

# 1. The Medieval World

## 1.1. Introduction

What comes to your mind when you hear the term “The Middle Ages”?

Why do you think this period of time is called “The Middle Ages”?

Sometimes “The Middle Ages” are also called “The Dark Ages”. Can you see why?

At which point in time do you see yourself? Visualise your ideas!

## 1.2. The Concept of “Space”

Nowadays, we have quite a detailed conception not only of the space around us but also of our nation, of Europe and even of the world. What was this conception like in the Middle Ages? Did medieval people travel? Did they have an idea of the space around them? How far did this ability to imagine the world go?



Travel in the Middle Ages was slow, uncomfortable, and usually dangerous. Today, we can travel around 70 km in one hour. In the Middle Ages, it would have taken a very fast horse over two days to travel the same distance. A few main roads in Europe had been paved by the Romans, and remained paved with cobblestones during the Middle Ages. However, most roads were made of dirt that turned into a river of mud when it rained. The paved roads were full of pot holes were peasants had “borrowed” a stone from the road to patch up their homes. The potholes and mud restricted travel to walking, horses, and light two-wheeled carts. Most people walked, because horses were very expensive and only the rich could afford them. Any heavy loads were transported on the ocean or by river. Robbers abounded on both sea and land and robbed and killed the unwary. Only very desperate people travelled by night, when the robbers were the most active. Most people didn’t travel at all. Common people sometimes lived their whole lives never traveling more than 15 km from the place where they were born. The nobility were more mobile, usually moving from castle to castle throughout the course of the year to check on each of their properties.”

Source: [http://www.angelfire.com/planet/historysite/new\\_page\\_3.htm](http://www.angelfire.com/planet/historysite/new_page_3.htm). 14.2.2014

**KEY TERMS:**  
paved: gepflastert |  
cobblestones: Pflastersteine |  
abound: vorkommen |  
the unwary: der Unachtsame |  
the nobility: der Adel

„The roads were filled with traders carrying goods to market. The marketplace was a local affair. It was held each week. Local goods were traded. In the beginning, people bartered for goods.

Trade Fairs: Soon a new kind of marketplace appears - the trade fair. A fair was a big deal. A fair might last for two weeks. To hold a fair, you needed a grant from the king or from the fief owner - you needed permission. [...] The fairs were held outside, open to the elements. Goods were displayed in the rain, snow, sleet, and mud. Sellers had no choice really. They had paid a fee. They needed to sell their goods.

The fair attracted pickpockets and other petty thieves. Some sellers rented space in homes to protect their goods. Some slept near their goods to protect them. Some people spent the night in inns, sheltered from the weather.

Fairs were noisy, dirty, exciting places. Musicians, jugglers, and entertainers worked the fair for the coins tossed at them. Sellers hawked their wares. Buyers bargained loudly. The people loved them.“

Source: <http://medievalurope.mrdonn.org/tradefairs.html>. 14.2.2014

**KEY TERMS:**  
traders: Händler | to barter: handeln |  
a grant: Bewilligung |  
fief: Lehensgut |  
sleet: Graupelschauer |  
a fee: Abgabe |  
a pickpocket: Taschendieb |  
to bargain: feilschen



⇒ After having read these two texts from different sources: is there any discrepancy between them?

⇒ Come to a conclusion.

Monks had to move from one monastery to another from time to time. Read about the experience of the Benedictine Richer of Reims:

“My joy faded somewhat because my own abbot gave me nothing more for the journey than one saddle-horse and a young lad to help with the trip. Without money or even a change of clothes, I decided to go anyway.

after setting out from Rheims with the messenger and the lad, I soon arrived at Orbais, well-known for its hospitality. The abbot cared for our needs and on the next day we set out for Meaux. But having entered the shadows of a dark forest, problems overtook us. We made a wrong turn at some crossroad, then wandered miles out of our way. Soon my abbot's

**KEY TERMS:**  
abbot: Abt |  
saddle-horse:



generous gift of a saddle-horse, which had seemed as powerful as [Alexander the Great's own steed] Bucephalus, began to lag behind. It was getting toward evening and the sky had clouded up. Just as the rain began to fall, as luck would have it, our Bucephalus sank to the ground some six miles from our destination and died. If lightening had struck him, he could not have been more dead! How serious our situation was, and how nervous we became, can only be appreciated by those who have also suffered hardships on the road.

The lad, now without a horse and unaccustomed to the difficulties of a journey, collapsed on the ground in despair. Our baggage sat there in a pile without any way to carry it further. Sheets of rain poured down on us. Clouds surrounded us. The setting sun brought darkness. Unsure of what to do, I turned to prayer and God did not ignore us: I had an answer. I left the boy with the baggage, told him what he should answer to any one who might come by, and warned him not to fall asleep. Then I set out with the messenger for Meaux. We reached the bridge before the town but could barely see it in the rainy night. I became even more anxious because the bridge had so many holes and large gaps in it that the citizens of Meaux could hardly cross it in the daytime, much less in the dark - and in a storm! The messenger, an experienced traveller, went to find a boat for us to cross in. Not finding one, we faced the difficult path over the bridge. As we went, the messenger put his shield over the smaller holes for the horses. He used planks for the larger gaps. At times he would be bending over, now standing up, now running here and there in order to keep the horses calm and safe. Slowly, he managed to get me and the horses across safely."

