

KS3 History - Middle Ages

Summary: The Middle Ages, or Medieval Times, in Europe was a long period of history from 500 AD to 1500 AD. That's 1000 years! This was a time of castles and peasants, guilds and monasteries, cathedrals and crusades. When people use the terms Medieval Times, Middle Ages, and Dark Ages they are generally referring to the same period of time. The Dark Ages is usually referring to the first half of the Middle Ages from 500 to 1000 AD.

Key concepts

1	The Dark Ages to Middle Ages: After the fall of the Roman Empire, a lot of the Roman culture and knowledge was lost. This included art, technology, engineering, and history. Historians know a lot about Europe during the Roman Empire because the Romans kept excellent records of all that happened. However, the time after the Romans is "dark" to historians because there was no central government recording events. This is why historians call this time the Dark Ages.
2	William the Conqueror: William was a powerful king. He spent much of his early reign putting down revolts. William is responsible for bringing the Feudal System, Castles and the Domesday Book to England.
	Castles: One of William's most lasting legacies was his castle building. He built castles throughout England in order to maintain control. Perhaps the most famous castle William built is the White Tower of the Tower of London.
4	Feudal System: The basic government and society in Europe during the Middle Ages was based around the feudal system. Small communities were formed around the local lord and the manor. The lord owned the land and everything in it. He would keep the peasants safe in return for their service. The lord, in return, would provide the king with soldiers or taxes.
5	The life of a peasant: Most of the people living in the Middle Ages were peasants. They had a hard rough life. Some peasants were considered free and could own their own businesses like carpenters, bakers, and blacksmiths. Others were more like slaves. They owned nothing and were pledged to their local lord. They worked long days, 6 days a week, and often barely had enough food to survive.
6	Medieval villages: The majority of people living during the Middle Ages lived in the country and worked as farmers. Usually there was a local lord who lived in a large house called a manor or a castle. Local peasants would work the land for the lord.
7	Medieval towns: Town life was very different from country life, but it wasn't much easier. The towns were crowded and dirty. A lot of people worked as craftsmen and were members of a guild. Other jobs in the Town included servants, merchants, bakers, doctors, and lawyers.

Key developments

1066 - William of Normandy, a French Duke, conquers England in the Battle of Hastings. He became King of England and changed the country forever.

1068-9 - The Harrying of the North: An English uprising killed all the Normans in Durham. In return William sent his soldiers to kill all English males in Durham. They burned down houses and set fire to food stores.

1085 - King William ordered the creation of the Domesday Book.

Key words

1	Baron	A ruler below the king in the feudal system, the baron ruled an area of land called a fief. He would pledge his loyalty to the king in return for the land.
2	Bishop	A leader in the church, the bishop was often the top church leader in a kingdom.
3	Castle	A defensive fortification where a lord or king would live. The local people would flee to the castle if they were attacked.
4	Chivalry	The code by which knights pledged to live. It involved honour, being courageous, and protecting the weak
5	Feudal System	A system of government where the king allotted land to his lords and barons. The lords and barons would then pledge their loyalty to the king and promise to protect his rule.
6	Fief	An area of land given to a lord or baron by a king to rule.
7	Guild	An association of craftsmen that focused on a specific trade or craft such as making shoes or weaving cloth.
8	Keep	A large tower within a castle that was considered the last line of defence.
9	King	The top ruler in a monarchy.
10	Knight	A warrior who rode a horse and wore heavy metal armour. Knights were rewarded with land and were required to protect the king when needed.
11	Manor	The center of life during the Middle Ages, the manor was the local lord's house or castle.
12	Moat	A ditch around a castle filled with water.
13	Serf	A peasant who worked the land for the local lord. The serf had few rights and was little better than a slave.
14	Vassal	Someone who pledges their allegiance to a lord.

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Summary: The Middle Ages was a time of inequality; women were seen as inferior and life for ordinary women was tough. Christianity and the Catholic Church played a major role in Europe during the Middle Ages. The local church was the center of town life. People attended weekly ceremonies. They were married, confirmed, and buried at the church. The church even confirmed kings on their throne giving them the divine right to rule.

1	Medieval women: Medieval England was not a comfortable place for most women. Medieval women had a hard time in an era when many men lived harsh lives. A few women lived comfortable lives but Medieval society was completely dominated by men and women had to know 'their place' in such a society.
2	The power of the church: The Catholic Church became very rich and powerful during the Middle Ages. People gave the church 1/10th of their earnings in tithes. They also paid the church for various services such as baptism, marriage, and communion. The leader of the Catholic Church was the pope. Right below the pope were powerful men called cardinals. Next were bishops and abbots. Even bishops held a lot of power on the local level and often served on the council of the king.
3	The Black Death: The Black Death is the name for a terrible disease that spread throughout Europe from 1347 to 1350. There was no cure for the disease and it was highly contagious. Many people thought that the Black Death was punishment from God. Some people thought that pockets of bad air released by earthquakes caused the plague. Others went so far as to blame Jewish people for bringing the plague to kill Christians.
4	Medieval medicine: Knowledge went into reverse in the west in Medieval times - many of the books of the Greeks and Romans were lost, and the knowledge they contained was replaced by mere speculation and superstition. Although many Medieval doctors continued to believe in the theory of the four humours, they also said disease was caused by demons, sin, bad smells, astrology and the stars, stagnant water, the Jewish people etc.
5	Medieval crime and punishment: Throughout the medieval period it was believed that the only way to keep order was to make sure that the people were scared of the punishments given for crimes committed. For this reason all crimes from stealing to burglary of houses to murder had harsh punishments.
6	Medieval persecutions: Jewish people were persecuted throughout the Middle Ages. People blamed them for spreading the plague by poisoning wells

Key developments

1154-1189 - During Henry II's reign he introduced 'trial by jury', where 12 people who did not know the defendant were selected to decide upon their guilt.

1170 - Four knights burst into Canterbury Cathedral and murdered Thomas Becket, the most important Church leader in England.

1347 - The Black Death begins in Europe. This horrible disease would kill around half of the people in Europe.

Key words

1	Apothecaries	People who made and sold medicines made from herbs and plants.
2	Archbishop	An important church leader. The Archbishop of Canterbury was in charge of all the changes in England.
3	Barber-surgeon	A medieval equivalent of a doctor.
4	Bishop	A leader in the church, the bishop was often the top church leader in a kingdom.
5	Black Death	A deadly disease that spread through much of Europe during the Middle Ages. It is estimated that it killed at least one third of all the people in Europe.
6	Blood-letting	The practice of making someone bleed to help cure an illness.
7	Christian	A person who believes in God and follows the teachings of His son, Jesus Christ.
8	Flagellants	People who whipped themselves in order to ask God for forgiveness.
9	Monastery	A religious area or group of buildings where monks lived. Monasteries were isolated from the rest of the world so the monks could focus on worshipping God.
10	Ordeal	A Medieval way of finding out if a person was guilty of a crime or not.
11	Pardon	Special letters that forgive a person for a crime.
12	Pope	The leader of the Catholic Church.
13	Scold's bridle	A head brace used to punish a nagging wife, sometimes called a Scold's brace.
14	Tithe	A tax that people had to pay to the local priest, usually one tenth of their farm produce.