral—significant not only for its impressive architecture but also for the vital role it played in the lives of medieval Christians

3.2 What developments and achievements influenced life in medieval Europe?

Medieval Europe experienced great changes, both good and bad. Although the arts such as music and architecture flourished, religious wars and devastating plagues took their toll. It was also a time of social changes that affected the entire structure of feudal society. At times, it may have seemed to the people of medieval Europe as if their world had been turned upside down.

Medieval buildings

One enduring (and more obvious) feature of Europe's medieval society is its architecture. Most European cities and towns that began during the medieval period still have buildings that date back hundreds of years. These buildings include castles, churches, cathedrals and monasteries. As you can see from Source 3.39, some of these structures were very large, often the biggest building in a town or city. Spires and bell towers, if included, added greater height.

Gothic style

Many medieval buildings are examples of Gothic architecture. As a style, it became prominent in modern France, England, Germany and Italy from about 1100. While each region had slight differences in their architecture, there were many common features, especially with churches. It is significant that many Christian churches in Australia still incorporate these features. They include:

- a cross-shaped floor plan, called a cruciform (a symbol of the cross on which Jesus Christ was killed)
- arches and windows that come to a sharp point at the top
- flying buttresses, a supporting structural feature that enabled the buildings to be built to a great height (some flying buttresses look a bit like giant insect legs)
- stained glass windows that, together with sculptures, provided religious education for a people who could mostly not read or write.

Medieval writings

Relatively few people in medieval Europe could read or write: those who could write were mostly priests and monks, and a few nuns. Among these nuns were the French writer and scholar Héloïse d'Argenteuil (c. 1100–1164) and the German abbess Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179). All documents were written by hand (until the printing press was invented in the early 1400s). This was a very time-consuming process. Hence, medieval writings, especially in the early medieval period, were significant and valuable works.

Religious manuscripts included copies of the Christian Bible, prayer books and guides to religious life. Other medieval manuscripts detailed laws, or administrative details about a kingdom or a landholding. Some rulers arranged for others to write their communications or, sometimes, accounts of their lives or those of their ancestors. It was very rare for the common people to write anything, including diaries and letters. This fact greatly limits our knowledge of how the poor lived in medieval Europe.

Illuminated manuscripts

Illuminated manuscripts are written works with highly decorated illustrations, often of scenes associated with the text. Sometimes the artwork was to fill a space, decorate the first letter of a word, or to provide a border for the text.

Illuminated manuscripts were significant historical documents. For a start, they were very valuable. Many materials and skilled craftspeople were needed to make them. They were generally written on parchment or on vellum (made from the skin of sheep, cows or goats). Paints were made from plants, ground-up semi-precious stones, charcoal and spices. Sometimes even earwax and urine were used to create colours. Gold and silver were also prepared so they could be painted onto manuscripts.



Source 3.40
A page from an illuminated manuscript created in the 15th century, which records the New Testament gospel of John

The Book of Kells

The *Book of Kells* is a version of the four New Testament gospels over 300 pages long. It is believed to have been written in Ireland about 1000 years ago. The monks who wrote and illustrated the *Book of Kells* used quills and special inks, some made from materials not found in Ireland. It is a religious work, and so was written in Latin, the language of medieval Christianity.

It combines local Celtic designs with illustrations of animals, and of the life of Jesus Christ and his disciples.

Medieval legends

Many medieval legends have provided inspiration throughout the ages for writers, poets and, more recently, filmmakers. Two of the more enduring of these—and hence the more significant—are the legends of Beowulf (one of the oldest surviving epic stories in English literature) and of King Arthur and his knights of the Round Table.



Source 3.41 An illustration of St Matthew from the *Book of Kells*

Medieval music

Music formed an important part of many medieval celebrations. It marked the end of harvests, provided entertainment in kings’ courts, and was an important part of religious life.

Most of the popular music of the day has been lost. However, traces of tunes that peasants sang and danced to can be found in folk and traditional music. More evidence is available of music created for formal settings (e.g. church services and coronations). It is significant that Western music was first written down during this period.

Musical instruments

Many instruments used today in Western music trace their origins to the medieval period (some even earlier). These included various types of drum; stringed instruments such as lutes, mandolins, harps and early violins; and wind and wood instruments such as flutes, recorders and types of bagpipes.



Source 3.44 A stringed medieval instrument called a dulcimer

Check your learning

- 1 List three of the characteristic features of Gothic architecture.
- 2 Suggest reasons why the building shown in Source 3.39 is such a significant building.
- 3 Consider what you know about illuminated manuscripts.

a In your own words, explain what an illuminated manuscript is.

b List some of the materials used when painting an illuminated manuscript.

c Why might such documents be thought of as significant?
- 4 Write down three facts about the *Book of Kells*.
- 5 Explain why the tale of King Arthur is a significant medieval legend.
- 6 Describe two aspects of the reported story of King Arthur that suggest his tale is a fantasy, not fact.
- 7 Name three ancient British texts that provide evidence that a ruler named Arthur existed.
- 8 Consider what you know about the legend of King Arthur. Who first mentioned Camelot and the Holy Grail?

focus on ...

evidence: King Arthur—did he exist or not?

There are many variations in the details of the story of King Arthur. The story goes that Arthur was a Celtic king, the son of the ruler Uther Pendragon. Arthur led his people against the invading Saxons, around the 5th or 6th century CE. A wizard named Merlin taught him as a boy.

Men came from far away to serve King Arthur. His most brave and noble knights sat at a round table to show their equality. They were renowned for their courage and honour and went on many quests, including the search for the Holy Grail. The code of chivalry they lived by made it a great shame that the knight Arthur most valued, Sir Lancelot, fell in love with Arthur’s wife, Guinevere.

Arthur was killed fighting his ambitious son, Mordred, at the Battle of Camlan. As he was dying, he asked that his magical sword, Excalibar, be thrown into a nearby lake. It was grabbed by a hand that shot up from the water. Arthur was buried on the magical island of Avalon.

Many later English kings claimed descent from King Arthur, whom they called the ‘one true King of the Britons’. This helped them to ‘prove’ their lawful right to the thrones of both Wales and England.



Source 3.42 *La Morte d'Arthur* [The Death of Arthur] by James Archer (1824–1904)

Geoffrey of Monmouth wrote *A History of the Kings of Britain* in 1136, compiled in part from texts written by other monks. It describes Romanised Britain, and the reign of a ruler named Arthur (and the small empire he created).

In the mid 1100s, Chrétien de Troyes translated Geoffrey of Monmouth’s book into French. His version mentions Camelot, the Round Table, Sir Lancelot and the Holy Grail quest for the first time.

An 8th-century text, *Annales Cambriae*, refers to two battles fought by a king named Arthur: the Battle of Mount Badon (c. 517) and the Battle of Camlan.

Source 3.43 Some sources of evidence for the possible existence of King Arthur

An inscription among the ruins of Tintagel Castle (Cornwall) translates as: *Artognou, father of a descendant of Coel, made this*. Artognou is an old-English form of ‘Arthur’. Tintagel is said to be Arthur’s birthplace. Welsh records describe a Celtic leader (c. 5th or 6th century) called Coel the Old.