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/riche1.asp>. 14.2.2014

Packpferd |  
lad: Bursche |  
a messenger:  
(hier:) Reiter

⇒ Describe the relationship between men and nature in this source.

⇒ What do you learn about travelling in the Middle Ages?

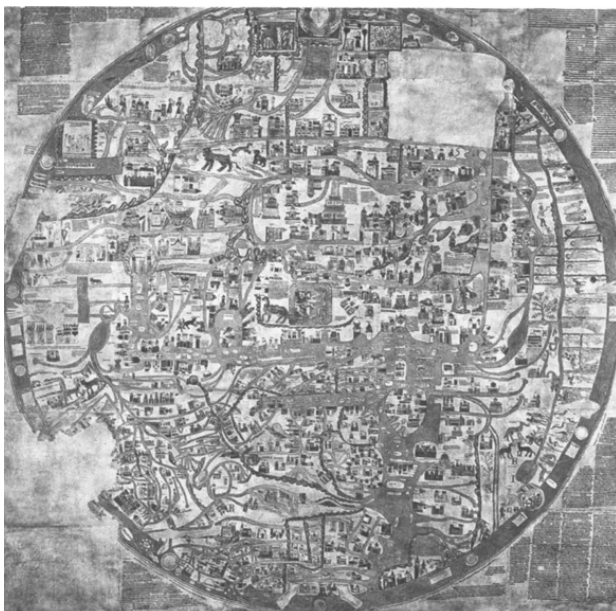
⇒ Talk about the role of religious faith in this source.

Nevertheless, some people travelled incredibly far. Just remind yourself of the journey of Columban from Ireland to Lake Constance – where he “lost” one of his monks, Gallus – and on to Italy. You will later read of other men and women who travelled far because of a pilgrimage. Could travelling people at that time benefit from existing maps like the two following examples? – We don’t know...



The **Tabula Peutingeriana** is “an illustrated itinerary”, in effect a road map, showing the road network in the Roman Empire. It is conserved at the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Hofburg, Vienna. The original map (of which this is a unique copy) was last revised in the fourth or early fifth century. The Tabula Peutingeriana is the only known surviving map of the Roman *cursus publicus*. That map which has been conserved until today was made by a monk in Colmar in the 13th century. It is a parchment scroll, 0.34 m high and 6.75 m long, assembled from eleven sections, a medieval reproduction of the original scroll. It is a very schematic map: the land masses are distorted, especially in the east-west direction. The map shows many Roman settlements, the roads connecting them, rivers, mountains, forests and seas. The distances between the settlements are also given. The three most important cities of the Roman Empire, Rome, Constantinople and Antioch, are represented with special iconic decoration.”

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tabula\\_Peutingeriana](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tabula_Peutingeriana). 14.2.2014



The **Ebstorf Map** is another famous example of a medieval “map”. Find out more about this specific map – on your own!

A good site to start with is...

[http://www.landschaftsmuseum.de/Bilder/Ebstorf/Ebstorf-Lueneburg\\_ganz-2.jpg](http://www.landschaftsmuseum.de/Bilder/Ebstorf/Ebstorf-Lueneburg_ganz-2.jpg)

You can zoom into different parts of this map and explore it.

⇒ Write at least three notes about the Ebstorf Map on your sheet!

## 2. How Life Took its Course



⇒ Compare and contrast these two pictures showing people on their deathbed.



Read the following source: It's Adelheid Wittenborch's last will. She was a merchant from Lübeck (28th November 1358)

1. Ihrem Ehemann Vicko Wittenborch ihr halbes Haus, eine silberne Schale, sieben silberne Löffel und die Hälfte des Geräts.
2. Der Tochter Wyndeke ihre Fibel und die Spangen, die sie zum roten Oberkleid gebraucht, sowie ein Handtuch.
3. Ihr besseres Oberkleid ohne die Spangen der Jacobikirche.
4. Dem Mönchsbruder Johan aus dem Minoritenorden 2 Mark.
5. Der Katharinenkirche, wo sie bestattet werden will, 10 Mark. Mit diesem Geld sollen auch die Kerzen für ihr Leichenbegräbnis angeschafft werden, die die Mönchsbrüder nach dem Begräbnis behalten sollen.
6. Der Marienkirche, der Jacobikirche, dem Spital zum Heiligen Geist und den Predigerbrüdern, jeder Stätte ein Gulden, damit sie über ein volles Jahr ihre Gedenk- und Fürbittengottesdienste abhalten.
7. Dem Priester Arhusen in Wismar 2 Mark.
8. Dem Mönch in Reinfeld Bruder Johan ihre Kleiderspangen, aus denen ein Kelch gefertigt werden soll.
9. dem Spital zum Heiligen Geist ein gutes Bett.“



⇒ What was the purpose of this last will? Can you see a connection between this last will and the medieval painting?

