

## depth study 1: Investigating medieval Europe

# Medieval Europe

Europe's medieval period began with the fall of the Roman Empire around 476 CE. Over time, a system called **feudalism** replaced Roman laws and the spread of **Christianity** changed societies across Europe. Christianity had many positive effects on daily life, architecture, the arts, medicine and the justice system, but it also provided motivations for war and justifications for prejudice. Social change in Europe was also brought about by the rapid growth of towns and trade, and a series of Christian–Muslim wars known as the **Crusades**. Around 1500 CE, the discoveries of inventors and explorers, together with new ways of thinking, brought an end to the medieval period and led to the birth of modern Europe.



Chapter

9

## 9A

What was life like in medieval Europe and how was society organised?

- 1 Societies in medieval Europe were based on a system known as feudalism. In this system, everyone had a clear position in society and had certain rights and responsibilities. How do you think feudalism might have helped to ensure stability and order?

## 9B

How did societies in medieval Europe change?

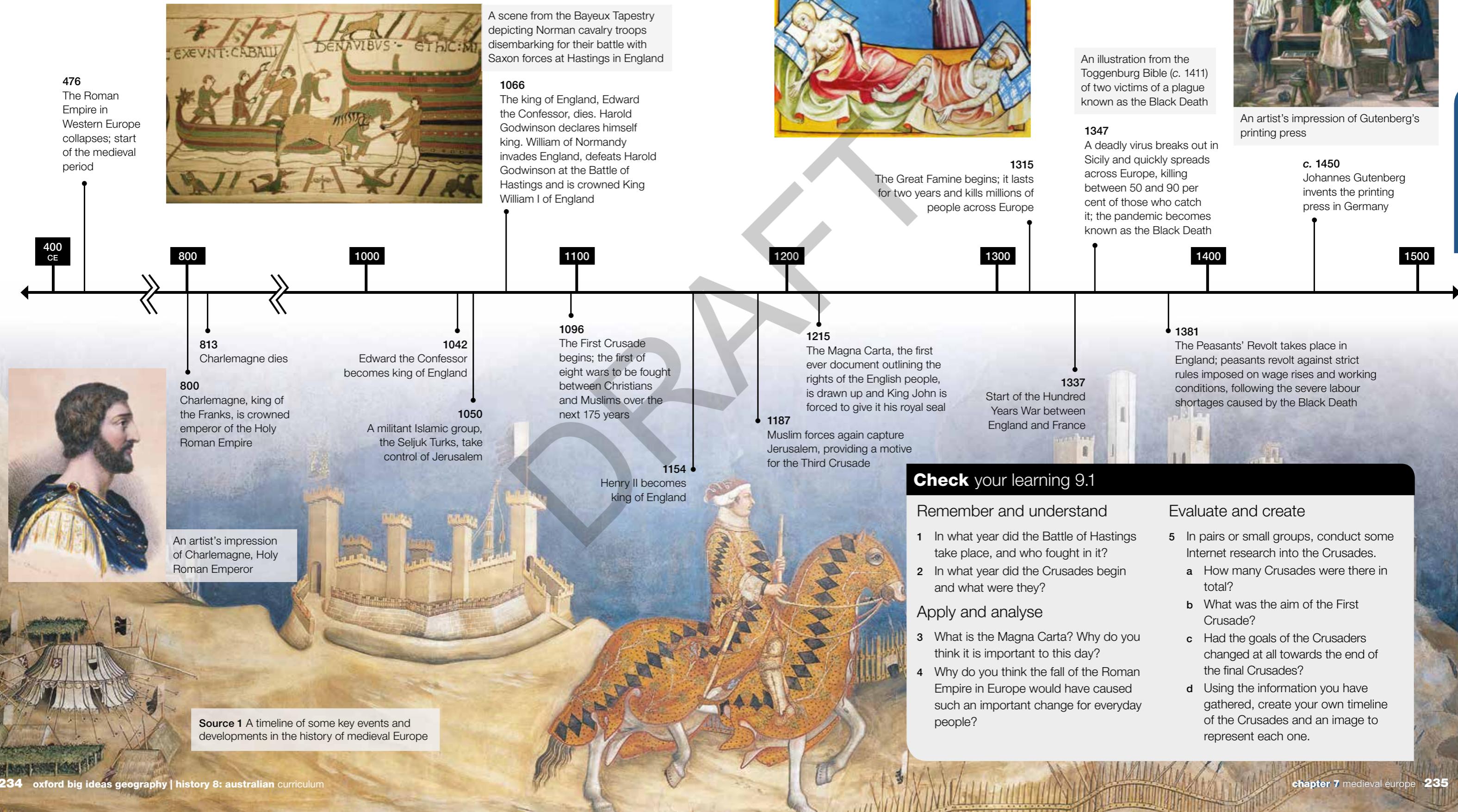
- 1 Christianity was a powerful force in medieval Europe. People believed that only the Church could grant them forgiveness for their sins and ensure their entry into Heaven when they died. How do you think this might have affected the lives of people in medieval Europe?