A Welsh monk Nennius in his book *The British History* (c. 830) mentions a king’s name—Arthur—and 12 battles that he fought.

In 1191, the monk Gerald of Wales reported seeing human remains at Glastonbury Abbey (in Somerset, England) and an inscription which translates as: *Here in the Isle of Avalon lies buried the renowned King Arthur, with Guinevere his second wife*.

Minstrels and troubadours

Minstrels were medieval entertainers. They sang, played instruments, told stories and recited poems. They sang about everyday things such as love. Others recited lengthy ballads about famous figures or events.

Some minstrels were part of the household of a king or a noble. Hundreds of them might be employed for a special event, such as a royal wedding or coronation. Some towns and cities employed minstrels for public events. Some minstrels simply wandered around the countryside, performing at fairs and community gatherings.

Some minstrels came to be known as troubadours. Troubadours were musicians who wrote many of their own works. This is significant, as it provided us with evidence of their musical style and lyrics. They became prominent in the late medieval period.

Music and religion

Music was a very important part of church life. Hymns and religious songs were often part of services in churches and monasteries. Religious songs were frequently sung without instruments. This so-called chanting was typically performed by choirs of monks and boys. Significantly, it has continued as a feature of Catholic life to the present day.



Source 3.45 An artist's impression of three wandering minstrels

Check your learning

- 1 How was a troubadour different from a minstrel?
- 2 Why is the medieval form of singing known as chanting a significant legacy of medieval Europe?

Religious warfare—the Crusades

The Crusades were a series of religious wars fought in today's Middle East in the first part of the 11th century. Basically, the wars were fought between Christians and Muslims to gain control over key religious sites in and around Jerusalem. Although historians argue about the total number of wars that were fought, most agree that eight major crusades took place between 1096 and 1270 (see Source 3.47).

The Crusades were significant events that had a great impact on Europe. Christian soldiers (called 'crusaders') from all over Europe took part in the wars. Common people, including youths, were also caught up in the desire to travel far away to fight in the name of Christianity. The movement of many people caused great changes—both good and bad.

For more information about the start of the Crusades, see the Focus on feature below.

cause and effect: the start of the Crusades

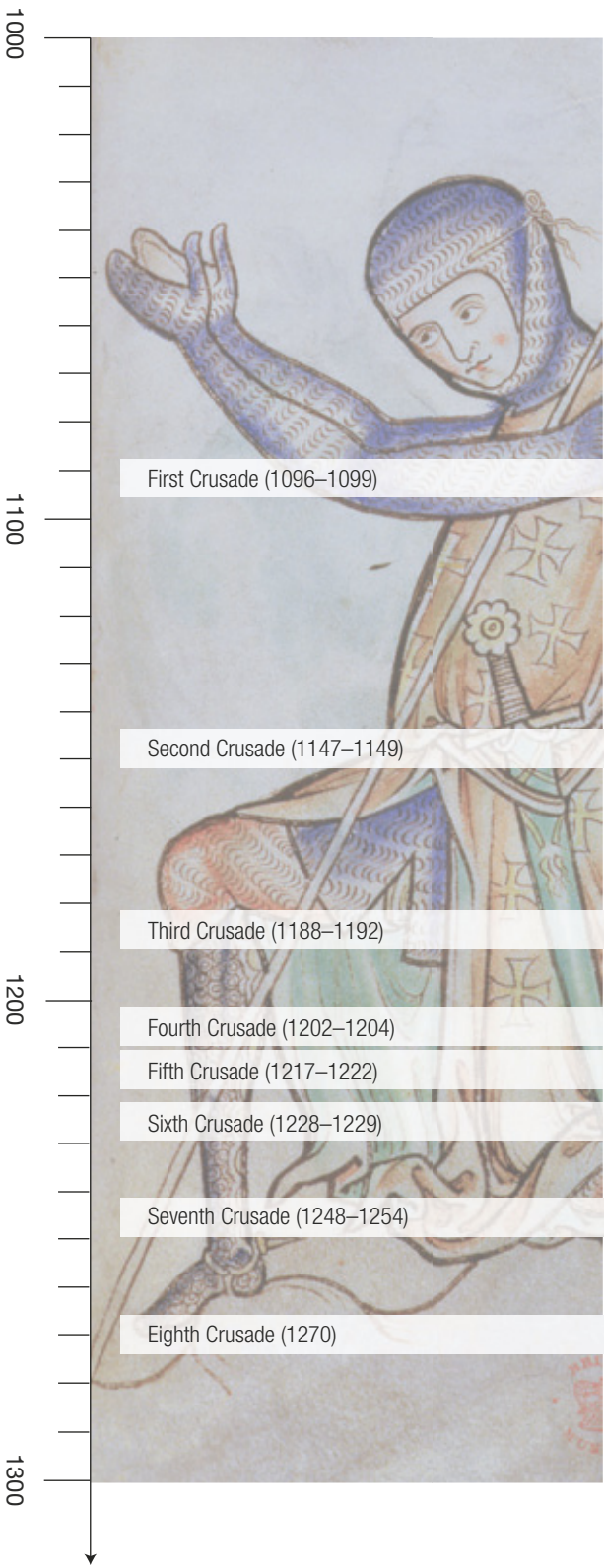
Jerusalem had been under Muslim control since 637 CE (when it was absorbed into the growing Islamic Empire). After this time, Christian pilgrims and merchants had peacefully lived with Muslims in the region for centuries. Then, in the mid 11th century, things changed.

In 1050, a more militant Islamic group, the Seljuk Turks, expanded their territory and took control of Jerusalem. This new Islamic regime committed many serious offences against Christian traders and pilgrims in the region and cut off access to important religious sites. They also threatened the city of Constantinople, capital of the Christian Byzantine Empire. This growing threat caused the Byzantine emperor to send a plea for support to Pope Urban II in 1096. This request, in turn, motivated the Pope's response (see Source 3.46). The effect, or consequence of his response, was the start of the First Crusade.

Source 3.46

You must hurry to help your brothers in the East, who need your help ... For the Turks, a Persian people, have attacked them. I urge you with passionate prayer—not I, but God—that, as messengers of Christ, you urge men of all ranks ... to move quickly to get rid of these awful people from the lands of your brothers. Christ commands it. And if any who go there should die on the way by land, or in crossing the sea, or in fighting these non-Christians, their sins shall be forgiven ... Let those of you who have been fighting your brothers and relatives now fight these barbarians.

Translated extract from Pope Urban II's response in 1096 to the Byzantine emperor



Source 3.47 The dates of the eight major Crusades, 1096–1270

Who were the Crusaders?

A range of people from all walks of life—from kings to young peasants—decided to join the Crusades. Although the primary motivation for most people who joined the Crusades was the desire to fight for Christianity, many people also chose to go to the **Holy Land** for adventure, to escape from the miserable life of a peasant, or simply to get rich.