Daily life during the Middle Ages is sometimes hard to fathom. Pop culture loves to focus on exciting medieval moments – heroic knights charging into battle; romantic liaisons between royalty and commoner; breakthroughs and discoveries made. But life for an average person during the Dark Ages was very routine, and activities revolved around an agrarian calendar.

Daily life in the Middle Ages consisted of hard physical work. Far more than today people were subjected to nature. They suffered from drought, cold and hunger. Disease and death were everyday experiences, and men were powerless against them. Most of the time was spent working the land, and trying to grow enough food to survive another year. Church feasts marked sowing and reaping days, and occasions when peasant and lord could rest from their labors.

Social activities were important, and every citizen in a medieval town would be expected to attend. Fairs with troubadours and acrobats performing in the streets, merchants selling goods in the town square, games of chance held at the local tavern, tournaments featuring knights from near and abroad. These were just some of the ways medieval peasants spent their leisure time. Medieval weddings were cause for the entire town to celebrate.

As we will see later, people lived in a strict, established order in which each person had its place. Most people were convinced that God himself approved this order. As God had created the world, he would also decide over its end. Doomsday was the endpoint and destination of men and everybody had to be prepared for this day.

Source adapted from [http://www.medieval-life.net/life\\_main.htm](http://www.medieval-life.net/life_main.htm). 21.2.2014

**KEY TERMS:**  
to fathom: ergründen |  
commoner: Mensch aus dem 3. Stand |  
drought: Dürre |



### 3. Under the Spell of Religion and the Church

#### 3.1. Religion in the Middle Ages

Most people in the Middle Ages lived their lives fully believing in the reality of a spiritual realm all around them, and in heaven or hell when they died. In the Middle Ages, the Church provided for people's religious lives – baptism of babies, marriages, confession, the last rites for the dying and burying the dead.

But the Church did much more than this:

- Monasteries looked after the old and sick, provided somewhere for travellers to stay, gave alms to the poor and sometimes looked after people's money for them.
- Monks could often read and write, so they copied books and taught children.
- Monasteries often had libraries.
- Church festivals and saints' days were 'holy days', when people didn't have to work.

Religion played an important part in people's lives:

- Many people chose a career in the Church or in a monastery. In 1300 one in twenty townspeople was a cleric.
- Many knights tried to earn forgiveness for their sins by going on Crusade.
- Many people went on a pilgrimage to try to reduce the time they spent in Purgatory.

Anybody who was not a Roman Catholic Christian was persecuted.

#### 3.2. Pilgrimage

You will read about pilgrims and pilgrimages on a separate worksheet.

KEY TERMS:  
realm: Reich |  
baptism: Taufe |  
confession: Beicht  
| monastery:  
Kloster | alms:  
Almosen |  
cleric:  
Geistlicher | knight  
Ritter | crusade:  
Kreuzzug |  
pilgrimage:  
Pilgerfahrt/-reise,  
Wallfahrt |  
purgatory:  
Fegefeuer |  
persecute:  
verfolgen

⇒ Create an advertisement in groups for a medieval pilgrimage. Try to make the readers curious about your destination by describing what might await them. Give some advice what pilgrims have to consider before leaving.

## 3.3. Romanesque Architecture and Gothic Style

Go to <http://quatr.us/medieval/architecture/medarch.htm> as well as <http://quatr.us/medieval/architecture/gothic.htm> and read about medieval architecture. Make an intelligent choice of technical terms (e.g. “round arches”). Make notes next to the photographs here on the sheet.

## KEY TERMS:

a pillar: Säule |  
round arch:  
Rundbogen |  
pointed arch:  
Spitzbogen |  
groin vault:  
Kreuzgewölbe |  
flying buttress:  
Strebepfeiler |  
wooden roof:  
Holzdecke | bell  
tower:  
Glockenturm |  
central aisle:  
Mittelschiff  
(Mittelgang) |  
side aisle:  
Seitenschiff |  
intersection:  
Querschiff |



Payern, Switzerland



Modena, Italy



St Denis, France



Notre Dame, France

## 3.4. The Crusades



Jerusalem is a holy city for both Christians and Muslims. From the seventh century, Jerusalem and the surrounding area were ruled by the Muslim *Seljuks*. In 1095 the Christians reported difficulties travelling to the Holy Land. Pilgrims were attacked more than usual and finally stopped visiting the holy places. The head of the Christian Church, Pope Urban II, called for volunteers to travel to Jerusalem and fight to take it back from the Muslims. Over the next 200 years Christians set out on crusades to control the Holy Land. In the end the Muslims managed to fight off the invading Christian armies and keep control of their land. Find out why the Christians went on crusades, how they captured Jerusalem and what resulted from the crusades.

Source adapted from History: Cities, Castles, Churches (Klett), p. 44-51

We have to consider the following source carefully: This text reports what Pope Urban II had said in a speech at the Council of Clermont, France, in the year 1095. But his author, a monk called Robert, eventually wrote it down more than ten years later. Imagine if you had to write down a speech you heard several years ago...! Nevertheless, we can assume that the monk Robert was in Clermont when Urban II held his famous address. And today we know five other sources from different authors about this speech which adds to its credibility.



