

ACTIVITIES

1. Why did the Hundred Years' War last so long? Consider both the strategy required for defeating castles (see page 147) and France's failures on the battlefield.
2. What could the long-bow do? How could this capability turn metal armour into a worthless technology?
3.
 - a) In the fifteenth century, powerful cannons were developed and widely used in sieges. With this new technology, castles could no longer provide the protection they once had. Why did gunpowder and cannons make both knights and castles out of date?
 - b) Think of two modern examples of technology making an institution or practice useless.
4. In war, countries use military might to get their way. Just as in a scuffle on the school ground, the best fighter usually wins. The justness of a cause is irrelevant. Write a brief paper outlining the benefits and drawbacks of war as a way to settle disputes between countries. In a small group, brainstorm other ways to settle disputes and outline the benefits and drawbacks of these.
5. Why do you think Joan of Arc was able to rally the French in the Hundred Years' War? How did she help the French see themselves as a nation?
6. Despite her powerless station as a shepherd's daughter, Joan of Arc beat the odds.
 - a) What enabled Joan to succeed? Do some research to find a Canadian who came from humble circumstances to make a mark on history. Describe an imaginary situation in which you achieve a similarly remarkable achievement.
 - b) By becoming a military leader, Joan took on a traditionally male role. Do you think this contributed to her fate? How? Describe the difficulty some women face when they take on traditionally male roles in Canadian society.

TRADE AND TOWN

TRADE BEGINS

During the Crusades, western Europeans' eyes were opened to the possibilities of trade with distant lands. Tempted by goods such as silk, spices, tapestries, and sugar, a few brave individuals with the money to pay for the expenses of a trip went into the trading business. Over time, western Europeans began sending ships on trading expeditions to distant lands in search of the goods they desired.

At first, traders sold their goods in regular local markets, or fairs, held in towns and villages and sponsored by the feudal lords. The fairs were fabulous events where people gathered to socialize and browse, not just to buy. Through exposure to the

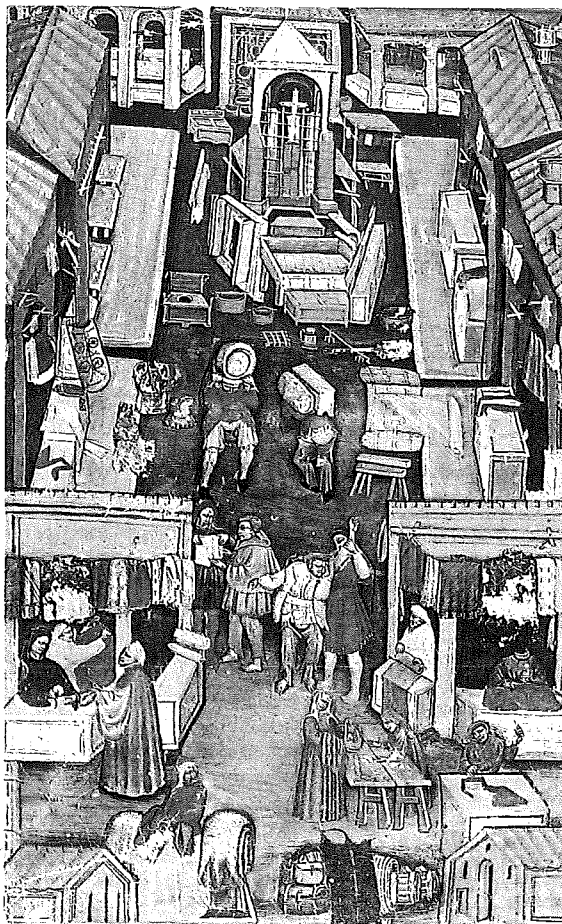


Figure 5-10 Medieval towns were busy places with all kinds of goods for sale. Identify four activities in this street scene.