During this deeply religious time, most Christians believed that taking part in the Crusades would be a sure way of gaining entrance into Heaven when they died. Many teenage peasants who took part in the Crusades were encouraged by their local priests to join the fight. They believed that their youth and lack of ‘sin’ would make them more successful than older Crusaders.

In spite of some battles that were won, overall, the Crusades failed to meet their main objective. The Holy Lands were not regained by the Christians and many Crusaders never returned home at all. Some were killed in the fight for the Holy Land. Others died of disease or injuries. And others were sold as slaves, never to see their homes and families again.

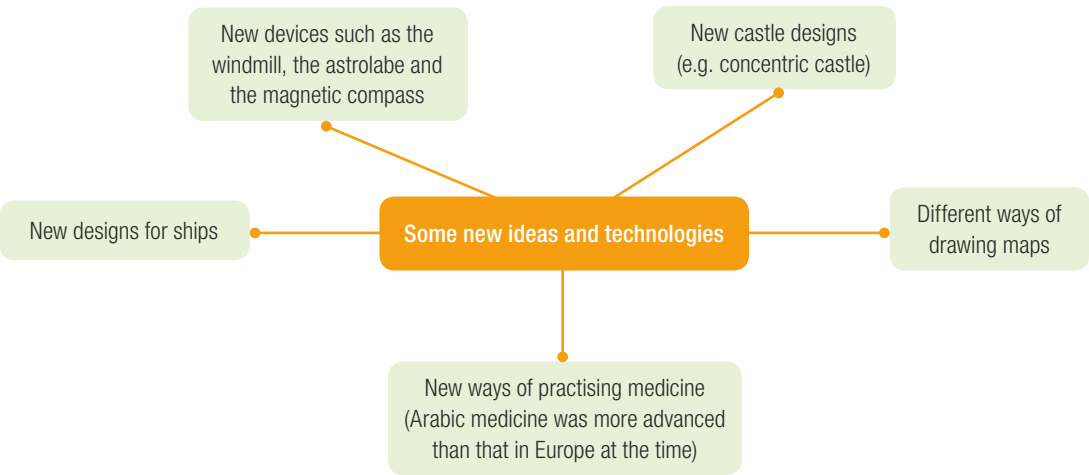
The Crusades did, however, benefit Europe and its peoples in many ways. Trade with eastern regions was increased. With the growth in trade came the need for more and further excursions to unknown lands. This, in turn, brought about new ideas, greater knowledge and more inventions. People’s lives in general improved; they were healthier and better educated. And, with the end of feudalism, they became more independent.



Source 3.48 The key cities at the time of the Crusades, and the approximate route taken by the first Crusaders



Source 3.49 A scene from the film *Kingdom of Heaven*, depicting one of the sieges of Jerusalem during the Crusades



Source 3.50 Some of the new ideas and technologies Crusaders brought back to Europe from the Holy Land

3.2 What developments and achievements influenced life in medieval Europe?

Remember

- 1 List three reasons why the Crusades were a significant event for the society of medieval Europe.
- 2 Consider what you have learned about medieval manuscripts.
 - a Why were medieval manuscripts generally regarded as works of significance?
 - b What was so special about illuminated manuscripts?
 - c List two examples of religious manuscripts produced in medieval Europe.

Understand

- 3 Conduct some research to find out more about Hildegard of Bingen. Based on what you find:
 - a Why do you think she is regarded as a significant individual in medieval European history?
 - b List three works that she wrote. Suggest for each why you think it might have been a significant work at the time.
- 4 Why do we know so much more of the music and lyrics written by troubadours than we do about the songs and tunes of simple peasant folk?
- 5 Given that tastes and fashions change over time, suggest why the story of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table has remained such an enduring legend for writers, poets, artists, filmmakers and television producers, even up to the present day? What aspects of this tale make it so significant?

Apply

- 6 In small groups, brainstorm aspects of our Australian society today you think are noteworthy enough (for whatever reason) for historians some 1000 years from now to decide that they were significant features of our society. A group spokesperson will present a summary of the group's findings to the class.

Analyse

- 7 Refresh your memory on some of the key features of Gothic architecture. See if you can locate at least one example of each in the following photographs of gothic cathedrals (Sources 3.51, 3.52 or 3.53). In your notebook, identify a feature that is visible in each source and draw a rough sketch to represent that feature.



Source 3.51 Notre Dame Cathedral, France



Source 3.52 A window of Notre Dame des Fleurs Chapel, France



Source 3.53 An aerial view of Cathedral of Our Lady of Chartres, France

Evaluate

- 8 Consider what you have read in this chapter about the takeover of Jerusalem in 1050 CE.
 - a What was the immediate effect on the Middle East region of Jerusalem's takeover by a more militant Islamic group?
 - b What do you think might have been the effect on the Middle East region and surrounds if this had not happened?
 - c Predict what might have happened in 1096 if the Pope of the day had told the Byzantine emperor who wrote to him 'that he was on his own' in dealing with the Seljuk Turks.
- 9 Listen to some examples of medieval music. (Your teacher might arrange for this.) Rate what you hear according to a set of criteria (aspects against which you judge something). It is important that you decide on these criteria before you listen to the music.

Create

- 10 Design your own Gothic cathedral (on paper or using ICT tools). Be inspired by illustrations and relevant information provided in this section. Include a plan view (as seen from directly above) and close-up sketch of two important features.



Source 3.54 An artist's impression of jousting knights

3.3 How and why did society in medieval Europe change?

All societies change over time, even if this change is very gradual. New developments, such as changing technology or ideas, or contact with other societies usually have a major influence. Social change is rarely due to just one factor. When change does occur, it does not mean that some older traditions do not continue.

This was certainly the case in medieval Europe. In the late medieval period, there were changes that weakened the feudal and manorial systems and, to some extent, reduced the authority of the Church. The process of change from Europe's medieval society into early modern society took several hundred years. Even then, traces of earlier traditions continued.

Options

How continuity and change were reflected in Europe's medieval society is discussed in respect to the topic areas listed below. Choose one of these:

- towns, cities and commerce
- crime and punishment
- military and defence systems.

A time of change

During the 14th century, there were three major events in Europe that rapidly reduced the population:

The Great Famine of 1315–1317: This famine mainly affected northern Europe (including England). The poor suffered greatly. A monk described how 'plump dogs were stolen ... men and women in many places secretly ate their own children'.

The Hundred Years War: This war was fought between England and France between 1337 and 1453. The English were driven out of Normandy, ending their claim to the crown of France. A young woman, Joan of Arc, was burned at the stake for her role in uniting the French.

The Black Death: This pandemic arrived in Europe in 1347, reducing the population by about a third. Its most common form was the bubonic plague. It is caused by a bacterium found in the blood of the rat flea. Medieval Europeans knew nothing about germs, and paid little attention to hygiene.

Short-term impacts of these changes

The events listed above dramatically changed the society of medieval Europe. France's population alone was halved during the 14th century. Peasants fled, creating huge labour shortages. Those prepared to stay (on manors or in skilled jobs in towns) often demanded higher wages to do so. Suddenly, they had more bargaining power because their services were in demand. In towns, it also led to outbreaks such as the Peasants' Revolt of 1381.

cause and effect: the Peasants' Revolt

The Peasants' Revolt took place in mid-1381 in England. This revolt, which involved separate but related uprisings by serfs, eventually led to the end of serfdom in England.