“Oh, race of Franks, race from across the mountains, race chosen and beloved by Gods shines forth in very many of your works set apart from all nations by the situation of your country, as well as by your catholic faith and the honor of the holy church! To you our discourse is addressed and for you our exhortation is intended. [...]

From the confines of Jerusalem and the city of Constantinople a horrible tale has gone forth and very frequently has been brought to our ears, namely, that the Seljuks, a race from the kingdom of the Persians, an accursed race, a race utterly alienated from God, a generation forsooth which has not directed its heart and has not entrusted its spirit to God, has invaded the lands of those Christians and has depopulated them by the sword, pillage and fire; it has led away a part of the captives into its own country, and a part it has destroyed by cruel tortures; it has either entirely destroyed the churches of God or appropriated them for the rites of its own religion. They destroy the altars, after having defiled them with their uncleanness. [...]

On whom therefore is the labor of avenging these wrongs and of recovering this territory incumbent, if not upon you? You, upon whom above other nations God has conferred remarkable glory in arms, great courage, bodily activity, and strength to humble the hairy scalp of those who resist you.

Let the deeds of your ancestors move you and incite your minds to manly achievements; the glory and greatness of king Charles the Great,

„Ihr Volk der Franken, Volk nördlich der Alpen, ihr seid, wie eure vielen Taten erhellen, Gottes geliebtes und auserwähltes Volk, herausgehoben aus allen Völkern durch die Lage des Landes, den Glauben und die Hochschätzung für die heilige Kirche. An euch richtet sich unsere Rede, an euch ergeht unsere Mahnung. [...]

Von Jerusalem und Konstantinopel kommt schlimme Nachricht zu uns. Die Seldschuken aus dem Königreich Persien, ein fremdländisches und gottloses Volk, eine Brut von ziellosem Gemüt und ohne Vertrauen auf Gott, hat die Länder der dortigen Christen besetzt, durch Mord, Raub und Brand entvölkert und die Gefangenen teils in sein Land abgeführt, teils elend umgebracht; es hat die Kirchen Gottes gründlich zerstört oder für seinen Kult beschlagnahmt. Besonders das Schicksal des heiligen Grabes muss euch zu Herzen gehen. Es ist in der Gewalt jenes sündhaften Volkes ebenso wie die heiligen Stätten, die von jenen Unreinen geschändet und besudelt werden. [...]

Wem anders obliegt nun die Aufgabe diesen Schmach zu rächen, dieses Land zu befreien, als euch? Euch verlieh Gott mehr als den übrigen Völkern ausgezeichneten Waffenruhm, hohen Mut, körperliche Gewandtheit und die Kraft den Scheitel eurer Widersacher zu beugen.

Bewegen und zu mannhaftem Entschluss aufzustacheln mögen euch die Taten eurer Vorgänger, die Heldengröße König Karls

and of his son Louis, and of your other kings [...]

This land which you inhabit, shut in on all sides by the seas and surrounded by the mountain peaks, is too narrow for your large population; nor does it abound in wealth; and it furnishes scarcely food enough for its cultivators. Hence it is that you murder one another, that you wage war, and that frequently you perish by mutual wounds. Let therefore hatred depart from among you, let your quarrels end, let wars cease, and let all dissensions and controversies slumber.

Enter upon the road to the Holy Sepulchre; wrest that land from the wicked race, and subject it to yourselves. That land which as the Scripture says "floweth with milk and honey," was given by God into the possession of the children of Israel Jerusalem is the navel of the world; the land is fruitful above others, like another paradise of delights. This the Redeemer of the human race has made illustrious by His advent, has beautified by residence, has consecrated by suffering, has redeemed by death, has glorified by burial.

This royal city, therefore, situated at the centre of the world, is now held captive by His enemies, and is in subjection to those who do not know God, to the worship of the heathens. She seeks therefore and desires to be liberated, and does not cease to implore you to come to her aid. From you especially she asks succor, because, as we have already said, God has conferred upon you above all nations great glory in arms.

Accordingly undertake this journey for the remission of your sins, with the assurance of the imperishable glory of the kingdom of heaven.

When Pope Urban had said these and very many similar things in his urbane discourse, he so influenced to one purpose the desires of all who were present, that they cried out, "It is the will of God! It is the will of God!"

des Grossen, seines Sohnes Ludwig und anderer Könige [...]

Dieses Land, in dem ihr wohnt, ist allenthalben von Meeren und Gebirgszügen umschlossen und von euch beängstigend dicht bevölkert. Es fließt nicht vor Fülle und Wohlstand über, liefert seinen Bauern kaum die blosse Nahrung. Daher kommt es, dass ihr euch gegenseitig beisst und bekämpft, gegeneinander Krieg führt und euch meist gegenseitig verletzt und tötet. Aufhören soll unter euch der Hass, schweigen soll der Zank!

Tretet den Weg zum Heiligen Grab an. Nehmt das Land dort dem gottlosen Volk, macht es euch untertan! Gott gab dieses Land in den Besitz der Söhne Israels; die Bibel sagt, dass dort Milch und Honig fließen. Jerusalem ist der Mittelpunkt der Erde, das fruchtbarste aller Länder, als wäre es ein zweites Paradies der Wonne. Der Erlöser der Menschheit hat es durch seine Ankunft verherrlicht, durch sein Grab ausgezeichnet.