## 9C

What developments influenced life in medieval Europe?

- 1 A number of important developments took place during the medieval period in Europe. Some related to society and culture, while others related to technology. Make some predictions about the types of things that may have changed over this time and their effect on people's lives.

# 9.1 Medieval Europe: a timeline



## Check your learning 9.1

### Remember and understand

- In what year did the Battle of Hastings take place, and who fought in it?
- In what year did the Crusades begin and what were they?
- What is the Magna Carta? Why do you think it is important to this day?
- Why do you think the fall of the Roman Empire in Europe would have caused such an important change for everyday people?

### Evaluate and create

- In pairs or small groups, conduct some Internet research into the Crusades.
  - How many Crusades were there in total?
  - What was the aim of the First Crusade?
  - Had the goals of the Crusaders changed at all towards the end of the final Crusades?
  - Using the information you have gathered, create your own timeline of the Crusades and an image to represent each one.

## 9.2 Feudalism in medieval Europe

Europe's medieval period lasted for about 1000 years, beginning almost immediately after the collapse of the Roman Empire in Western Europe in 476 CE. It was a time of great change over a vast area – from the Viking homelands in the north to the Mediterranean Sea in the south, and from the Atlantic coast in the west to the borders of Russia and the peoples of the east (see Source 1). Over this time, the borders and rulers of European societies changed countless times as people competed for territory and power.

Without the Roman army to enforce the laws, society largely broke down. Barbarian raids were common, so people had to find new ways to protect and sustain themselves. A system known as **feudalism** held the answer for many societies across Europe. Feudalism was introduced across Western Europe between the 8th and 11th centuries and was a kind of

social system based on rights and obligations relating to land ownership. It shaped medieval European societies for hundreds of years.

### The origins of feudalism

As shown in Source 1 on page XX, tribal people began invading Western Europe from about the 4th century CE. These groups included the Huns, Visigoths, Vandals, Angles, Saxons and Vikings. The ancient Romans called them all **barbarians**. Some of these tribal people were warlike and aggressive.

During the rule of the Roman Empire, common people had been protected against these invaders by the soldiers of the **emperor**. When the empire fell, there were no laws or soldiers left to protect these common people. As a result, they moved onto lands



Source 1 A map of medieval Europe (c. 1360) from a 1911 atlas of historical maps

owned by wealthy and powerful lords, where they could be protected by the lord's private army and take shelter in his castle during attacks. As payment, these people worked the lord's land for him and tended his animals. This was the beginning of feudalism.