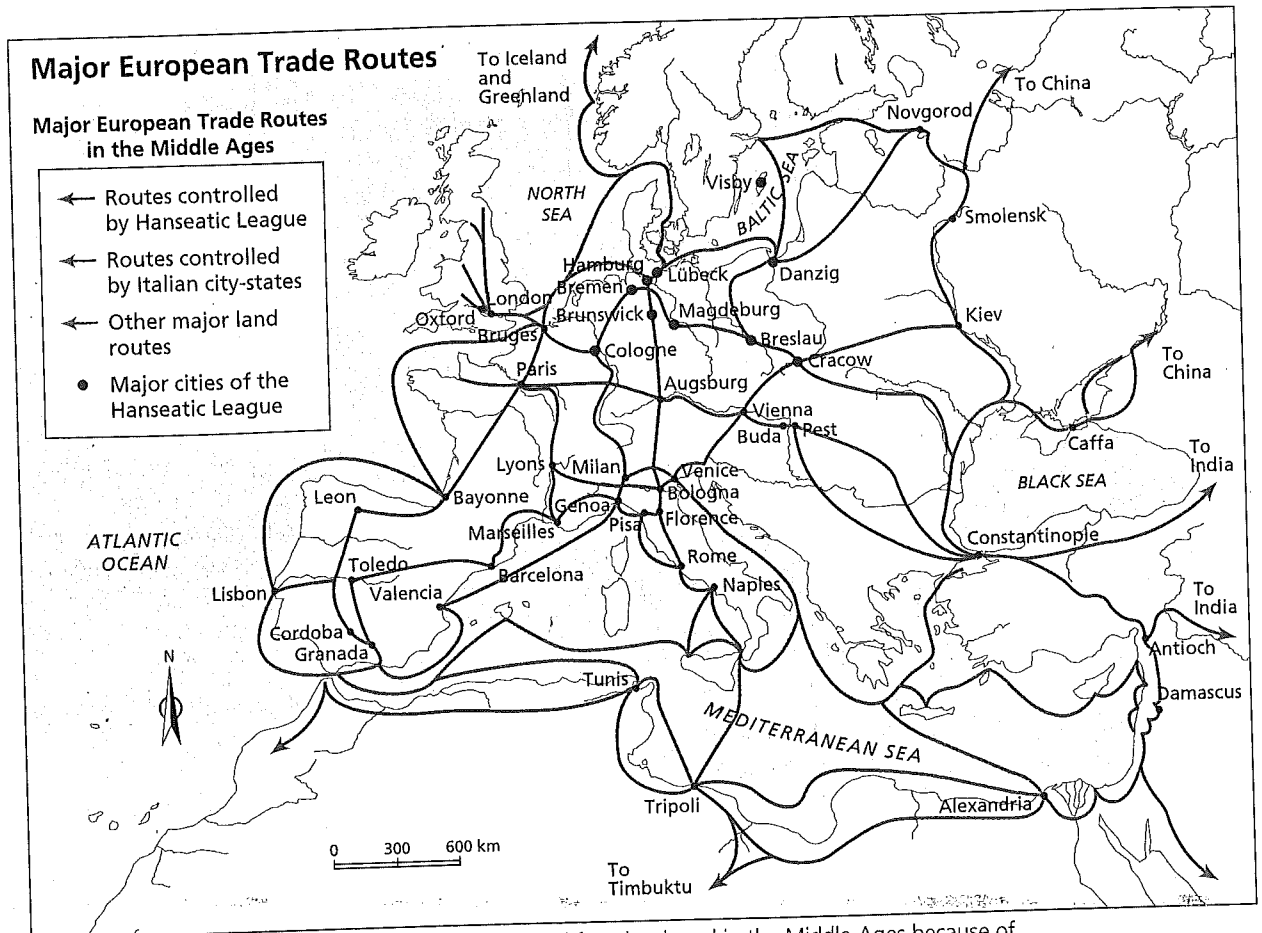


Figure 5-11 Cities such as Oxford, Hamburg, and Frankfurt developed in the Middle Ages because of their location on trade routes. What trade did the Italian city-states of Venice and Genoa control? What trade did the Hanseatic League control?

many goods brought from faraway lands, ordinary people realized that they could make things and sell them in exchange for money. Here was their escape from serfdom. All over Europe, people began learning and perfecting the skills needed to produce the goods that were coming from distant lands. Fairs were soon filled with finely crafted goods—such as copper pots, gloves, and cutlery—made in western Europe as well as in far-off lands.

TRADE LEADS TO TOWNS

After some time, the fair could not satisfy all the needs of traders and consumers. First, they were seasonal, so no one could buy or sell in winter. Second, people would sometimes have to travel great distances to reach the fairs. Travel was dangerous, so many just didn't go. Out of this emerged the need for the stability that could be provided by a town, where permanent shops could be set up and protected by a wall surrounding the town.

TO MARKET, TO MARKET

The appearance of a market in a society marks the beginning of organized **commerce**: the buying, selling, and bartering (trading) of goods and services. In the countryside, the market usually appears on a set day of the week



or month. Goods may be sold, as well as various foods. Sometimes a hairdresser or letter writer offers services for sale. In larger towns and cities, the market usually occupies one area, with different squares or streets dedicated to various products.

The market has emerged in virtually every civilization. For example, Bernal Diaz del Castillo, a Spaniard who travelled to Mexico

with Hernán Cortés in 1519, saw the great Tlatelolco marketplace in Tenochtitlán, capital of the Aztec Empire. He called this market a marvel of organization, with areas for jade, lumber, limestone, salt, and more, as well as streets for herbalists, barbers, and wild animal dealers.

The ancient fair, or market, survives in Canada in amusement parks, trade fairs, and farmers' markets. We even buy and sell bonds and company shares on the "stock market."

Figure 5-12 A young vendor sells her wares in a market in Gujarat, India. Goods and services are sold in markets in virtually every civilization.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

1. Name a nursery rhyme, song, or story that features a fair or market.
2. a) Identify another form of market (such as the farmers' market) that exists today in Canada.
- b) Why do you think the market in all its forms has become such an important feature of Canadian culture? What does this tell you about Canadian society?

THE CRAFT GUILDS

The emerging towns were populated with people specializing in trades of all sorts. There were bakers, tailors, sword and armour makers, **tanners**, and tavernkeepers, to name a few. Every trade, or craft, was controlled by the experts in that particular trade, who together were called a **guild**.