Diese Königsstadt also, in der Erdmitte gelegen, wird jetzt von ihren Feinden gefangen gehalten und von denen, die Gott nicht kennen, dem Heidentum versklavt. Sie erbittet und ersehnt Befreiung, sie erfleht unablässig eure Hilfe. Denn euch verlieh Gott, wie wir schon sagten, vor allen Völkern ausgezeichneten Waffenruhm.

Schlagt also diesen Weg ein zur Vergebung eurer Sünden: nie verwelkender Ruhm ist euch im Himmelreich gewiss.

Als Papst Urban dies und Derartiges mehr in geistreicher Rede vorgetragen hatte, führte er die Leidenschaft aller Anwesenden so sehr zu einem Willen zusammen, dass sie riefen: „Deus lo volt! Deus lo volt!“

⇒ Which arguments does the Pope use to permit a crusade to the Holy Land? – Collect them!

⇒ What do you think about the reaction of the audience?



# Exploring the Crusades

⇒ Go online and find out relevant points about the crusades! Remember these points during your research:

- 1) What do I (get to) know about the first crusade (the siege of Jerusalem)?
- 2) Which other crusade in the Holy Land was important? Why?
- 3) Which was probably the worst crusade because of its result or its initial idea?
- 4) After the crusades: what remains? Who won – who lost? What's my opinion?
- 5) What were the impacts of the crusade?

A good start to understand the main issues:

<http://medievaleurope.mrdonn.org/crusades.html>

Excellent maps, but quite detailed and difficult:

<http://explorethemed.com/Crusades.asp?c=1>

If you have already read about the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> crusade, you can test yourself here:

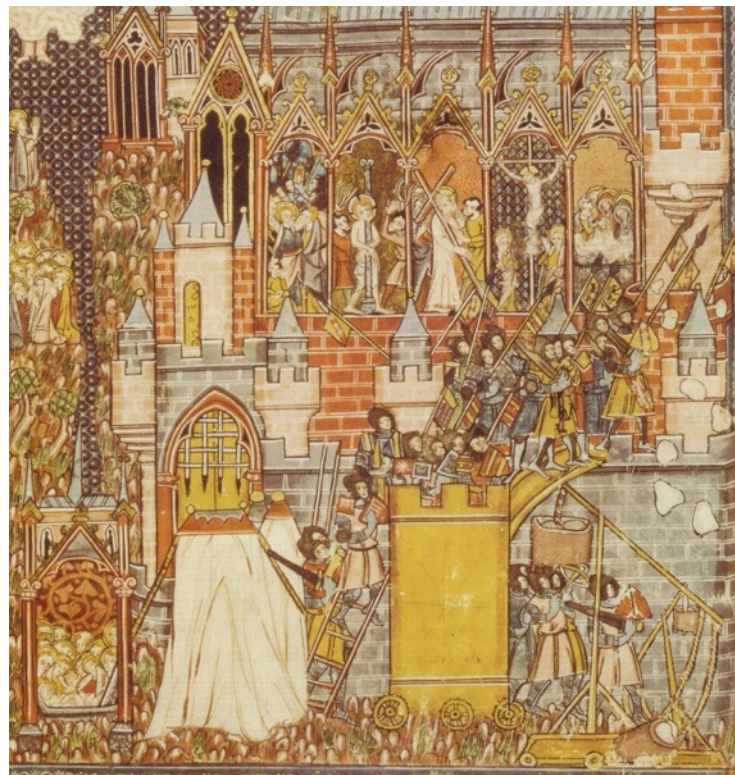
<http://www.schoolhistory.co.uk/games/fling/crusades/index.shtml>

Here you can watch short videos on different aspects of the crusades:

<http://videos.howstuffworks.com/discovery/35313-crusades-journey-video.htm>

What were the impacts of the crusades? Find out more by reading this text:

<http://history.howstuffworks.com/middle-ages/crusades8.htm>







During the medieval times inflicting pain and torture were accepted forms of punishment or interrogation. The cruel and pitiless torturers were induced to inflict the horrors of torture or punishment on the pitiful prisoners. Different types of torture or methods of punishment were inflicted, depending on the crime and the social status of the victim, using various methods and various types of devices or instruments during a Medieval Inquisition.

The Medieval Inquisition was an institution of the church for combating or suppressing heresy. Heresy is defined as an opinion or belief which was held deliberately and with knowledge against church teachings. The Medieval Inquisition was a series of Inquisitions by the church to suppress heresy. The first Medieval Inquisition was established in the year 1184 against the Cathar movement. Torture was used after 1252 when Pope Innocent IV issued a papal bull which authorized the use of torture by inquisitors.

No torture methods were allowed in an Inquisition that resulted in bloodshed, mutilation or death. A common form of torture was hanging the accused by their wrists, hoisted above ground and then having weights hung from their ankles. This torture method was known as the Judas Cradle and a similar method was called the Strappado. A skilled torturer would use methods, devices and instruments to prolong life as long as possible whilst inflicting agonising pain. The customs of the Medieval period dictated that prisoners were tortured before they were executed in order to obtain additional information about their crime or their accomplices. Men or women who were proclaimed as heretics by the Inquisition were being burnt to death.