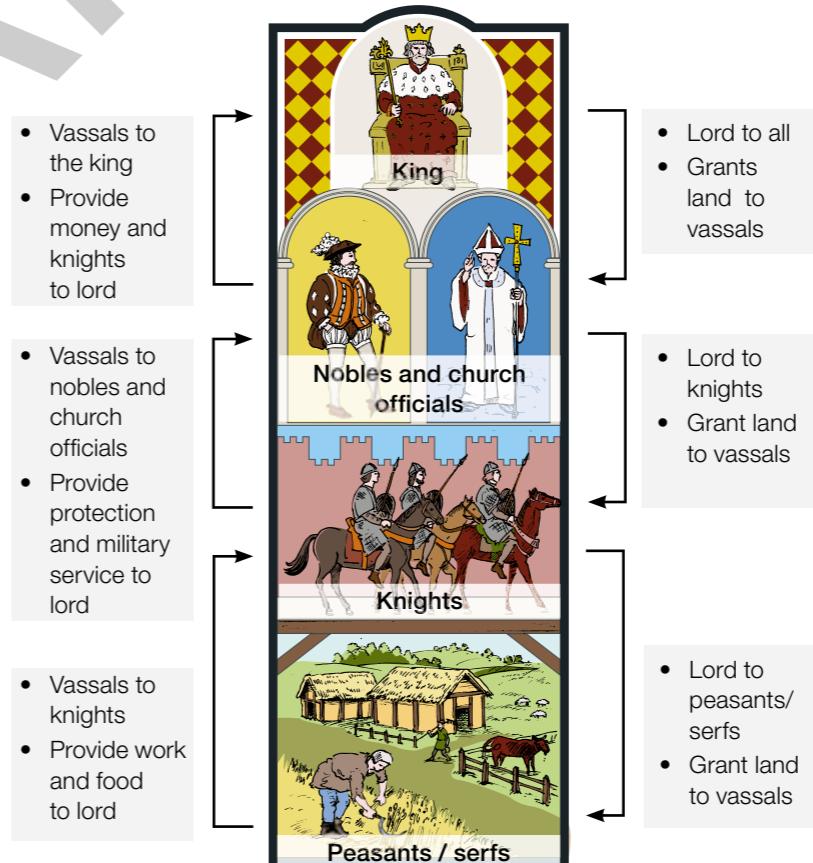
### How feudalism worked

Feudalism was a way of organising a society through a **hierarchy**. A hierarchy is any system that classifies its members from top to bottom in order of importance. In a feudal society, everyone from the king to the poorest peasant had certain rights (things they could expect, such as protection) and responsibilities (work they had to perform in return, such as farming).

Under feudalism, relationships in the hierarchy were between **lords** (people higher up in the hierarchy) and **vassals** (people lower down in the

hierarchy). However, feudalism was not simply a top-down structure where the people at the top could tell the people below them what to do. Obligations were mutual (two-way). For example, a king (lord) had an obligation to the nobles directly below him (his vassals). He provided them with land to live on (known as a **fief**). In return, each noble promised to obey the king and provide military support when needed. At the same time, each of these nobles (lords) had obligations to the knights directly below them (their vassals). These relationships carried on down the hierarchy, as shown in Source 2.

In a feudal system, a person could almost never change their social position. If a person was born as a peasant (at the bottom of the feudal hierarchy), he or she died as a peasant. Peasants could not become nobles, no matter how hard they worked or how intelligent they were.



