

The Middle Ages

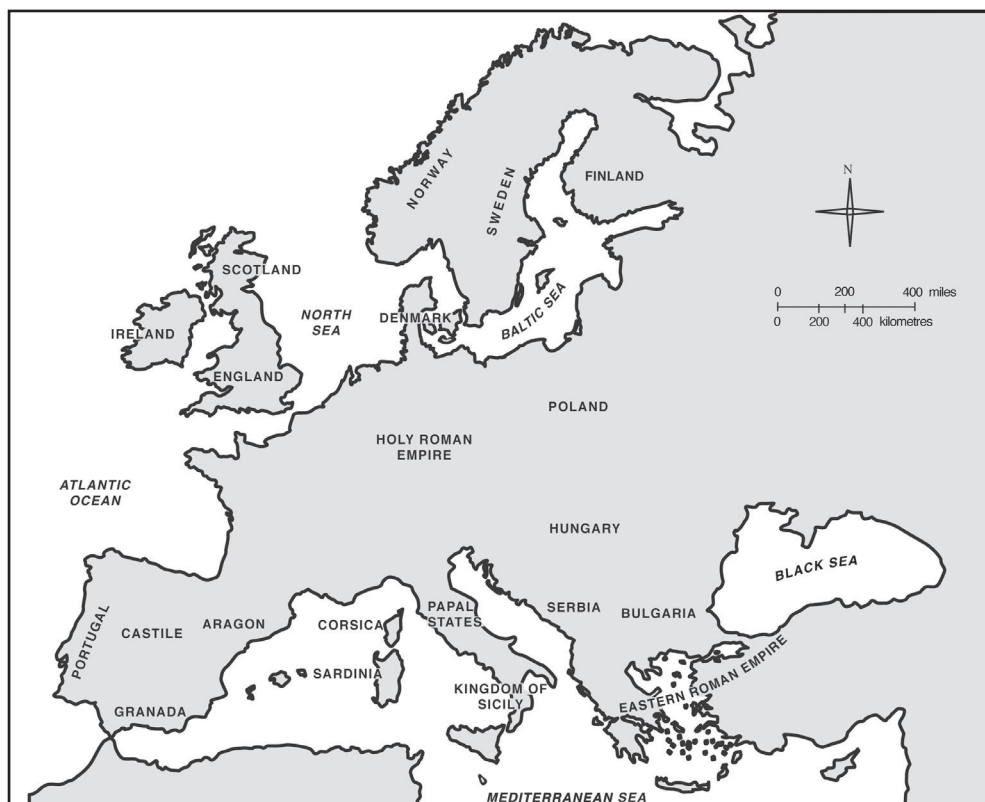
The **medieval** period is also known as the Middle Ages. It was an **era** that lasted for nearly 1000 years. It began in approximately 590 CE and lasted until 1500 CE.

The start of the Middle Ages is marked by the end of Roman rule across Europe. Until then the **Roman Empire** had been in control of most of Europe, but by 476 CE a process known as the ‘fall of Rome’ had occurred. The Western Roman Empire collapsed and the Eastern Roman Empire (also known as the Byzantine Empire) took over as the dominant force in Europe.

The Middle Ages saw considerable change across Europe. Belief systems, rulers, territories and customs were all challenged. The Eastern Roman Empire grew and changed over the next thousand years. The end of the Middle Ages is marked by the start of a new historical era known as the Renaissance.

 **1** Use an atlas to find the following modern cities. Mark these cities on the map below.

Paris	Rome	London	Athens
Berlin	Madrid	Stockholm	



Medieval Europe, c. 950–1300 CE

An important historical period

The Middle Ages are an important part of world history. By studying the Middle Ages, we are better able to understand how and why we live the way we do today.

Tremendous changes took place in Europe during the Middle Ages. Many important things to do with society changed, from the way countries were governed to the sorts of laws people had to obey. Life was hard and the rules of medieval society were very strict.


Medieval Europe was a time of great opportunity for some people and extreme hardship for many others. **Kings, lords** and the **Catholic Church** were very wealthy. Most people, however, struggled to stay healthy and provide enough food for their families.

Important things that took place during the Middle Ages included:

- the development, and then the decline, of **feudalism**
- the creation of laws that gave **rights** to peasants
- the growth of the Catholic Church's power, until it became the most powerful organisation in Western Europe
- the movement of people between the 'West' and the 'East', which brought new ideas and knowledge to Western Europe.

Much of what took place during the Middle Ages continues to affect our society today. For example, the library and health care systems we take for granted in our society were started in the Middle Ages in Europe. Even our legal system is influenced by things that happened in Medieval Europe.

The legacy of the Middle Ages

 Read the Resource sheet 'An important historical period'. Work with a partner to answer the following questions.

1 Why is it important to study history? Give one reason.

2 What was the most powerful organisation in Medieval Europe?

3 Name two important things that happened during the Middle Ages.

4 Imagine you had been born during the Middle Ages. What are two things you own today that you would not have owned then?

As time passes, some things change and some stay the same. The development of public libraries and hospitals were two important social changes that took place in Europe during the Middle Ages. Hundreds of years later, we still have libraries and hospitals even though our lives are very different.

5 Write down two things that have changed for you in the last 10 years. Why did these things change? For example, you might like to think about the sort of food you ate when you were a baby and the sort of food you eat now.

6 Now write down two things that haven't changed for you in the last 10 years. Why have these things remained the same?