The lower classes under the feudal system in place were not well treated. They lived in great poverty and were virtual slaves as they were permanently 'attached' to the land. In spite of their great poverty, serfs were required to pay taxes to support King Richard II's military exploits.

Also, the Black Death had severely reduced the population, but the King passed a law to ensure that workers could not ask for better employment terms (such as higher wages or freedom to travel). When some peasants near London refused to pay taxes, an attempt was made to stop their protests through fines or by placing men in the stocks as punishment. But the discontent was felt in many places, and the uprising swelled throughout London and beyond. The leader of the revolt, Wat Tyler, was killed by the Mayor of London.

Although the demands for better working and living conditions were not immediately met, the upper classes did begin to realise that they could not rule over the peasants as they had in the past. They also realised that large groups of workers could be a significant political force to reckon with, and that some changes had to be made.



Source 3.55 An illustration of Richard II and the killing of Wat Tyler during the Peasants' Revolt



Source 3.56 A magnetic compass; its needle points to magnetic south-southeast



Source 3.57 An astrolabe was used to chart the movements of planets and stars.



Source 3.58 A reproduction of Johannes Gutenberg's printing press. It used movable type, arranged within wooden frames, to print a page of text.

Long-term impacts of these changes

Social systems such as feudalism and manorialism, together with belief systems such as Christianity had helped to sustain the society of medieval Europe and keep it stable. The changes forced on society, increasingly so from the 13th century onwards, made people more aware of the world around them.

This led, in time, to movements that questioned some aspects of the Church (the **Reformation**), the place of humans in the scheme of things, and their potential (the **Renaissance**), even to cherished ideas long held about religion (the **Scientific Revolution**).

Some of these new ways of looking at things were helped by new inventions such as the compass, the astrolabe and the printing press (invented by Johannes Gutenberg around 1400).

The magnetic compass, invented by the Chinese, seems to have been first used in Europe in the late 12th century to help sailors navigate the English Channel.

The astrolabe was an ancient navigation tool used across the European and Islamic world. Together with the magnetic compass, the astrolabe enabled European sailors to travel across oceans to claim new lands.

The printing press revolutionised people's access to the written word. Books could now be produced quickly and cheaply. Most importantly, new ideas could spread rapidly.

Towns, cities and commerce

Medieval Europe was an agricultural society. Its various kingdoms were largely divided into feudal landholdings. From about 900 CE onwards, especially after 1000, things started to change. More towns began springing up as the threat of barbarian raids began to reduce. This trend increased over time. Some towns grew into cities.

By about 1200, there were around 600 cities in Europe, three times as many as there were 50 years earlier. Many cities also had cathedrals, so they attracted Christian pilgrims as well as merchants.

Town populations

Town populations included people who had left manors. Some of these peasants went on to earn a living as artisans or skilled workers. Those who worked in the same craft or specialist occupation (such as butchers or carpenters) started banding together to form guilds. They commonly met in guildhalls to discuss quality standards, conditions of work, fair pay and prices; and to set up apprenticeships.

The growing strength of town populations meant loyalties began to change. The one-time bond to the manor lord became weaker as townspeople became more independent. This trend continued as towns became richer through trade and commerce.

New markets, new goods and booming commerce

Not all those who drifted from country manors settled down immediately in towns. Some moved around as wandering 'salesmen'. The goods they offered for sale were often cheap and basic.

The best profits came from selling goods from faraway places. The risks in getting these goods, though, were high: pirates, rough terrain, extreme weather and predators. Nonetheless, some merchants were prepared to take these risks. Some of those who did made huge profits.

Marketplaces and fairs

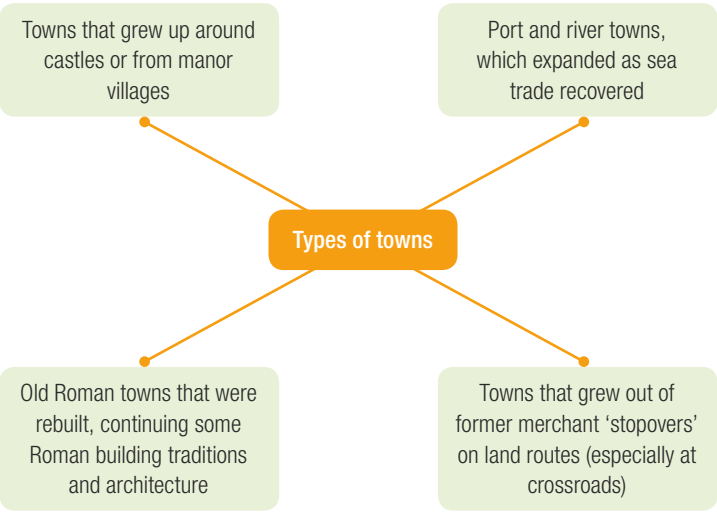
Merchants sold their goods in marketplaces and, commonly, at huge open-air fairs held each year in Europe. Buyers flocked to these displays. Purchases were often made in bulk and taken away on carts.

Once travelling merchants had made their wealth, they might then opt to settle in towns. Merchant communities formed, particularly in Italian cities. This led to the rise of merchant guilds, which controlled a town's retail industry. Business partnerships developed, too, between merchants.

Moneylending and financial records

As commerce continued to flourish, moneylending and financial record keeping became more common in Europe. Using money and issuing loans were established practices among Islamic merchants in the Holy Land.

Many of these practices were brought back to Europe by the Crusaders in the 12th and 13th centuries. Loans enabled



Source 3.59 Some types of towns that developed in medieval Europe



Source 3.60 The medieval city of Fribourg, in Switzerland. Many of its medieval buildings still remain, including St Nicholas Cathedral.



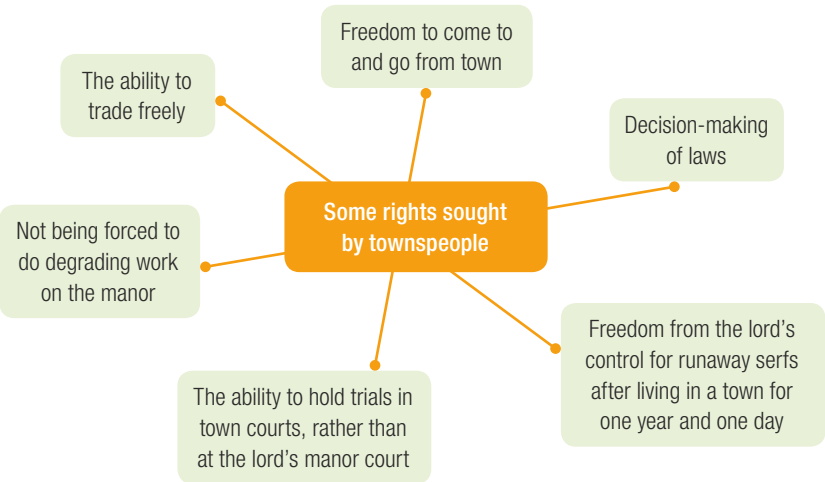
Source 3.61 A 15th-century artist's impression of a covered medieval European marketplace

more goods to be purchased; this extra financial activity boosted town economies. Some merchants’ families became so wealthy they lent money even to monarchs. Many also invested in prestigious public works in their town or city.