Guilds were co-operative organizations that set standards for the quality of their products,

controlled prices for them, kept out unskilled craftspeople, and eliminated competition. They controlled almost all the merchant and trade activity that took place within and between towns. Guilds also looked after their members in case of death or accident. For example, if a member of the candle-makers guild grew too sick to work, the other candle makers would pitch in to provide food for him and his family. Tradespeople could only operate if they belonged to a guild, and they could only belong to the guild for which they had been trained.

commerce: the buying, selling, and trading of goods and services

tanner: a person who makes hide into leather

guild: a union of persons practising the same craft

apprentice: one who learns a trade by working for a master

master: a certified expert

journeyman: one admitted to a guild but not yet a master

seamstress: a woman who makes a living by sewing

chamber pot: a pot used instead of a toilet before plumbing was invented

Becoming a Master of a Craft

Acceptance into a guild came at the end of a long and difficult apprenticeship. The **apprentice** learned the craft in stages, beginning with the most simple tasks. He or she would receive training, room and board, and a small allowance. Young people were sent to live and work under a particular **master** at a very early age, sometimes eight or nine. Many masters beat their apprentices for making mistakes.

After years of work and learning, apprentices would take a test to become a **journeyman** and would be admitted to a guild. They were called journeymen because they could now be paid by the day (*par journée*). After several more years of study and practice, the journeyman created a "master piece" to be judged by a panel of masters for quality. If the piece was considered acceptable, then the journeyman became a master, an expert in his or her craft.

Using The Written Rule as a Primary Source

CATALOGUE CARD

What is it? A set of rules called an ordinance

Who wrote it? High ranking masters of the **seamstresses'** guild in Memmingen, Germany

When? 1543

Why? To set guidelines about who can be a seamstress and what training is required

Concerning seamstresses: All seamstresses who are not citizens here are to be sent away and forbidden to do work as seamstresses in this city.

For those who are citizens, it is ordered that no one shall serve an apprenticeship of less than one year, and after this a period as a journeyman for at least one year, before she is allowed to become a master. She is also never to do anything which is limited to members of the tailors' or furriers' guild, and is to pay the guild five shillings [when she is taken on as a master]. She is to obey all regulations and ordinances. A woman who wants to become a master is to appear before sworn overseers [guild officers], who will test her on what she knows and explain the ordinances, which she is to follow from that point on.



Guild membership was not limited to men in the Middle Ages. Although barred from most guilds, women were active in others, especially guilds related to the brewing and textile industries. As you can see from the set of rules above, women could become masters of their craft.

Ordinances are rules written by towns, companies, or clubs to help them run their affairs. They do not deal with criminal offences, such as murder or theft. Instead they deal with such things as whether or not you can keep chickens within town limits or empty your **chamber pot** out your window.

Rules are important because they tell us what was important to ordinary people, especially rule makers. When assessing just one set of rules, always keep in mind that the townspeople probably had many other rules about other matters. Also, people in

other towns may have had different concerns. In other words, a set of rules gives us a snapshot of the concerns of one group.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

1. Read the passage again to identify five things that were important to the seamstresses' guild in Memmingen.
2. Here is one clause from a by-law, or rule, for the city of Scarborough, Ontario. "Pinball machines and other electric or manually operated games shall be prohibited in ... commercial zones." What does this clause tell us? Analyze a by-law for your own community.



Figure 5-13 These three young people work in a German automotive plant as apprentice mechanics. After they complete their apprenticeships they will receive their journeyman papers. Identify another trade that uses apprentices.

prohibition: a ban

incentive: something that urges a person on

mandatory: required

LINK-UP

Guilds and Modern Unions

The guilds of the late Middle Ages brought together people working in the same field to achieve common goals. As such, guilds were the forerunners of modern associations of professionals, such as the Editors' Association of Canada. Craftspeople formed guilds for several reasons, one of which was to protect the rights of the guild members. Particularly in this area, guilds bear a striking resemblance to modern unions, such as the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW). The following excerpt from a newspaper article shows what

CAW won after a strike against General Motors of Canada (GM Canada) in the fall of 1996.

CAW leaders can pat themselves on the back for some short-term victories:

- ◆ A requirement that GM Canada hire someone to replace every job that goes to an outside supplier.
- ◆ A three-year **prohibition** on plant sales or closings.
- ◆ Attractive early retirement **incentives** for workers in Windsor and Oshawa to help compensate them for the sale of those two plants.
- ◆ A ban on **mandatory** overtime at the Oshawa operations.



WHAT DO YOU THINK?

1. For each of the four "short-term victories" noted above, what was the union trying to achieve? Examine the section "Apprentices and Guilds" to identify three goals of the guilds of the Middle Ages.

Compare the two sets of goals.

2. With your teacher, look up some modern business unions or associations in the telephone book. You may

even find that some of these organizations still use the word "guild" in their names. As a class, write to one of these groups and ask what the organization does for its members.

pageant: an elaborate entertainment displaying scenes from history

bear baiting: a public spectacle in which dogs torment a chained bear

DID YOU KNOW?