Source 2 How feudalism worked in medieval Europe

### Check your learning 9.2

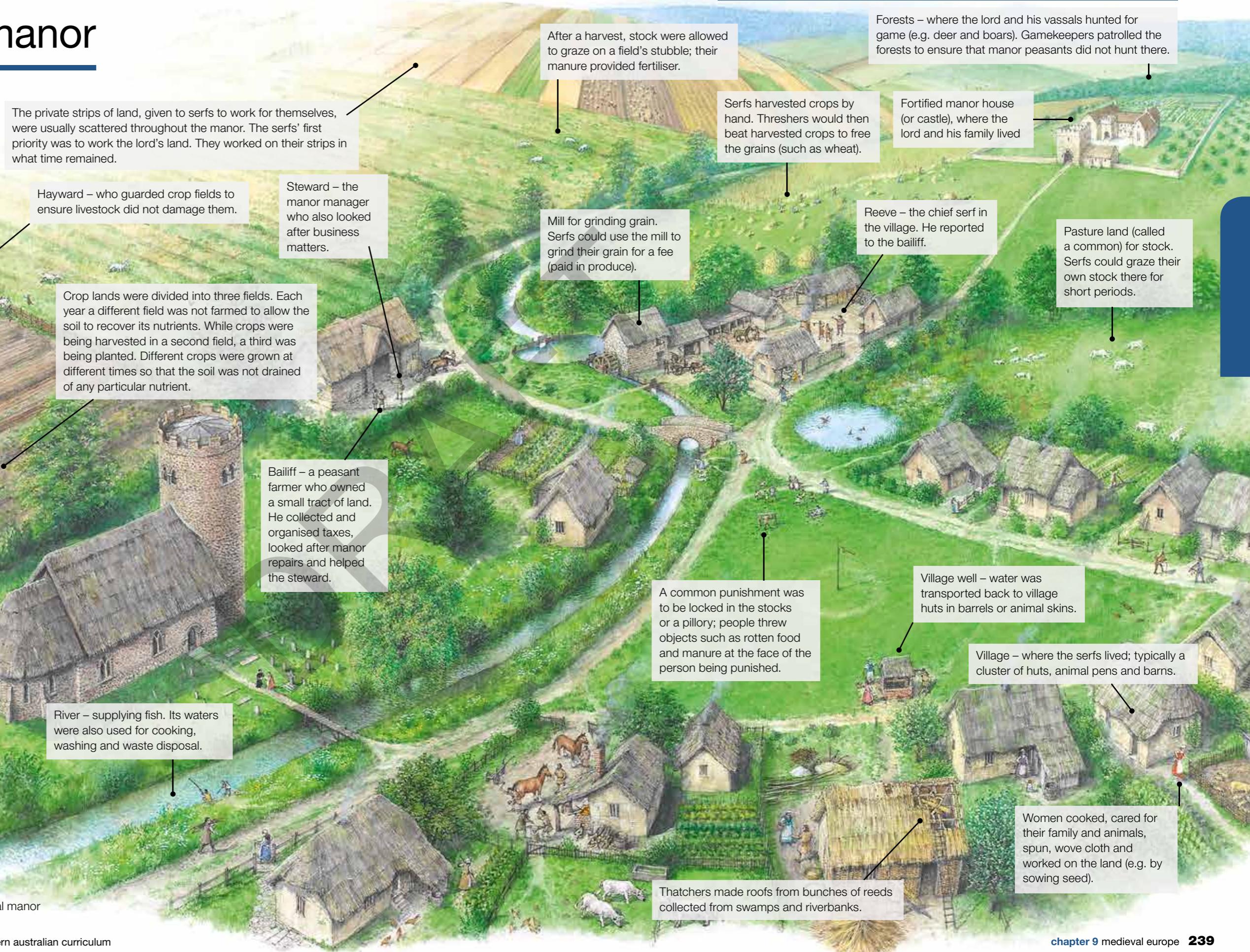
#### Remember and understand

- Why did feudalism emerge after the fall of the Roman Empire in Europe?
- Explain the relationship between a vassal and a lord.
- What was a fief?
- What is a hierarchy? Do we have hierarchies of any kind in Australia today? Explain.
- How do you think a medieval ruler's position might have been strengthened by giving fiefs to those who provided loyalty and support?

## 9.3 The feudal manor

Under feudalism in Europe, land not belonging to the ruler or the Church was mostly divided into manor lands. Each manor was owned by a noble or knight who was given it by his lord as a fief. Manor lands were made up of the demesne (the lord's land), and peasants and serfs farmed the land to meet their own needs.

Under this arrangement, the lord of a manor provided serfs on his estate with a place to live and the means to survive. In return, they provided him with their labour. They also provided taxes (a portion of what they produced on the land they farmed). Most serfs were not free to leave the manor lands and had to have the lord's permission to do many everyday tasks.



## 9.4 Social groups in medieval society

In medieval Europe, a number of different groups made up society. These groups were organised in a strict hierarchy – from the very rich and powerful to the very poor and powerless.

### The king

In medieval times, the king (and occasionally a queen) sat at the top of the social hierarchy. All of the land ruled by the king was believed to belong only to him. In most medieval European societies, the king kept about 25 per cent of all land for himself and granted permission to nobles and Church officials to use the rest. The king enjoyed great wealth and privilege, hosting lavish banquets and balls. However, the role of king was also difficult – much time was spent administering the country, planning or fighting wars, and fending off challengers to the throne.