Many famous medieval people were accused of heresy and became victim of the Inquisition. On Friday the 13th, in October 1307, Jacques de Molay, the Grand Master of the Knights Templar, and 60 of his senior knights were arrested in Paris. Joan of Arc was also subjected to a Medieval Inquisition and subsequently burnt at the stake.

There were no laws or rules to protect the treatment of prisoners who faced torture or punishment, such as the Medieval Inquisition Torture. Torture methods used during Inquisitions were seen as a totally legitimate means to extract confessions, obtain the names of accomplices, obtain testimonies or confessions.

Source: <http://www.medieval-life-and-times.info>. 28.4.2014

**KEY TERMS:**  
 torture: Folter |  
 interrogation: Verhör  
 | Inquisition: Aufspürung  
 falschen Glaubens |  
 heresy: falscher Glaube | a  
 heretic: ein Ungläubiger,  
 Falschglaubender, ein Häretiker | a  
 cathar: Ketzer  
 | papal bull: päpstlicher Erlass  
 | bloodshed: Blutvergiessen  
 | mutilation: Verstümmelung  
 | stake: Scheiterhaufen

- ⇒ Explain how the medieval church could become even more powerful through the Inquisition.
- ⇒ What were other consequences of chasing heretics?
- ⇒ Is there a connection between the Inquisition and the fact that people were claimed to be witches in medieval times?



Selling of indulgences was another dark chapter in medieval history. The earliest record is Pope Urban II's declaration at the Council of Clermont (1095). He remitted all penance incurred by crusaders who had confessed their sins, considering participation in the crusade equivalent to a complete penance.

Indulgences became increasingly popular in the Middle Ages as a reward for displaying piety and doing good deeds. However, the later Middle Ages saw the growth of considerable abuses. Commissaries sought to extract the maximum amount of money for each indulgence. "Pardoners" - who were sent to collect alms for a specific project - practiced the unrestricted sale of indulgences. With the permission of the church, indulgences also became a way for the church to fund expensive projects, such as Crusades and cathedrals, by keeping a significant portion of the money raised from indulgences in their lands. There was a tendency to forge documents declaring that indulgences had been granted.

**KEY TERMS:**  
 penance: Busse |  
 abuse: Missbrauch  
 | alms: Almosen

Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indulgence>. 28.4.2014

- ⇒ Again: Think about possible consequences of this behaviour!
- ⇒ Why are indulgences logical for medieval thinking?

## 4. Rulers and Subjects



Woodcut, 1492. See also „Mai, Weltgeschichte“, p. 54.

After having had a look into the medieval way of thinking and living, we will analyze parts of medieval society. As you will see, it was quite different from today's society. This knowledge will help you to understand later periods in history, e.g. the different revolutions in Europe, when men couldn't stand the injustice of medieval society anymore.



Drawing, 1789. See also „Mai, Weltgeschichte“, p. 113 where you find an earlier version of it.

⇒ Look at the woodcut above: How was society divided in medieval thinking?

Poor peasants spent all their lives working and producing food. But there were two main types of peasants in the Middle Ages: **villeins** and **freemen**.

Most villeins worked their own and the lord's land. The lord was meant to protect the villeins but in fact he abused the manpower of his villeins. Some villeins belonged to the land (feudum) they lived on. They were not allowed to move from it, otherwise the lord was not allowed to sell or to exile them. In German these villeins are called "Hörige". Other villeins were seen by their lord as part of his property. Therefore he felt entitled to treat these villeins like objects or slaves. In German we call these villeins "Leibeigene". 60% of the villeins were owned as "Leibeigene" by a lord.

A freeman had less duties: Of course, he had to pay a rent for the land the lord let him and he had to work for a set number of days for the lord. But a freeman could move and live as he wanted to. Not everybody could become a freeman. Usually, villeins stayed villeins, but some had the chance to become free, e.g. when a third person paid for their freedom. (As we will see in the next chapter, The Medieval City, in the later Middle Ages a villein could hide in a city for at least a year. Then he became a freeman. We still have evidence of this in our language today: "Stadtluft macht frei!")

In the medieval society every person who held land received protection from their superiors but had to pay duties and services in return. Everybody knew his or her place in this social system. We call this system **feudalism** – from the Latin word *feudum*.

The king at the top of the order of society let land to the barons. The barons let land to the knights or nobles, and all of them let land to peasants. The lords and nobles swore an oath to the king. They had to go to war when the king told them to do so or they had to send a number of men.

Churchmen were at the same level as lords. The peasants were at the bottom of the feudal system, which meant that they had to obey their lord, to whom they had sworn an oath of obedience. Villeins and freemen had to pay a tax to the church, called the **tithe**. It was 10% of what a peasant had produced in a year. All peasants also had to work without payment on church land. To be at the bottom of the feudal system did not mean to be at the very bottom of society! For example excommunicated people, beggars or robbers did not even belong to the society.