Growing independence of towns

With changes in town wealth and population came another push for change. Townspeople wanted more independence from feudal restrictions and more rights. At this time, the lord typically ‘owned’ the town/s within his realm and expected dues to be paid by the people in money rather than in produce from the farm, as had happened on the manor.

A town might present a petition to a lord setting out their demands for such freedoms. In return for payment, some towns were given what they asked for. A **charter** set out what had been agreed by the lord and town spokespeople.



Source 3.62 Some of the rights sought by townspeople

Check your learning

- 1 Europe began a period of change from around 1000 CE onwards, causing towns to form and grow.
 - a What change encouraged the growth of towns?
 - b How did some of these early towns form, and where?
 - c Explain why the rebuilding of some old Roman towns was an example of continuity and change.
- 2 Where could ordinary Europeans buy many of the goods merchants brought back from distant markets?
- 3 Explain broadly how many medieval towns were changed by:
 - a people abandoning manors
 - b growing numbers of people in the same occupations or crafts
 - c the public investments of very wealthy merchants
 - d a growing desire for independence from feudal lords.



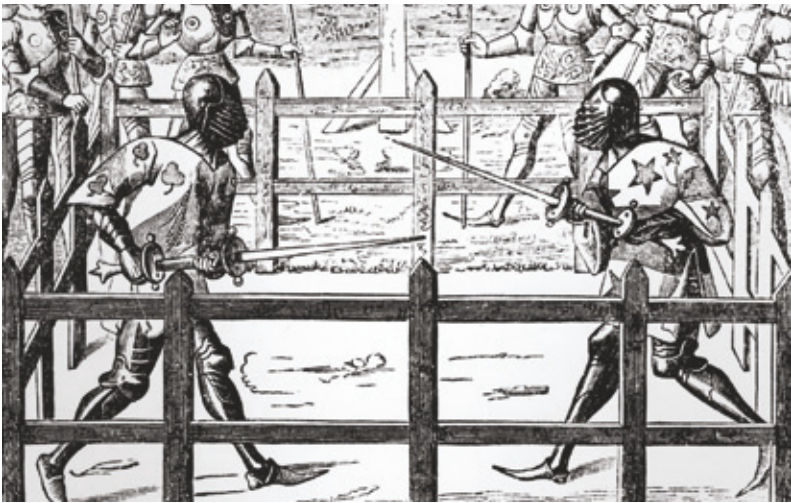
Source 3.63 This painting shows a woman trying to prove her dead husband was innocent of a crime against the king by holding a red-hot iron in one hand and her husband’s head in the other.

Crime and punishment

Under the early feudal system, different courts dealt with different types of offences. Minor matters (such as a nagging wife) were heard by village courts; a woman found guilty might have to wear a scold’s bridle. A manor court heard slightly more serious matters, for example a charge that a serf’s son was being educated without the lord’s permission. In such cases, the serf might be fined.

More serious charges were dealt with in the Church courts (for charges such as **heresy**) and the king’s court (for charges of **treason**).

By modern standards, punishments for crimes handed down by most courts was severe. Confessions for such crimes were frequently obtained through torture (through the use of thumbscrews and other devices). People could be executed by being burnt or skinned alive. Traitors were frequently executed by being hanged, drawn and quartered. This last puishment involved first hanging a person, cutting him down while still alive, then pulling out his intestines while he watched, and finally attaching each of his hands and legs to a horse and having the horses pull him apart.



Source 3.64 An artist’s impression of medieval trial by combat

Trial by ordeal and combat

The legal system of early medieval Europe required those accused of crimes to prove their innocence. They did this by swearing an oath before God. Witnesses might also swear oaths to support the accused or the accuser. Sometimes, the oath of the accused was tested using trial by ordeal. There were two types of ordeal:

- Ordeal by fire—The accused held a red-hot iron for some time (see Source 3.63), put an arm in a fire or walked across burning coals. If, after three days, the burn was not healing, they were seen to be guilty.
- Ordeal by water—The accused placed an arm in boiling water and checked three days later to see if the burns had healed. If not, they were seen to be guilty. They also could be bound and tossed into a river. If their body floated, they were seen to be guilty. If they sank, they were innocent but dead!

Another trial commonly used for members of upper classes was trial by combat, where the accused fought the accuser. Sometimes a champion (e.g. a strong knight) fought on behalf of a weaker party. The winner (or whoever they represented) was innocent; God was believed to ensure this. Guilty people were punished or killed. They might have ears or hands cut off, or worse.

Medieval torture chambers

Medieval justice was typically harsh, with people (who were often innocent) punished for the smallest offence. Some punishments (such as being put in the stocks or the pillory) were designed just to humiliate the offender. More serious punishments involved horrific torture and slow death.

Often, the remains of mutilated corpses were left to rot in public places as a warning to others not to offend. This was designed to act as a deterrent.

The rack pulled the victim's arms and legs out of their sockets. Limbs were often torn off.

Hundreds of spikes on the back, seat and arms of the Judas chair penetrated the victim's body. Sometimes a slow fire was lit underneath.

This device was called an iron maiden because it was shaped like a woman. Victims would be locked inside this metal box, which was lined with spikes.

Victims were tied to a wheel, often above ground so birds could attack them. Arms and legs were broken by hitting them through the spokes.

Victims were bound tightly and a constant stream of dripping cold water fell on the same spot on the face.

The victim's head was slowly crushed by turning the wheel. The head crusher smashed the victim's teeth and made his or her eyes pop out.

Molten lead was poured into a container and sprinkled over the victim through the holes at the end.

Rats were placed in a cage that opened onto a victim's stomach. When the cage was heated, the only way for the rats to escape was to gnaw through the victim's body.

Source 3.65 An artist's impression of a medieval torture chamber

Changes to the medieval justice system

In 1154, King Henry II became king of England. The types of courts mentioned earlier continued to exist during his reign. But Henry II also wanted all his subjects to have access (if they desired) to royal justice. So he and his court (king’s court) travelled around the land, hearing cases. Judges began recording court decisions.

Over the centuries, this initiative continued to be refined. It set the basis for today’s common law, as practised in England and Australia (where judges’ decisions are based on those made for similar trials in the past). Another initiative of King Henry II was trial by jury. It, too, continues to this day as a key part of the Western justice system.

The Magna Carta

By the early 13th century, King John was England’s king. He was not popular. He had raised taxes, fought a series of unsuccessful wars and upset the Pope. The Pope was so angry that he had banned religious services in English churches.

The nobles decided to act. They negotiated with King John, forcing him (reluctantly) to agree with much of what they put in their charter. The *Magna Carta* marked a significant legal change in England: the monarch would be subject to the will of others, not just God. No longer could he rule exactly as it suited him. This is seen as one of the first steps towards the development of legal and political rights for ‘the people’ and the start of modern democracy. King John did go back on some of his agreements, but the momentum for change continued.