A stone wall encircles the oldest part of Quebec City, just as walls encircle the centres of many European towns.

LIFE IN THE TOWN

Although medieval towns had many attractions, they were also crowded and smelly and rather small compared with modern cities. London, England, today has a population of more than eight million people, but in the year 1300 only 50 000 people lived there, only one-thirtieth the number living in modern Greater Vancouver.

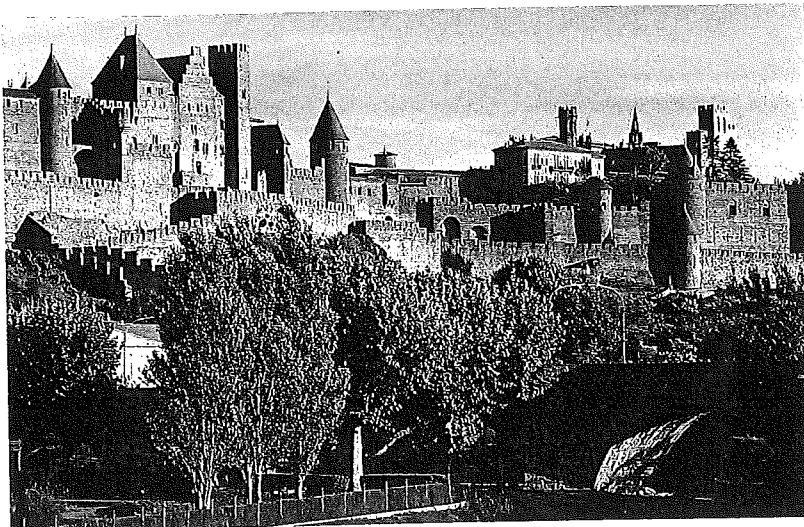


Figure 5-14 The city of Carcassonne, France, is still surrounded by the wall built in the Middle Ages. What effect would such a wall have on the architecture of the houses in the town?

Most towns and cities were the centres for farm communities. They were surrounded by the farms of large manors or they grew around some sort of defensive structure, such as a castle, palace, or large monastery. Citizens usually built an encircling wall of stone to protect against raids from rival cities or feudal lords. The citizens also built gates, which they shut at night. As a village developed into a town and then into a city, ever larger rings of walls were built.

Because of the walls that surrounded medieval towns, space was limited, and houses for the poor and middle-class people were all crowded together. Town houses were often several stories high, with their upper floors overhanging the street. Unlike cities today, medieval towns did not have straight, planned streets.

Instead, streets were narrow and winding, and they usually had open sewers. As there was no plumbing, people routinely emptied chamber pots into the street and dumped their garbage there as well. In some places, swineherds drove pigs through the town at night to eat up the waste.

For all their faults, medieval towns also had their attractions. Compared with small manor villages, there was much more entertainment for people. Guilds and the local church organized many **pageants** and plays, and people could also see **bear baiting** and other blood sports. Life in town was exciting.

SOCIAL CHANGES THAT CAME WITH TRADE

Money had not been very important in the old feudal system, where a person's wealth and power were measured by the amount of land he or she held. With trade, all that changed. Now many people could become independent and even powerful because they could make money. The town was the home of the medieval middle class, most of whom were merchants and skilled tradespeople. These townspeople were called **burgesses** in England, **burgers** in Germany, and **bourgeois** in France. Some merchants grew wealthier than the feudal landowners in the country.

The feudal lords had a hard time adjusting to a system where money, and not position, was most important. Members of the nobility thought trade was beneath them, but they still wanted the finer things available only in the towns. Unknown to the feudal lords, the middle class, with its power, money, and desire for freedom, would spell the end of feudalism.

New Freedoms

The towns drew people longing for freedom. Although the town was walled and cramped, people had the freedom to do as they wished, marry whom they pleased, and make money as they could. According to the law, runaway serfs could gain their freedom by staying in town for a year and a day without being discovered. Because the towns were so small, this was actually quite difficult to do. Nonetheless, some were able to manage it.

Feudal lords could not control the people who lived in towns, nor could manor courts. Most medieval towns were chartered; that is, they paid for or were given the right to exist by the monarch or the local lord. The **charters** of many modern European towns can be traced all the way back to the Middle Ages. A charter gave a town certain privileges, one of which was that the town could govern itself. Wealthy citizens and the guilds usually controlled the town government.

New Powers

The most powerful citizens were those belonging to the merchant guilds. These guilds were for the people who bought and sold goods on a large scale, and who financed ships and overland caravans to trade in distant lands.

Sometimes merchant guilds became very powerful and well organized. By putting together their wealth, for example, the port cities belonging to the Hanseatic League (a merchant guild) were able to support their own army and build a navy. The league became so wealthy and powerful that by threatening to cut off all trade with a country it could force that country's ruler to do what it wanted. In Italy, the port cities of Genoa, Venice, and Naples grew into powerful city-states thanks to their merchant-traders.

DID YOU KNOW?