After reading this, you might want to know why nobody questioned this unfair system. We know some sources about peasants complaining about their situation and there were some uprisings against lords. But as we learned at the beginning of this chapter, Europe still had to wait for a real revolution of this feudal society.

Source adapted from History: Cities, Castles, Churches (Klett), p. 10ff.

### KEY TERMS:

villein:  
Leibeigener |  
Duties:  
Pflichten |  
superiors:  
Höherstehende |  
feudalism:  
Lehnswesen;  
Feudalsystem | to  
let: leihen | tithe:  
der Zehnten | an  
oath: ein Eid | to  
obey: gehorchen |  
uprising:  
Aufstand

⇒ Think about symbols, arrows, shapes you could use to illustrate the information above. Draw a diagram which summarizes the structure of the society and the different duties.



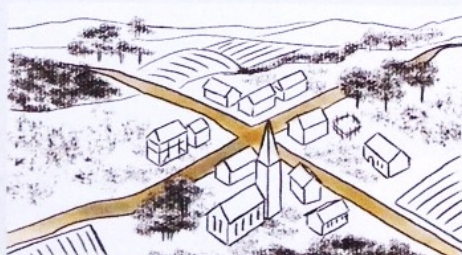
## 5. The Medieval City

Find out **where** and **why** medieval towns were founded...

The majority of medieval cities and **towns** were founded between the 11<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century by feudal lords on their own land. As feudal lords became richer, they started to buy many luxurious products from foreign **merchants**. **Fairs** or **markets**, where a greater number of people gathered, developed. **Artisans**, who made various items for their own as well as their lord's needs, were allowed to trade here with their products. With the permission of the **landlord**, these artisans also settled in such places, which often developed into economic and cultural centres.

⇒ Match the pictures with at least one of the phrases on the right!

⇒ Why did landlords choose the different locations to found a city?



**monasteries**

nuns and monks needed supplies

**water (rivers and streams)**

good supply of fish; needed every day and people did not want to walk miles for it

**fords/bridges**

many travellers and traders, tax for using it

**bays**

protection of ships against storms, harbour helped in trade

**high ground**

good view of the surrounding area; made it possible to spot enemies early and to prepare own defence

**castles**

defence against enemies

**crossroads**

many people/travellers/traders



Find out **who governed the medieval towns...**

⇒ Read the text on the right and write a brief description of how government worked in a medieval town!

⇒ Describe and explain the changes in medieval city governance from the 11<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup> century!

Townspople in medieval times had the **privilege** of being able to run their own affairs via the **town council**, through a royal **charter** granted by the monarch. But over time, the way how the town was **governed** changed. The power shifted from the landlord to the people. But this did not always happen. Some towns were under the power of their landlord for hundreds of years.

The historian Peter Hammond about life in a medieval town

The medieval town had a defined hierarchy and those with the most power had the greatest say in how the town was run. The townspeople were answerable only to a town government. Charters were a good source of income for medieval monarchs, as a town paid to buy its charter, then made annual payments for the right to continue self-governing. Once the townspeople had been granted a charter, they were free **to elect** their own officers to run the town government. Those who elected the officers of the town council were the **freemen** – usually full members of one of the town's craft guilds. The council was headed by a **mayor**, again elected by the freemen.

Peter Hammond, Life in a Medieval Town, Amberley 2008, © Stroud: Sutton 2007.

defined: festgelegt | hierarchy: Hierarchie | to be answerable to: verantwortlich sein gegenüber | craft guild: Gilde/ Zunft (Vereinigung bzw. Körperschaft von Handwerkern) | to be headed by: angeführt sein von

