

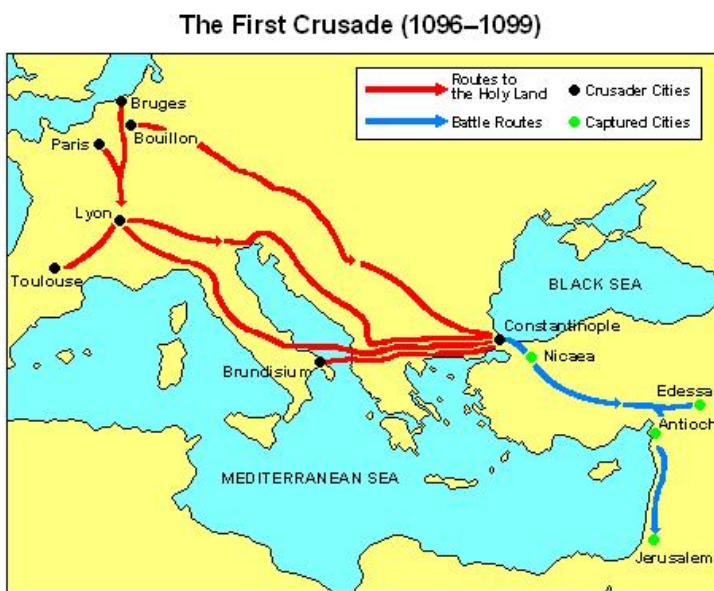
FEUDALISM TO NATION STATE (1000 BCE–1770)

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The Middle Ages

The thousand or so years following the collapse of the Roman Empire are called the **Middle Ages** (because they span the years between the ancient world and the modern world), or the **medieval** period. The first several centuries of this time are often referred to as the Dark Ages. They were “dark” because in Europe, at least, education declined, science stagnated, and trade slowed greatly. The most famous leader during this time was Charles the Great, or Charlemagne. He ruled over what is today France, Switzerland, Belgium, and the Netherlands as well as parts of Germany, Spain, and Italy. Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne as the Holy Roman Emperor in 800 BCE. This kept alive the idea of the old Roman Empire, but at that time it was an empire in name only.

After Charlemagne’s death, his lands were divided among his sons. Now there was no central government to protect people from attacks by the Vikings, a group of sea raiders who came from the region now known as Scandinavia. People sought protection wherever they could find it. This led some weaker lords to pledge loyalty to a stronger lord. In exchange for protection, the weaker lord, or **vassal**, promised to fight as a knight for the stronger lord. This highly complex system of lords and vassals became known as **feudalism**. Peasants, or **serfs**, protected themselves by tilling the fields of a nearby lord.



In 1095 Pope Urban II called on the people of Europe to recapture the Holy Lands in the Middle East from the Muslim Turks who ruled the region at the time. Over the next 200 years, the Christians of Europe launched a series of wars, called **Crusades**, against the Muslims. At first they succeeded in taking Jerusalem and other places, but in the long run the Crusades failed. The Holy Lands returned to Muslim control. The Crusades did, however, benefit the Europeans in one way. They opened European eyes to the superiority of Muslim culture, especially in fields such as science and medicine.

One great achievement of Europeans during the Middle Ages was building cathedrals to honor God. These massive stone churches towered over all the other buildings. Their most striking features were graceful flying buttresses and colorful stained-glass windows. Two prime examples of these churches are Notre Dame Cathedral in France and Salisbury Cathedral in England.

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The Renaissance

The Middle Ages ended and the modern world began with the **Renaissance**. The Renaissance started in Italy in the mid-1300s and slowly moved north. It brought great changes in the way ordinary people looked at the world. During the Renaissance, however, people grew more concerned with the here and now, and with real human issues in this world. This new outlook became known as **humanism**. The Renaissance also sparked a revival of interest in the ancient Greeks and Romans. In fact the word *Renaissance* means “rebirth”—a rebirth of interest in classic civilizations.

The Renaissance transformed the worlds of science, art, literature, and politics. The invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg in 1452 turned the world upside down. Books, once copied by hand, could now be produced in large numbers and made available to many more people. The church’s old monopoly over learning was broken. People could read and think for themselves. Scientists such as Copernicus and Galileo shattered the traditional belief that Earth was immovable and fixed at the center of the universe. Artists such as Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci painted the human form as it really was. Writers such as Desiderius Erasmus and Martin Luther attacked superstition and meaningless church ceremonies. The Renaissance also promoted unified political power under a monarchy. Spain, France, and England, in particular, were now ruled by powerful kings or queens.

The Renaissance awakened European interest in foreign trade and the rest of the world. This led to the “age of exploration.” Sailors from Portugal and Spain began to explore for new water routes to Asia. Previously the only way to Asia was over land by caravan the way Marco Polo did it in the 13th century. Now explorers such as Bartholomeau Dias and Vasco da Gama sailed south from Europe to find an all-water route to India around the tip of Africa. Then Christopher Columbus, seeking a shorter all-water route to Asia, sailed west across the Atlantic Ocean in 1492 and discovered the Americas. Five years later, in 1497, John Cabot became the first European since the Vikings to set foot on the mainland of North America.

