

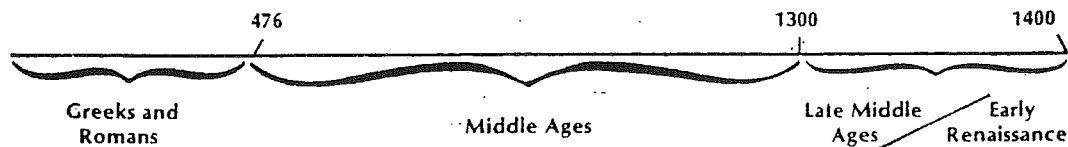
UNIT I

THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES

The Beginning of the Middle Ages

Migration (movement) of great numbers of people creates changes in the way a society is organized. American society underwent great change as people moved west in the 18th and 19th centuries. We are influenced today by the shift of population to the suburbs and to the "sun belt." In the same way, the ending of the Roman Empire and the beginning of the Middle Ages was partially triggered by migration. Barbarian Germanic tribes moved from northern to southern Europe.

The Middle Ages, also called the medieval period, lasted almost 1000 years—from the fall of the Roman Empire to the Renaissance.



We might date the beginning of the Middle Ages at the moment when the first Germanic king became Roman emperor in A.D. 476. However, there was really no one point at which the Roman Empire ended and the medieval period began. The change was slow and probably unnoticed by the people of the time.

Movements of barbarians created danger and interrupted trade. Because of this danger, society had to become better organized to provide protection for people. And because trade was interrupted, cities and the middle classes who lived in them could not exist in the numbers they once had.

The unified Roman Empire no longer existed in the West during the Middle Ages. German rulers fought with one another and with later invaders to control and protect smaller territories. Nevertheless, many aspects of Roman civilization lived on:

1. The Roman Empire in the East, away from the direct path of the invaders, survived for hundreds of years. Centered at Constantinople (now called Istanbul, Turkey), it was known as the Byzantine Empire. Byzantine civilization preserved much of Roman learning and culture.
2. The Roman Catholic Church, headed by the Pope in Rome, remained as a unifying force in the West.
3. Germanic peoples adopted many Roman practices. They combined Roman and Germanic ways to suit new situations. For example, Roman legal ideas often were part of the new law of the Germanic kings.

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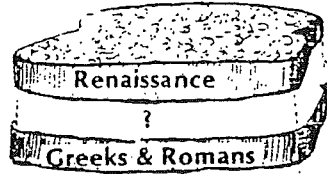
The earliest part of the Middle Ages is often referred to as the Dark Ages. This term suggests an absence of organization and culture. However, Europeans did organize to deal with the problems and needs of an invaded society. And culture was indeed preserved and carried on by the Church and by many rulers. Our modern society has more in common with Roman than with medieval society. That is probably why we sometimes see the Middle Ages as "dark."

Activities for Understanding

1. a. The term "Middle Ages" refers to an almost 1000-year period. What periods did it come between (in the middle of)? _____ and _____.
- b. The first part of the Middle Ages is often called the _____. This is not a very accurate term because _____

2. Study this cartoon and answer the questions below.

Historical Sandwich



- a. What is the filling for this "historical sandwich" ? _____
- b. Which two of the three parts of this sandwich are most similar to each other? _____ and _____

3. Roman culture did not die with the fall of Rome. List the three ways in which it was preserved during the Middle Ages.
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____

4. The following is an historical generalization: "Migration of great numbers of people creates changes in the way a society is organized." Apply this generalization to various periods in history by filling in the following blanks.
 - a. The migration of the _____ into the Roman Empire helped to cause the fall of _____ and the coming of the _____ Ages.