The charter, the *Magna Carta*, was agreed at Runnymede in 1215. King John’s royal seal was affixed to it. Among its provisions was a significant change for medieval justice: trial by ordeal would be abolished. No more could people be condemned, tortured or killed on the grounds of suspicion or rumour.

- Some other key aspects of the *Magna Carta* included:
- a description of the position of the Church in England
 - an outline of feudal responsibilities and obligations
 - a promise of fair laws, and for all to have access to the courts
 - guidelines on how the charter would be enforced.



Source 3.66 A barrister addressing the jury—a modern legacy of changes introduced in England by King Henry II

Check your learning

- 1 England’s King Henry II introduced a number of initiatives.
 - a Name two that produced significant change in medieval England’s legal system.
 - b Why are these examples of continuity and change?
- 2 How was the medieval practice of trial by ordeal changed by the *Magna Carta*?
- 3 The words ‘*Magna Carta*’ mean ‘Great Charter’ in Latin. Do you agree that it was ‘great’ (however you define the word)? Discuss as a class.
- 4 Do you think that trial by ordeal was fair? Give reasons for your view.

Medieval warfare

Warfare was one of the most important ways a medieval kingdom in Europe could become powerful (either by fighting to expand its territory or to defend itself). The focus was often on capturing the enemy’s stronghold, usually a castle. Castles were typically built in places that were easier to defend: on top of a cliff or hill, on an island, or jutting out into a lake.

Castle fortresses

In times of peace, a castle was home for a ruler (or feudal lord), his family, servants and vassals (see Source 3.29). Only a small band of soldiers was needed as guards. In war, the castle became a hive of military activity as the lord called on his vassals to supply him with foot soldiers, armour, weapons, and often horses.

Changing castle design

Castle designs changed and developed through the feudal era, improving on weak features and continuing those that worked.

Motte and bailey castles

Early fortresses were called motte and bailey castles. The motte was a raised area (such as a hill) on which a wooden fortress was built. Below it was an open area called the bailey, where barns, workshops and stables were located. Both the bailey and motte were encircled by a gated timber palisade (fence-like barrier, made of logs), a ditch (sometimes filled with water) and an earth bank.

Stone castles with keeps

By the late 10th century, stone structures (called keeps) were starting to replace the wooden fortress in the motte and bailey design. These keeps, usually rectangular and up to four storeys high, were fitted out to withstand a siege. Thick stone walls replaced the palisade and a wide moat replaced the ditch. Access to the castle was by drawbridge.

Concentric castles

Some 200 years later, a new type of castle design emerged in Europe: the concentric castle. It was based on designs Crusaders had seen in the Holy Land. This stone and/or brick castle had two outer walls (with battlements) to provide an extra barrier against attack. The outermost wall was often curved. The wall closest to the centre was the highest. There was a greatly reinforced gatehouse, but no keep.



Source 3.67 Fenis Castle in Italy; note the protective outer wall (with its battlements) and the multi-storey keep inside the walls



Source 3.68 Krak des Chevaliers in today’s Syria, once occupied by Crusader knights, is a concentric castle; note the much higher inner wall.



Source 3.69 A modern recreation of a knight practising his jousting skill with a quintain (a post to act as an opponent for practice). Medieval knights used a quintain to help them perfect the accuracy of their lance blows.



Source 3.70 A medieval artist's impression of a tournament

Castle warriors

War in medieval Europe meant knights were obliged to provide their lord with their own fighting services and those of others they recruited. Some recruits were professional soldiers, men of the upper social class. They might be the younger sons of noble families, wanting to improve their standing through military service. (The eldest son inherited the father's entire estate then.) Such soldiers were often called men-at-arms.

Other fighting recruits were commoners (peasants). These men, often called up straight from the fields or towns, fought as foot soldiers (often archers) as they could not afford horses. Their weapons and armour were much simpler than those of knights and men-at-arms.

Military training

To stay fit and trained for war, knights fought jousts. Often these were public spectacles. Heavily armoured knights charged each other on horseback holding wooden lances ahead of them. Sometimes a long wooden fence, called a tilt, separated the charging horses. The idea was to knock an opponent off his horse.

Sometimes the contest was not between two knights but hundreds of fighters (knights on horseback and foot soldiers). These events were called tournaments (see Source 3.70). They were mock battles, similar in principle to today's military training exercises. By the 13th century, tournaments had become colourful spectacles that created great excitement among medieval communities.

Heraldry

It was common for noble medieval families to adopt a badge, or coat of arms. This practice was called **heraldry**. Each son in a family added a specific symbol to the family's coat of arms (for example, a five-point star for a third-born son). A knight's coat of arms was featured prominently, on clothing, shields and on their horses' coats. This meant a knight could be identified on a battlefield, whether fighting or among the piles of the dead.

Coats of arms were usually colourful and sometimes highly decorative. Design features included crosses, checks, stripes, wavy lines and symbols such as crowns, lions, battlements, weapons and the *fleur-de-lys* (a simplified image of a lily).

Changes in medieval warfare

Until about the 12th century, armour was made of chain mail (small hoops of iron linked together, which was fashioned into a knee-length tunic (see Source 3.71). A coat of cloth was usually worn over the tunic.

From about 1300 onwards, metal plate armour became more common. Its design would change further so it eventually protected the whole body. Whole-body armour made a shield less necessary.

When using a shield, the fighter had only one hand for his sword. So, early sword designs were for one-handed use. As armour changed, so did designs of swords: they were larger and made for two-handed use. The aim of these weapons was not so much to cut as to bash. Two free hands meant that weapons such as the mace (an iron club), morning stars (a metal ball attached to a chain and handle), flails and war hammers could be more easily used.

Gunpowder

Gunpowder reached Europe during the 13th or 14th centuries from China (where it was first developed some 400–500 years earlier). It was another factor that helped to end Europe's feudal system. It did so by changing how wars were fought.

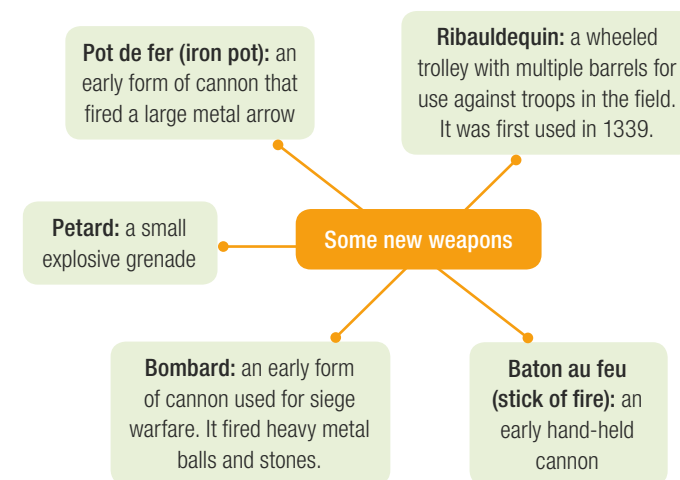
It was first used effectively during the Hundred Years War between France and England. Now castle walls could be more easily broken down: sappers could blow them up or gunpowder could be used in weapons fired at them. By about 1350, forms of cannon were becoming commonplace.