In modern times, people who run major businesses still have enormous influence over nations large and small. Their power, however, lies in their ability to bring business to a country, not in military might.

charter: a written order authorizing the right to operate as a town

ACTIVITIES

1. Examine the map showing trade routes. How were trade routes affected by major waterways? Referring to a relief map of Europe, explain how the physical features of Europe affected the trade routes.
2. With a partner, skim pages 149–50 to find the answers to the following two questions. When you skim, don't read everything. Instead look for just the information you need.
 - a) What factors led to the growth of trade?
 - b) How did the growth of trade lead to the need for towns?
3. Compare a medieval fair with a modern Canadian shopping mall. Consider the days and hours of operation, goods sold, type of consumers, and ownership of the shops/booths. What do the differences tell you about the two societies?
4. Explain how medieval guilds worked, why they were needed, and what they did for their members.
5. In a chart, compare the life of a serf and the life of a guild member working in a town. What are the benefits and drawbacks of each person's way of life?
6. Describe what you would see and experience as you entered a medieval town. What conclusions can you draw from the fact that medieval towns always had walls?
7. Define the term "middle class." How did this class fit into medieval society? Why did the middle class grow in size and importance during the Middle Ages? In what way would the growing middle class change feudal society?
8. Why was the Hanseatic League able to become more powerful than some rulers?

WOMEN IN THE LATE MIDDLE AGES

European women of the Middle Ages had fewer advantages in life than men. By referring to passages in the Bible, the Church taught that women's lower social status was justified. Medieval society was male-dominated, so it

seemed acceptable to treat all women as inferior to men and to keep them under men's control. Not having any power, most women simply tried to make the best of things.

libel: a false or damaging statement

oratory: a small chapel

redress: set right

Chaucer Defends Women Through the Wife of Bath

In the late Middle Ages, as at other times, many women resented being treated as inferiors. Geoffrey Chaucer must have known one or two of these women because, in his book *Canterbury Tales*, he presents the Wife of Bath. This strong-willed character explains why women got a poor reputation in the first place. Below, Chaucer's original Middle English version of the Wife of Bath's words appears on the left. The modernized version appears to the right. What reason does the Wife of Bath give to explain women's poor reputation?



In Middle English

For trusteth wel, it is an impossible
That any clerk wol speke good of wyves,
But if it be of hooly seintes lives,
Ne on noon oother womman never the mo.
Who peynted the leon, tel me who?
By God! if wommen hadde writen stories,
As clerkes han withinne hire oratories,
They wolden han writen of men moore
 wikkednesse
Than al the mark of Adam may redresse.



In Modern English

For take my word for it, there is no libel
On women that the clergy will not paint,
Except when writing of a woman-saint,
But never good of other women though.
Who called the lion savage? Do you know?
By God, if women had but written stories
Like those the clergy keep in oratories,
More than had been written of man's
 wickedness
Than all the sons of Adam could redress.



WOMEN AND SOCIAL LEVEL

All peasants at this time lived hard lives, often in terrible poverty. Women usually had many children, shared the hard work with men in the fields, and died young.

Town women were slightly better off than the women who worked the fields because many earned money. In addition, they maintained their homes, went to market, cooked the meals, spun the wool, wove the cloth, made the clothes, and cared for their children. Many worked as servants. Women who belonged to a guild or who were married to a guild member were better off than most. As towns grew in importance, many merchant families grew rich. The women of these wealthy families had many opportunities. They often received a good education, either through a **parish** school or under a **tutor**.



Figure 5-15 Pieter Breugel's sixteenth-century painting of a peasant. What do you think life was like for medieval peasant women?

parish: church-sponsored

tutor: a private teacher

inventory: a detailed list of items

Margaret Paston Writes to Her Husband

In the fifteenth century, well-off people communicated by letter almost as often as we do today by telephone. The busy head of a household, whether man or woman, would often write six or seven letters a day. In this one, Margaret Paston, a noblewoman, writes to her husband to bring him up to date on estate business. How do you think the day-to-day tasks of Paston's life would compare with those of a medieval peasant woman? What words does Paston use to address her husband? Whose inventory is she beginning? What do these two pieces of information tell you about the relationship of husband and wife?

To my right worshipful master, John Paston, be this delivered in haste.

Right worshipful husband,
I recommend me to you, praying you to know that I have spoken with Newman for his house, and I am through with him therefore....

I have begun your **inventory**, that should have been made ere this time if I had been well at ease; I hope to make an end thereof and of other things by this next week....

I have sent John Norwood this day to Gresham, Besingham, and Matslake, to get as much money as he may. The blessed Trinity have you in his keeping. Written at Norwich, on the feast day of Peter and Paul.