### Nobles

Below the king was a group of noble families loyal to him. They often lived in large manor houses built

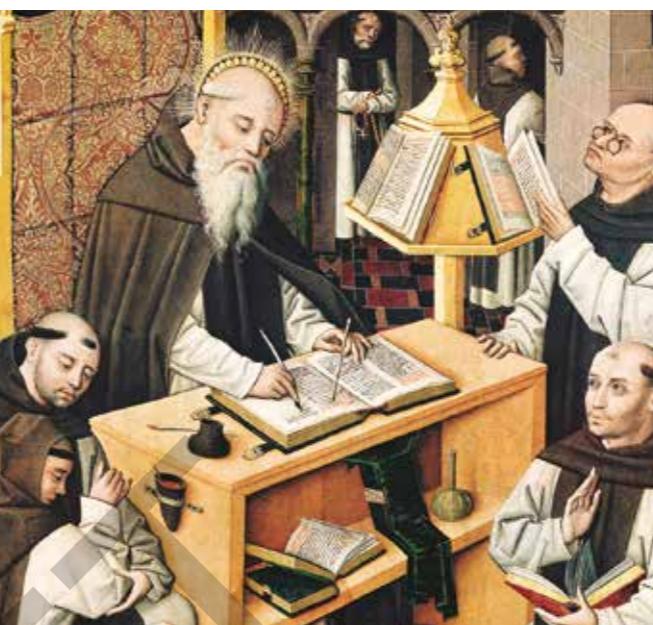
on land granted to them by the king (known as fiefs). These manor lands were farmed by peasants and serfs who were allowed to live there by the nobles in exchange for labour and food. Noblemen often spent their days attending to business on their land, hunting, attending church and ruling over their vassals.

### Church officials

In medieval Europe, the Church was extremely powerful and influential. The Pope and the Church were supported by a large network of Christian workers – cardinals, archbishops, bishops, deacons, abbots, monks, nuns, village priests and friars. Some of these people (such as abbots) were often given fiefs by the king or ruler. By acquiring land and by collecting taxes and payments from the people who lived on it, the Church became very wealthy. For example, in England, the Church and the nobility owned about 75 per cent of all the land between them. The Church was not required to pay taxes.



**Source 1** A medieval artist's impression of peasants harvesting grapes and tending grapevines on a feudal manor. In the foreground, the lord of the manor is inspecting their work.



**Source 2** A 16th-century artist's impression of monks creating manuscripts

### keyconcept: Significance

### The Catholic Church

The Catholic Church (which later became known as the Roman Catholic Church) was a very significant institution in medieval Europe. Its head was the Pope. He was seen as God's representative on Earth by believers. In medieval times, the Pope had enormous religious and political authority, even influencing kings. One of the Pope's greatest powers was the ability to **excommunicate** (expel from the Church forever) members of the faith – a punishment that terrified medieval Christians. An excommunicated person could no longer go to church, and his or her soul was doomed to live in hell.

The Catholic Church played a dominant role in the life of medieval Christians from birth to death. Its many religious festivals filled the calendar. Many were named after Christian saints and martyrs (people who died in the name of their religion). People's lives typically revolved around the activities of the village or town church.

People learned from childhood how the Church expected them to behave and what they should believe. Obeying the Church's teachings helped to preserve the social order in medieval Europe.

For more information on the key concept of significance, refer to page XX of 'The history toolkit'.

### Other members of the Church

Devout Christians in medieval Europe often chose to serve God as monks or nuns. Their lives were controlled by their vows of chastity (no sexual relationships), obedience and poverty. They devoted their lives to serving God and their superiors. This meant living a simple life – praying many times a day (including late at night and early in the morning), caring for the poor and sick, and performing their religious duties. To help them keep their vows and show their devotion, monks and nuns lived apart from the community – monks in monasteries and nuns in nunneries.

In medieval times, monks were usually the only people who could read and write. Some were historians, and others were librarians and keepers of important documents for feudal lords. Many others copied or translated important **manuscripts** such as the Bible and ancient medical texts from around the world. The medieval Church played an important role in preserving ancient documents that might otherwise have been lost to us today.



