

Intellectual life was marked by scholasticism, a philosophy that emphasised joining faith to reason, and by the founding of universities. The theology of Thomas Aquinas, the paintings of Giotto, the poetry of Dante and Chaucer, the travels of Marco Polo, and the Gothic architecture of cathedrals such as Chartres are among the outstanding achievements toward the end of this period and into the Late Middle Ages.

The Late Middle Ages was marked by difficulties and calamities, including famine, plague, and war, which significantly diminished the population of Europe; between 1347 and 1350, the Black Death killed about a third of Europeans. Controversy, heresy, and the Western Schism within the Catholic Church paralleled the interstate conflict, civil strife, and peasant revolts that occurred in the kingdoms. Cultural and technological developments transformed European society, concluding the Late Middle Ages and beginning the early modern period.