Yours,
Margaret Paston



ACTIVITIES

1. Until recently, many peasant women in various parts of the world did not have a chance to grow old because they died either of a contagious disease or during childbirth. In Canada today, most contagious diseases are under control, and only eighteen Canadian women died in childbirth in 1995. What do you think accounts for these differences?
2. a) List three tasks that Margaret Paston describes to her husband.
b) Examine the painting on page 140 to identify three entertainments enjoyed by privileged medieval women.
3. Write a summary that describes the status and lifestyle of women in the late Middle Ages. Compare the rights and responsibilities of women in different classes.
4. Women played a very responsible role in medieval society. Make a list of the things women did. Medieval women were denied equal treatment and generally accepted this. Are things different in your community? Draw up a chart to compare the life of women of the Middle Ages (most of whom were peasants) with the life of Canadian women (most of whom are middle class).
5. Attempt your own translation of the Middle English version of the comments of the Wife of Bath on page 156. According to the author, how did the "power of the pen" serve men well and women badly?
6. Compare Chaucer's Middle English poetry with the Old English poetry from "Beowulf" on page 28. How has the language changed? Identify one reason why language might change.

THE CHURCH IN THE LATE MIDDLE AGES

PILGRIMAGES

In the late Middle Ages, the Church continued to have great influence over people's lives, both through its position in society and through its spiritual guidance. Pilgrimages were very popular during the Middle Ages, showing that Christians at this time took their religion very seriously. Pilgrims would make a journey to a holy place, especially a place where a Christian saint had been **martyred**. Many pilgrimages were long, dangerous journeys. There were no planes, trains, or cars; people travelled by foot, horse, or sailing ship. The favourite destinations were the shrine of Saint James at Compostela in Spain, the tomb of St. Thomas Becket in England, the holy places in Rome,

and the city of Jerusalem. The pilgrimage was a way of making up for sins.

Pilgrims usually tried to bring back souvenirs of their journeys. The symbol of a pilgrimage to Compostela, for example, was a cockle shell; the symbol of a pilgrimage to Jerusalem was a palm leaf. Some Jerusalem pilgrims took the name "Palmer" to celebrate their journey. Pilgrims also brought back pieces of Christ's cross, the nails used in the Crucifixion, and many other holy items. Or so they thought. There were many sly traders on the pilgrim roads who made themselves rich by selling fake **relics** to unsuspecting pilgrims.

martyred: killed for the sake of religion

relic: a sacred object associated with a saint

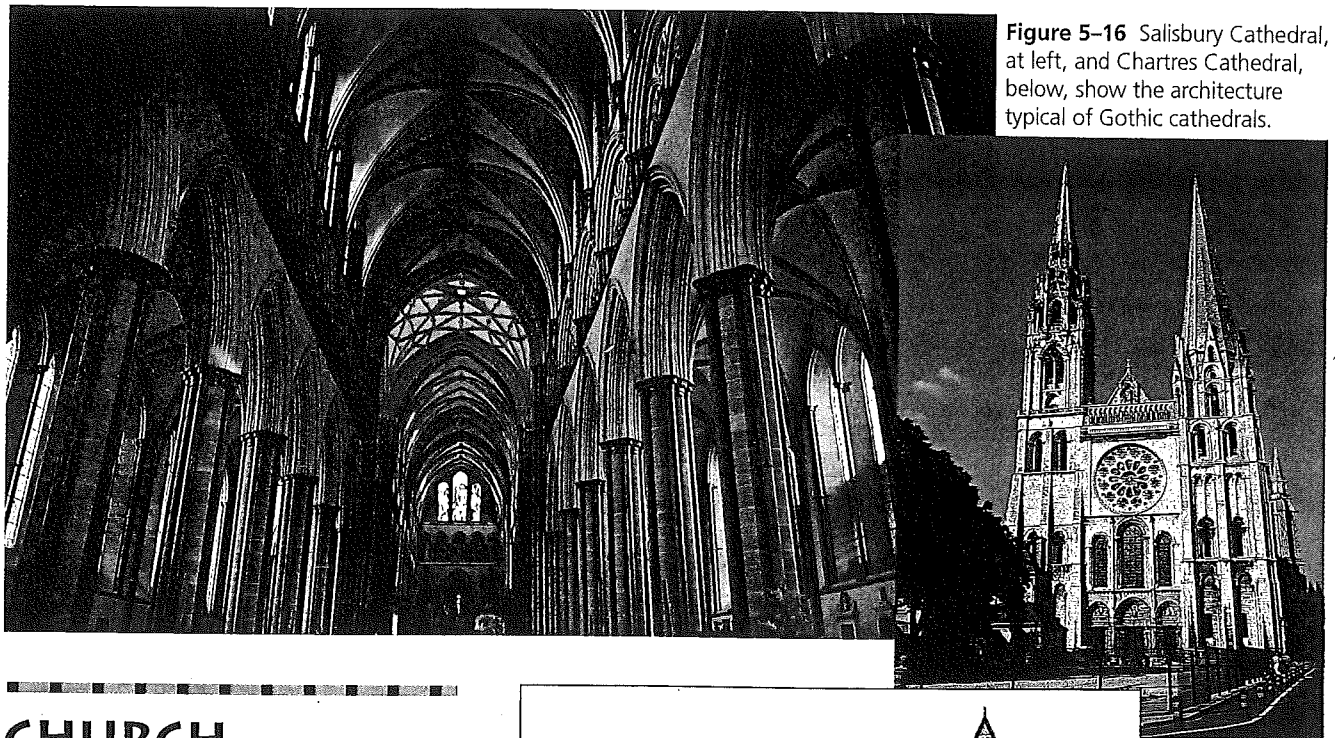


Figure 5-16 Salisbury Cathedral, at left, and Chartres Cathedral, below, show the architecture typical of Gothic cathedrals.