### KEY TERMS

**governance**

Regierung

**city/town council**

Stadtrat

**charter**

Gründungsurkunde, Freibrief

**to govern**

regieren

**to elect s.o.**

jemanden wählen

**freeman**

Freier, Ehrenbürger

**mayor**

Bürgermeister

**administration**

Verwaltung

**jurisdiction**

Rechtsprechung

**welfare**

Fürsorge

**taxes**

Steuern

**laws**

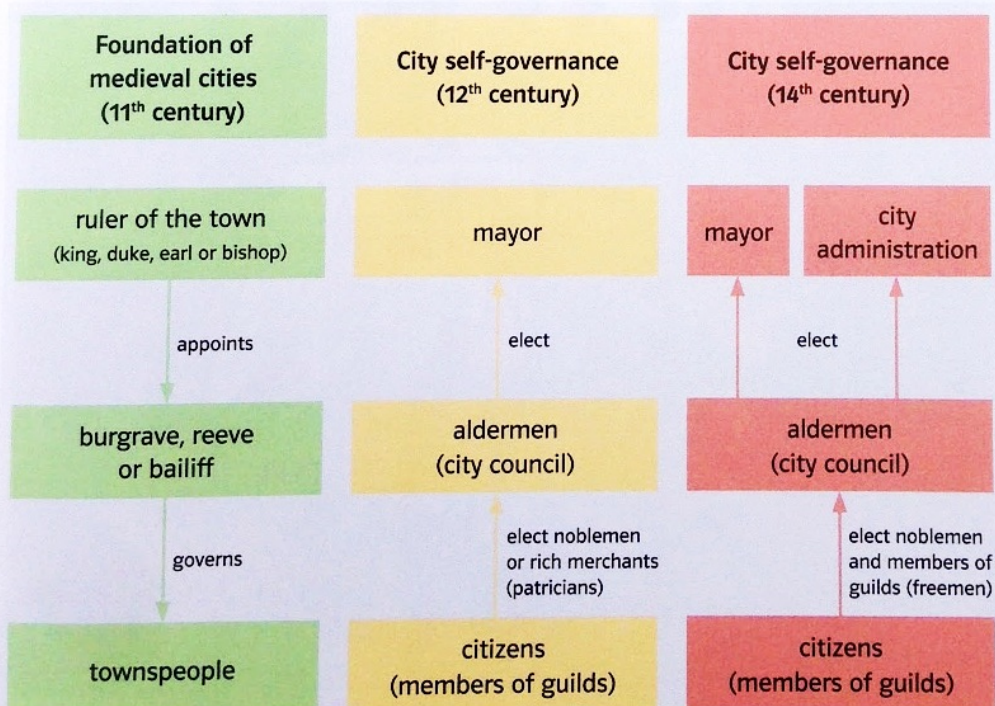
Gesetze

**alliances**

Bündnisse

**treaties**

Verträge



Development of medieval town governance (11<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century) – duties and responsibilities of the medieval mayor and town council: **administration, jurisdiction, welfare, taxes, laws, war, peace, alliances, treaties, buildings, fire protection, control of epidemics**

duke: Herzog | earl: Graf | to appoint: ernennen | burgrave: Burggraf | reeve: Vogt | bailiff: Büttel (Verwalter) | alderman: Ratsherr | patrician: Patrizier | guild: Gilde/Zunft (Vereinigung bzw. Körperschaft von Handwerkern) | duty: Aufgabe, Obliegenheit | fire protection: Brandschutz | control of epidemics: Seuchenbekämpfung



## The guild:

⇒ Read the following two sets of regulations of craft guilds. Then write down an answer to the question: "What was a medieval craft guild?"

⇒ Outline the functions of a guild by explaining the aim of the different regulations!

### The regulations of the craft guild of garment cutters of Stendal (1231):

1. No one shall presume to cut cloth, except if he is of our craft; those who break this rule will pay three talents to the guild.
2. Three times a year there must be a meeting of the brethren. Whoever does not come to it will pay what is right.
3. Whoever wishes to enter the fraternity, whose father was a brother and cut cloth will come with his friends to the meeting of the brethren. If he behaves honestly, he will be able to join the guild at the first request on payment of five solidi, and he will give six denarii to the master.
6. If any brother prepares cloth in his house and cuts or sells it at the wish of others, he will either cease or have no part in this fraternity.
8. Every year a master and four other good men who shall preside over the affairs of the guild will be faithfully chosen.

Adapted and simplified from: F. Keutgen, Urkunden zur Städtischen Verfassungsgeschichte, Berlin 1901, pp. 356–357.

garment cutter: Kleidungsschneider | to presume: sich erdreisten | talent: Taler | brethren: Brüder; hier: Mitglieder der Gilde | fraternity: Bruderschaft | request: Antrag | solidi: Solidus (mittelalterliches Zahlungsmittel) | denarii: Denar (mittelalterliches Zahlungsmittel) | to cease: aufhören | to preside over: den Vorsitz innehaben | affairs: Angelegenheiten | faithfully: ehrlich

emblem: Emblem | carpenter: Tischler | blacksmith: Schmied | goldsmith: Goldschmied | shoemaker: Schuster | barber: Barbier | butcher: Fleischer | tailor: Schneider | brick layer: Maurer | potter: Töpfer

### Ordinance from the Southampton Guild Organisation (14<sup>th</sup> century):

6. And if a **guildsman** is ill and is in the city, wine shall be sent to him, two loaves of bread and a gallon of wine and a dish from the kitchen. And two approved men of the guild shall go to visit him and look after his condition.
7. And when a guildsman dies, all those who are of the guild and are in the city shall attend the service of the dead. And the guildsmen shall bear the body and bring it to the place of burial.

Adapted and simplified from: R. B. Morgan, Readings in English Social History from Contemporary Literature – Volume Four 1603–1688, Yutang Press 2007, p. 338.  
© Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1922 (original publication)

a loaf of bread: ein Laib Brot | gallon: Gallone (Maßeinheit) | dish: Gericht | approved: anerkannt | condition: Zustand | to attend: (hier) beiwohnen | Service of the dead: Begräbnis | bear: tragen | place of burial: Grabesstätte

### KEY TERMS

#### craft

Handwerk

#### guild

Gilde/Zunft

#### regulation

Bestimmung, Regelung, Verfügung

#### master

Zunftmeister

#### ordinance

Satzung; Bestimmung; Erlass

#### guildsman

Zunftgenosse

**3** Each craft guild had its own coat of arms. Identify the coat of arms of the following guilds among the emblems:



Source: The last three pages were taken from: History – Cities, Castles, Churches (Klett)