The use of firearms in warfare gradually reduced the importance of knights on horseback. Early cannons could be filled with metal fragments and fired at the enemy. Early firearms also increased the distance between fighting armies. Plate armour could deflect the early 'bullets' and grapeshot, but it meant that all soldiers in battle now required armour. The increased expense of so equipping an army shifted the responsibility for this onto kings, not feudal nobles. And so the importance of knighthood began to diminish. In place of knights, new types of professional soldiers emerged who led new types of troops.

Source 3.71 Remains of a medieval fighter's chain mail armour



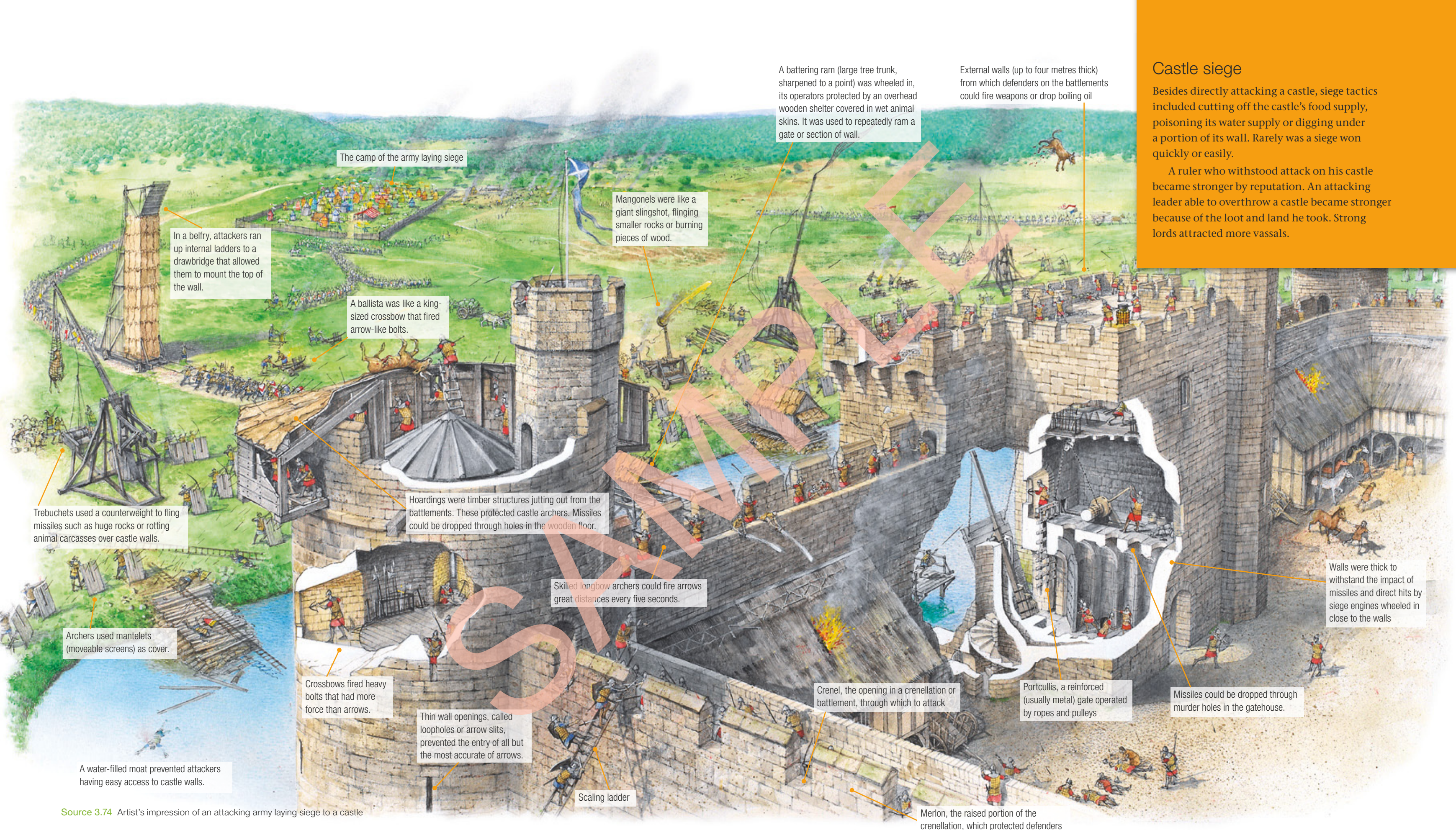
Source 3.72 A medieval fighter's full plate armour (made in the 15th century for the Count of Tyrol, Archduke Sigismund of Austria)



Source 3.73 New weapons in the age of gunpowder

Check your learning

- 1 Name three places in which a castle might commonly be built for security.
- 2 What two main purposes did castles serve in feudal Europe?
- 3 Explain briefly how both castle design and armour design changed over time. Where relevant, explain what aspects of each continued (even if in another form).
- 4 Study Source 3.74, which follows.
 - a List three ways of defending a castle under attack.
 - b List three tactics or items an attacking army might use to force the surrender of a castle.
- 5 Draw a flow chart to show some of the ways gunpowder changed medieval warfare, both in the short and longer term.



The camp of the army laying siege

In a belfry, attackers ran up internal ladders to a drawbridge that allowed them to mount the top of the wall.

A ballista was like a king-sized crossbow that fired arrow-like bolts.

Mangonels were like a giant slingshot, flinging smaller rocks or burning pieces of wood.

A battering ram (large tree trunk, sharpened to a point) was wheeled in, its operators protected by an overhead wooden shelter covered in wet animal skins. It was used to repeatedly ram a gate or section of wall.

External walls (up to four metres thick) from which defenders on the battlements could fire weapons or drop boiling oil

Trebuchets used a counterweight to fling missiles such as huge rocks or rotting animal carcasses over castle walls.

Archers used mantelets (moveable screens) as cover.

A water-filled moat prevented attackers having easy access to castle walls.

Hoardings were timber structures jutting out from the battlements. These protected castle archers. Missiles could be dropped through holes in the wooden floor.

Skilled longbow archers could fire arrows great distances every five seconds.

Crossbows fired heavy bolts that had more force than arrows.

Thin wall openings, called loopholes or arrow slits, prevented the entry of all but the most accurate of arrows.

Scaling ladder

Crenel, the opening in a crenellation or battlement, through which to attack

Portcullis, a reinforced (usually metal) gate operated by ropes and pulleys

Missiles could be dropped through murder holes in the gatehouse.

Walls were thick to withstand the impact of missiles and direct hits by siege engines wheeled in close to the walls

Castle siege

Besides directly attacking a castle, siege tactics included cutting off the castle's food supply, poisoning its water supply or digging under a portion of its wall. Rarely was a siege won quickly or easily.