CHURCH ARCHITECTURE

Churches in the early Middle Ages were relatively small. Engineers had not yet discovered ways of supporting heavy stone walls over a certain height. Then, sometime in the twelfth century, they learned how to build much taller churches with spires and how to replace wall space with huge windows of brilliantly coloured stained glass. To achieve greater height, **architects** pointed the arches that supported the cathedral roofs. By using massive supports called **flying buttresses** to hold up the walls, they made the cathedrals even taller and allowed for the large windows.

Thus began the age of the **Gothic** cathedral. Soon church spires were reaching for the heavens in every town and on every hilltop.

Gothic cathedrals are among the most beautiful buildings ever created. They were constructed with simple tools over long periods, sometimes a hundred years or more. With their intricate carvings, lofty ceilings, and striking patterns in stained glass, these churches struck awe in the hearts of the medieval faithful. Even

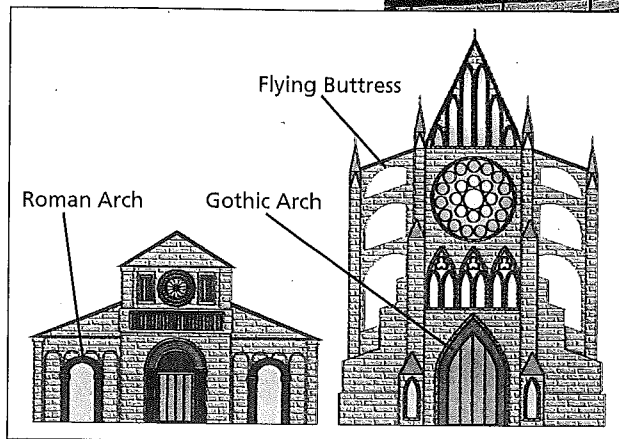


Figure 5-17 A cathedral in the Romanesque style is shown on the left; the Gothic cathedral is on the right. What differences can you see between these two buildings?

today, stepping into a Gothic cathedral on a day when the sun streams through the multicoloured glass is like entering another world.

architect: one who designs buildings

flying buttress: an archway built against a wall to help support it

Gothic: a type of architecture featuring steep roofs and pointed arches

RUMBLINGS IN THE FLOCK

During the fourteenth century, the Catholic Church began to lose authority. In England, the teachings of an Oxford professor named John Wycliffe became very popular with commoner and noble alike. Wycliffe believed that priests and bishops, even the pope himself, had no right to tell people what to believe. He

thought each person could only gain salvation by following his or her own conscience.

At this time, the Bible existed only in its Latin version. Wycliffe wanted to translate the Bible from

Latin into English so that the common people could read it and decide for themselves what was right and wrong. Church leaders were enraged by Wycliffe's teachings. He had powerful friends among the nobility, however, so the Church was unable to prosecute him.

One reason nobles liked John Wycliffe was that he criticized the Church for its wealth. The nobles and the common people alike were tired of paying heavy taxes to the Church on top of what they had to pay to the king.

Wycliffe's teachings were popular not just in England but also in Hungary. There his disciple John Hus had great success in converting people to the new ideas. Hus, however, was condemned by a Church council in 1415 and burned at the stake. The nobles refused to protect him because they were afraid his ideas would lead to a peasants' revolt.



Figure 5-18 John Hus was burned at the stake, the usual means of execution for medieval heretics. Many condemned persons died of smoke inhalation before the flames could reach them, but not all.

ACTIVITIES

1. Describe the medieval pilgrimage and explain its purposes.
2. Tradition holds that the townspeople of Chartres harnessed themselves to carts to haul heavy loads of stone from nearby quarries to build Notre Dame Cathedral. What does this tell you about what religion meant to people of the Middle Ages?
3. Describe what Gothic cathedrals looked like. Considering that church services were given in Latin and that most people could not read, what purpose did sculptures and stained glass windows serve?
4. Describe a place of worship with which you are familiar. Are the architectural style, decoration, and works of art meant to help the worshipper achieve a certain frame of mind? How?
5. Think of a scene that would illustrate one of your own values. Using tissue paper, black construction paper, and glue, design your scene as a stained glass window.
6. What did John Wycliffe believe in? Pretend you have heard some of Wycliffe's sermons. Prepare a journal entry in which you record your thoughts on Wycliffe and the Church. You can do this from the point of view of a noble, a citizen of a town, or a young priest.
7. Compare the fates of John Wycliffe and John Hus. Why was one executed and the other not?

Persecution of the Jews

The plague brought out the good in people but also the bad. Some of the worst instances of cruelty during the plague involved prejudice against the Jewish people. This was not unusual.

Jews lived all over Europe in the Middle Ages, particularly in larger villages and towns.

The most skilful and knowledgeable doctors of the Middle Ages were Jewish, though usually they were not allowed to treat Christians. Only a few occupations were open to Jews, so some concentrated on academic studies. Others flourished in business, becoming prosperous jewellers, money traders, and merchants.

