

Summary: Middle Ages

Life in the Middle Ages

For centuries Rome ruled most of Europe. Then groups of people from northern Europe attacked Rome. The empire broke into small kingdoms that fought for land and wealth. This time was called the Middle Ages.

Kings divided their kingdoms into manors. The lords of the manors promised to provide soldiers for war. Poor peasants lived and farmed on the manor land. They had to give part of their crop to the lord. In return, the lord protected them.

The Influence of Religion

In the Middle Ages, many Europeans belonged to the Roman Catholic Church. Catholics gave the church part of what they earned. Church leaders were rich and powerful.

The church started schools to teach religion, math, and science. Monks or priests copied the books by hand. Many ideas came from scholars who followed a religion called Islam.

Trade and Towns

Around 1000, changes in Europe helped trade grow. Inventions like the compass helped sailors travel. Merchants sold goods to different kingdoms. Market fairs were centers for commerce. Trade centers grew into towns and cities as commerce grew. Some peasants moved to towns to find jobs. Workers learned new skills. Workers who did the same kind of work formed powerful guilds.

Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

manor *noun*, farmland given by a king to rulers known as lords and ladies

peasant *noun*, a poor farm worker

commerce *noun*, the buying and selling of goods

guild *noun*, a group of people who do the same work and join together to help each other

After You Read

REVIEW Why did peasants live on manors? Draw a box around three sentences that tell what peasants did.

REVIEW In what ways did religion influence learning during the Middle Ages? Highlight the sentences that tell how schools were started and how books were made.

REVIEW Why did towns and cities grow during the Middle Ages? Underline the sentence that tells the answer.