**Source 3** A 12th-century artist's impression of a knight swearing allegiance as a vassal to his lord in return for favours such as a fief

### Knights

As a group, **knights** made up only a small percentage of the population. In feudal society, though, they played a particularly important role. Through the feudal hierarchy, many were given grants of land from their lords. In return they were expected to protect their lords when required, and also fight for the king. In addition to this, many knights also received income in the form of food and supplies from peasants in exchange for protection.

## Peasants and serfs

Peasants made up the largest group in medieval European society (about 90 per cent of the population). They undertook the bulk of the physical work, most of which was related to farming. Their labour produced the food and other goods needed by the wealthy (such as furniture and armour). They also provided much of the income of the rich through the rents and taxes they paid. Peasants lived hard lives that were usually short.

Farm work was difficult. Everything had to be done by hand, and tools were basic. These included sickles and scythes (large, curved, sharp-edged knives used to cut long grass and harvest grain crops like wheat and rye).

People went to bed early and woke up at dawn. For the peasants, there were few human comforts, especially when the weather was bad. Survival depended on working hard and staying healthy. There was little time for rest and leisure.



Source 4 A medieval artist's impression of the life of a peasant, representing the 12 months of the year (from top left to bottom right)

### Rules for peasants on manors

- Work the lord's land as required
- Pay taxes to the lord, usually in the form of crops
- Ask permission to leave the manor or move house
- Ask approval from the lord to allow their daughters to marry or their sons to be educated
- Be punished or fined for breaking manor rules
- Pay fees to the lord for basic privileges (e.g. for grinding their grain in his mill)

Source 5 Rules for peasants working on feudal manors

## 9.5 Daily life in medieval Europe

In the medieval world, the lives of the wealthy and the poor were very different. These differences reflected the social group of which people were members, and could be seen in things like clothing, hygiene, food and entertainment.



Source 1 An artist's impression of a range of garments worn by people in 11th-century England. The top panel shows the types of clothing worn by common people and soldiers; the bottom panel shows clothing typically worn by the rich – including the king.



Source 2 An artist's impression of a medieval man enjoying a 'stew'

### Medieval fashions

By the 11th century in Europe, there were great differences between the clothing worn by the rich and the poor. In fact, laws were passed to enforce this difference. Only people of royal blood were allowed to wear gold and silver materials and purple silk, and only noblewomen could wear veils and have dresses made from satin and velvet.

The clothes of the wealthy were almost always custom-made by tailors. Women typically wore long, trailing garments with elaborate sleeves and ornate headgear. Wealthy men commonly wore tunics, stockings, decorated cloaks and fancy hats. The clothes of the poor were, by contrast, drab and dull in colour. They were crudely cut, and made from coarse cloth woven by peasant women from handspun wool or linen.

### Hygiene

Cleanliness was valued by medieval people, even though they did not understand the health benefits of staying clean. For the poor, personal hygiene was very basic. Peasants washed in a dish of cold water. Wood was a scarce and valuable resource for the poor, so it was not wasted on heating water for washing.

Only the wealthy could afford the luxury of a long, hot bath. This was called a 'stew'. Scented oils, rose petals or herbs such as rosemary and spearmint were added to the water. Often, expensive perfumes from faraway places such as Arabia were also used. Dried herbs and spices such as mint and cinnamon were also burnt to purify and sweeten the air while bathing.

Dental hygiene for both the rich and poor was almost non-existent. People occasionally cleaned their teeth, but only by rubbing them with a piece of cloth. Sometimes, mixtures of herbs and ash were also used. There was only one treatment for a bad tooth – it was pulled out with no anaesthetic or pain medication.

## Medieval food

There were no supermarkets, refrigerators or ovens in medieval times. People killed their own animals and preserved meat by salting, smoking or pickling it. Spices were also used to disguise the taste of meat when it was old and rotting. Sometimes dogs were used to test this meat before it was eaten to see if it was safe. Vegetables were commonly dried or pickled. Grain was ground into flour to make bread. People used spoons, knives or their fingers to eat; instead of plates, most people ate off thick slices of bread called trenchers.