Jews were not appreciated for their successes, however. They were usually forced to live in a *ghetto* (a certain section of the town or city), had to wear identifying yellow patches on their clothing, and did not have the freedoms of other

On Saturday — that was St. Valentine's Day — they burnt the Jews on a wooden platform in their cemetery. There were about two thousand people of them. Those who wanted to baptize themselves were spared. Many small children were taken out of the fire and baptized against the will of their fathers and mothers. And everything that was owed to the Jews was cancelled, and the Jews had to surrender all pledges and notes that they had taken for debts. The council, however, took the cash that the Jews possessed and divided it among the working-men proportionately. The money was indeed the thing that killed the Jews. If they had been poor and if the feudal lords had not been in debt to them, they would not have been burnt.



citizens. Many Christians blamed Jews for the crucifixion of Christ and accused them of secret anti-Christian rituals. At times of trouble, Christians tended to blame Jews for their problems, making them **scapegoats**. Many Jews were massacred during the Crusades and at other times of unrest.

During a time of plague in the French city of Strasbourg, the

townspeople accused the Jews of starting the epidemic by putting poison in the city's wells. Despite the objections of city officials, the mob dragged the entire Jewish community to the Jewish cemetery, where they burned them to death in a bonfire. Does this event remind you of a tragedy that occurred during World War Two? Describe links between the two events.

THE PEASANTS' REVOLTS

Feudalism was further weakened in the fourteenth century when the lowest order of society, the peasants, rose up and demanded better living conditions. In both France and England the revolts at first met with some success but were then savagely suppressed by the nobility.

France

In France, the revolt was called the "Jacquerie," after Jacques Bonhomme, the nickname for the French peasant. The revolt began after the French defeat at the battle of Poitiers in 1356, when the English captured the French king, John II, and held him in London

for ransom. While he was gone, a mob attacked the palace of the king's son, the dauphin, in Paris, and drove him from the capital.

In the northern countryside, the serfs broke into open revolt against their lords. Even though the farmlands had been laid waste by years of fighting, manor lords were still demanding high rents from their serfs. Banding together, peasant armies burned manor houses throughout northern France and killed their lords. Reaction was swift and brutal. Ringleaders were rounded up and hanged, and whole villages were burned to the ground.

England

In fourteenth-century England, the ravages of the Black Death caused

scapegoat: a person wrongfully blamed, sometimes leading to persecution

severe labour shortages in the countryside. Food supplies went down, and prices and wages both rose dramatically. The lords tried to put an end to the trend in 1381. They passed a law returning wages to the pre-plague levels. Then, to help finance the Hundred Years' War, Parliament approved a **poll tax**, which took a fixed amount of money from every person in England, from the lowliest serf to the highest noble.

The serfs had had enough. Two leaders emerged to organize the angry serfs into a fighting force: Wat Tyler, a former soldier, and John Ball, a stirring preacher who believed that since all people were equal in the sight of God there should be no class distinctions.

Before long, a peasant army was marching on London. When the army reached the city, sympathetic guild workers opened the gates of the city. Once inside, the peasants killed any nobles they could find, including the archbishop of Canterbury, and burned



down many great buildings. During negotiations with fourteen-year-old King Richard II, however, Wat Tyler was killed by the lord mayor of London. John Ball was taken prisoner and later beheaded. The revolt collapsed, and the serfs returned to their farms, where vengeful lords hanged many.

Figure 5-23 The Lord Mayor of London strikes down Wat Tyler, while King Richard II and John Ball watch. Write a story about what might have happened if Wat Tyler had dodged the blow and the peasant army had overwhelmed the royal party.

poll tax: a standard tax collected from every person

ACTIVITIES

1. a) Rats flourish where there is plenty of garbage and grain to eat. How do you think the conditions in which humans lived in the Middle Ages contributed to the spread of the bubonic plague? Consider systems of waste and garbage disposal, the crowded conditions in town, and the lack of plumbing.
b) Research other civilizations to find out which ones had plumbing.
2. Make a bar graph showing the population of Europe before and after the Black Death.
3. Imagine you are in the same predicament as the young people of Boccaccio's *Decameron*. Write a story about leaving your family and fleeing your plague-stricken community to join friends at a ski chalet. Be sure to explain how you feel about deserting your family and convey your own worries about becoming infected.
4. Pretend you live on an English manor or in an English town in 1349. Write an account of what happened in your community as a result of the Black Death. Your account, which can appear in diary form, should contain entries for a period of six months or more, and should give details about the social and economic effects of the plague.
5. Examine the chart that shows the balance sheet of a manor before and after the Black Death. Draw a bar graph to compare the profits of the year before the plague, with the losses of the year after the plague. The bar showing profit will rise above the zero line, while the bar showing loss will drop below it.
6. How was the Black Death related to the end of feudalism in Europe? Prepare a detailed response.
7. Identify two causes of the revolt in England.
8. Write a speech, to be read by either John Ball or the leader of the Jacquerie, to inspire the peasants to revolt against the landowners and nobles. Make your speech forceful and dramatic.