A ruler who withstood attack on his castle became stronger by reputation. An attacking leader able to overthrow a castle became stronger because of the loot and land he took. Strong lords attracted more vassals.

3.3 How and why did society in medieval Europe change?

Remember

- 1 Write short definitions in your own words for the following terms:
For Option A (towns, cities and commerce): charter, guild
For Option B (crime and punishment): heresy, treason
For Option C (military and defence): men-at-arms, heraldry.
- 2 In your own words, define the word ‘barbarian’ as the Romans used the term.
- 3 What religious institution played a dominant role in most people’s lives in medieval Europe?
- 4 Who was known as the Holy Roman Emperor?

Understand

- 5 Use a concept map to explain why the 14th century was such a period of change in medieval Europe. Include in it some of aspects you have covered in your option study for this section. Think, too, about how some of the changes you list impacted on existing systems such as feudalism, manorialism and Christianity.
- 6 Explain how *each* of the following helped to bring about change in medieval Europe: magnetic compass, astrolabe, printing press.

Apply

- 7 In your notebook, complete the following table, which asks you to identify modern roles in Australian society with roles in medieval Europe under feudalism (Source 3.22 will come in handy as a reference for you).

Medieval Europe	Australia today
Lord	
Monk	
Peasant	
Steward	
Hayward	
Reeve	

- 8 Is there any relationship today in Australia that is similar to the relationship between a lord and a vassal? Explain your answer, giving examples.
- 9 What do you think is the most significant change that has occurred in your community in the last five years? Explain why you think it occurred and how you think it will affect your community in the short and longer term.

Analyse

- 10 For the option you studied in this section, identify:
 - a in what way/s it saw change introduced for the society of medieval Europe
 - b what aspects of it (directly or indirectly) have continued through to the present day
 - c the causes and consequences of any changes (consider any impacts on such things as daily life, social structure, the environment, belief system and so on). Present your findings in a form of your choice (such as an essay, a role-play discussion with others, an extended concept map, a visual display, a series of storyboards and so on).

Evaluate

- 11 In a class brainstorm, predict what might have happened in the society of medieval Europe if factors causing change in your optional study had not happened.
- 12 In small groups, discuss the concept of *knighthood* today. How is it similar to medieval *knighthood* and how is it different? Do you think *knighthood* is still relevant today? You should provide reasons and examples to support your answers.
- 13 Why do you think the Church was so powerful in medieval Europe? In what ways did the Church hold power over people, both physically and mentally?
- 14 Look at Source 3.74 and note the various protective elements of the castle and the ways in which the castle is being attacked. With a partner, complete the following table to assess the defences of the castle and determine the effectiveness of those features, as well as how they could be improved to combat the weapons of the enemy.

For bonus points, add another column to this table and suggest how the enemy’s weapons could also be improved to be more effective against the design of the castle.

Feature	Assessment of effectiveness	Suggested improvements
Portcullis		
Drawbridge		
Murder holes		
Crenels		
Moat		

Create

- 15 Complete one of these activities:
Option A: Role-play *either* a discussion at a guildhall meeting about a topic of concern (choose a trade or occupation) or the representations senior townspeople make to a feudal lord for more independence for their town.
Option B: Scenes such as those shown in Source 3.65 were everyday practice for a long time in medieval Europe. Discuss with a partner to what extent you agree that aspects of such behaviour still continue in some parts of the world today.
Option C: Write a dialogue (based around some aspect of the attack shown, and medieval warfare) between two or more characters in Source 3.74.
- 16 Design and create a coat of arms for your own family similar to those shown in the banners below. Select colours and symbols that you think say something about your family’s ancestors and achievements (you may want to conduct some research first to find out what the various parts of a coat of arms means). Most importantly, come up with an appropriate motto (a saying that you think has some significance for your family).

When you have completed the coat of arms, label each feature, explaining its meaning and significance.



connectingideas

Medieval Europe

Heart of the Western world

You will have seen or heard references in the media and elsewhere to terms such as ‘the Western world’, ‘the West’ and ‘Westernisation’. Australia, for instance, is a Western country with a Western culture, as is the United States, Canada, Norway and so on. All Western countries share a cultural heritage and historical traditions that originated in western Europe. That heritage draws on the culture and traditions of medieval Europe and ancient Rome (of which it was once a part). In turn, ancient Rome had, before that, absorbed much from ancient Greece.



Source 3.75 This church service, held within St Andrew's Cathedral in Sydney, continues a tradition set in medieval Europe.

Christianity

Christianity dominated the history of medieval Europe. Its teachings influenced behaviours, value systems and ideas about justice and punishment. Its workers—mostly monks—preserved a great many ancient and medieval documents. Its traditions greatly influenced art, architecture and music.

Australia's first white settlers were from Britain, bringing their 'western Europe' traditions and beliefs with them. Since that time, Australia has changed. It now has a multicultural population and growing links with Asia.

- 1 What debt does Australia's classification as a Christian nation owe to medieval Europe?
- 2 As a class, discuss why Australia today is an example of continuity and change in respect to its status as a 'Western' country.
- 3 Locate an example, in each case, of how Christianity has influenced architecture, public behaviour, art and music in this country.



Source 3.77 A meeting of Australia's upper house of parliament—the House of Representatives

Source 3.76 The scientific (Latin) name of the koala is *Phascolarctos cinereus*.

Language

Latin was the official language of the ancient Romans. It became the language used in medieval Europe for official documents and Church services. Until recent times, it was still the language commonly used in many Roman Catholic Church services. Latin is the basis of a great many English words we use today. Scientists use Latin words to classify areas of their study.

- 1 Why might it benefit students in Australia today who want to become botanists if they have studied Latin?
- 2 The origin of English words in a dictionary is identified at the end of each entry. Find ten English words with Latin origins.
- 3 The Viking invaders who later settled in parts of medieval Europe introduced their language: Norse. English words such as 'window', 'egg', 'kick' and 'ugly' have Norse origins. Use a dictionary to find five more.



Today, Australia's debt to the legacy of medieval Europe is still strong, though weakening in some areas. Decide, through group discussion, what sort of country you think Australia will be in 100 years time. How do you think it will have changed? To what extent do you think it will then be defined as a Western society?



System of government

Meetings of parliament in Australia can be traced back to men who advised the king, later called the Great Council. England's King John, in signing the *Magna Carta* in 1215, promised that the law would be important in the country's rule, not just the will of the monarch. This led to meetings of both nobles and ordinary people to talk about important matters.

The Great Council was expanded to include more ordinary people. In 1350, when it became known as a parliament, it was broken into two groups. The nobles (lords) met in one place and the ordinary people (commoners) in another. This arrangement later developed into Britain's upper house of parliament, the House of Lords, and its lower house, the House of Commons. Australia inherited this governing system.

- 1 The word 'parliament' comes from the French word *parler*, meaning 'to talk'. How relevant do you think this word is to both the governing system in Australia and England's medieval arrangements?
- 2 Think back to what you have learned about the history of medieval Britain. Why might its governing body be called a parliament, based on a French word?
- 3 What important principle did the *Magna Carta* set out that allowed ordinary people to have more say in the rule of their country?