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The Enlightenment

The Middle Ages has often been called the “Age of Faith” because of the emphasis on God and heaven. Later, the Renaissance led the way for the “Age of Reason,” or the Enlightenment, in the 17th and 18th centuries. The focus now was on the power of the human mind to solve human problems. This problem solving was done by using the **scientific method**. That means learning facts through observation and experimentation that can be repeated by someone else.

This scientific method was first applied to science problems. For example, Copernicus and Galileo changed people’s view of Earth’s place in the universe. Issac Newton, an Englishman, discovered that the world operated like a well-oiled machine according to certain fixed laws. One of these laws was the law of gravity. Newton observed that apples always fall to the ground rather than flying off into space, and from this he concluded that they are pulled down by the gravity of Earth.







Europeans also applied reason to areas other than science. They figured that if the world was governed by natural law, then maybe human life was as well. The philosopher John Locke argued that all people have “natural rights” given by God. These included the rights of life, liberty, and property. So any government that did not protect these rights was violating natural law. Locke said a “social contract” existed between the government and its citizens. If the government broke the contract by denying people’s rights, the people could set up a new government. This is the argument Thomas Jefferson would later use in the Declaration of Independence.

In France, philosophers such as Voltaire, Rousseau, and Diderot tried to reform society. Voltaire fought against prejudice and in favor of tolerance. He said that while he might disagree with what a person said, he would fight for the person’s right to say it. Rousseau advocated freedom, especially in education, and believed that all people were naturally pure and good. In his view, it was civilization that corrupted people. Diderot put all the learning of his age into a series of 35 books. His encyclopedia gave readers facts about all branches of learning.

Renaissance Time Line

- 1350** Renaissance begins in Italy
- 1387** Geoffrey Chaucer writes *The Canterbury Tales*
- 1434** The Medici family begins its long reign over the city of Florence
- 1440** Johannes Gutenberg invents the printing press 
- 1469** The marriage of Ferdinand and Isabella unites the Spanish kingdoms of Aragón and Castile
- 1485** Henry VII establishes the Tudor dynasty in England
- 1492** Columbus lands in the West Indies
- 1498** Vasco da Gama discovers a water route from Portugal to India
- 1505** Leonardo da Vinci paints the *Mona Lisa* 
- 1508** Michelangelo begins work on the Sistine Chapel
- 1513** Niccolo Machiavelli writes *The Prince*, presenting early views of modern political theory
- 1517** Martin Luther publishes his 95 *Theses*, sparking the Protestant Reformation
- 1521** Ferdinand Magellan completes the first trip around the world
- 1534** Henry VIII breaks with the Catholic Church, creating the Church of England 
- 1543** Nicolaus Copernicus publishes *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres*, advocating the heliocentric (sun-centered) model of the universe
- 1558** Elizabeth I takes the throne in England
- 1564** William Shakespeare is born 
- 1598** Henry VI takes the throne in France, beginning the powerful Bourbon dynasty
- 1605** Miguel de Cervantes publishes *Don Quixote*
- 1609** Johannes Kepler publishes *New Astronomy*, establishing his laws of planetary motion
- 1610** Galileo Galilei publishes *The Starry Messenger*, suggesting that Earth revolves around the Sun
- 1631** The Taj Mahal is built 
- 1680** Sir Isaac Newton establishes the laws of motion

Key Enlightenment Figures

	Country	Major Work	Philosophy		Country	Major Work	Philosophy
 John Locke (1632–1704)	England	<i>Two Treatises of Government</i> (1690)	The people are the most important part of any nation, not the ruler; the job of a government is to protect the natural rights of its citizens.	 Charles de Montesquieu (1689–1755)	France	<i>The Spirit of the Laws</i> (1748)	Executive, judicial, and legislative powers should be split in any government to prevent the absolute power of one individual.
 Voltaire (1694–1778)	France	<i>Candide</i> (1759)	Everything is not for the best. Bad things happen and not for the greater good. Optimism is a bad way of dealing with reality.	 Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778)	France	<i>The Social Contract</i> (1762)	Human beings in nature are inherently evil; society and government serve the purpose of civilizing mankind.
 Denis Diderot (1713–1784)	France	<i>The Encyclopédie</i> (1745–1772)	All people should have access to theoretical knowledge instead of relying on superstition and the teachings of the Catholic Church; freedom is necessary to a healthy nation.	 Adam Smith (1723–1790)	Scotland	<i>The Wealth of Nations</i> (1776)	The supply and demand of goods will automatically maintain a state of equilibrium, or balance; therefore, the government should only play a small roll in regulating the economy.

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