Source 3 A 15th-century illustration of a rich man's feast

### Eating habits of the rich

The rich ate the meat of both domestic animals (such as cows, pigs and sheep) and game animals (such as deer, wild boars and pheasants). They also ate fish, fruit, soft cheese, eggs, coloured jellies, vegetables, sauces and soups, salads, white bread, pies and tarts, and ornate sweet dishes called subtleties. Food was washed down with ale, wine or mead (a brew made from honey and water).

Banquets were held on important religious feast days, and to mark events such as marriages, coronations, special birthdays, tournaments and the arrival of important guests. Important people (such as members of the lord's family) sat at a higher table than other diners. Feasts often lasted for hours. In between the many courses, diners were entertained by acrobats, **minstrels**, **troubadours**, storytellers, jugglers and jesters.

### Eating habits of the poor

The poor ate a simpler and less varied diet than the rich. It included stews, grainy bread, vegetables and fruit (when available), milk, hard cheese, porridge made from oats or barley, and perhaps some nuts from the forests. Most peasants ate their main meal for the day while working in the fields. If peasants were lucky enough to live near the sea or rivers, they ate fish. Generally, however, they ate very little meat, as they were often too poor to own and raise animals. Hunting for game (wild animals) in the lord's forests was forbidden.



## Medieval entertainment

Many pastimes in medieval Europe were the privilege of the wealthy. These included lavish banquets and, for the men, activities such as hunting, falconry and playing chess. Wealthy women might embroider, stitch tapestries or listen to musical performances.

Hunts were typically conducted in the woods and forests surrounding feudal manors. Sometimes, women, riding side-saddle, would be part of the hunting party. Access to these areas was forbidden to the poor; instead, they hunted for rabbits and birds in the fields.

Source 4 This 14th-century illustration shows a hunting party of nobles carrying birds of prey on their wrists. They are led by a falconer, who trains and looks after these birds. The long stick in his hand was used to beat trees and bushes to flush out small game animals, which would then be caught by the trained birds of prey.



Source 5 This painting by Pieter Brueghel the Elder, *Children's Games* (c. 1560), shows a wide range of games played by children in medieval Europe.

Falconry involved using trained birds of prey such as eagles, falcons and hawks to catch small animals such as pigeons and hares (see Source 4). The type of hunting bird used indicated a person's status – eagles, for example, were only owned by kings. Appearing in public with a bird of prey on a leather-strapped wrist was a sign of a person's wealth and social status.

The poor did not have many opportunities for entertainment, but during special feasts, such as at harvest time, there might be dancing, dice throwing, ball games and wrestling, for example. Many of the games played by medieval children, such as hopscotch and hide-and-seek, are still played today (see Source 5).

### Check your learning 9.5

#### Remember and understand

- Describe one way in which an 11th-century noblewoman might 'advertise' that she was wealthy in the way she dressed.
- What did 'having a stew' mean in medieval times? What social group might engage in this activity? Why?

#### Apply and analyse

- Compare and contrast the diets of the rich and poor. Which diet do you think was healthier? Justify your opinion.
- With a partner, identify as many medieval games and activities as you can in Source 5. Create a table and sort the activities into those you recognise instantly and those that seem strange to you.

#### Evaluate and create

- Refer to Source 1 and conduct some further research on the Internet in order to design two separate outfits for:
  - a peasant man or woman in medieval England
  - a nobleman or noblewoman in medieval England.
 Sketch and colour your finished garments, ensuring that they follow the established rules and laws in medieval England (in terms of colours, materials and styles).

## 9.6 Tournaments and fairs

Tournaments were another form of entertainment popular across medieval Europe. The earliest tournaments took place in the 11th century. They were held in the open countryside and were very violent battles between two teams of up to 100 knights a side. Over time, tournaments developed into well-organised public events like the one shown in Source 1, where knights could show off their skills to the excited spectators.

The highlights of every tournament were an organised battle and a series of jousts. In a joust, two knights each holding a lance (a long wooden pole with pointed metal tip) would ride towards each other on horseback and try to knock each other off.

In addition to these events, people attending tournaments could eat, drink and be entertained by musicians and performers.



# 9.7 Living conditions in medieval Europe

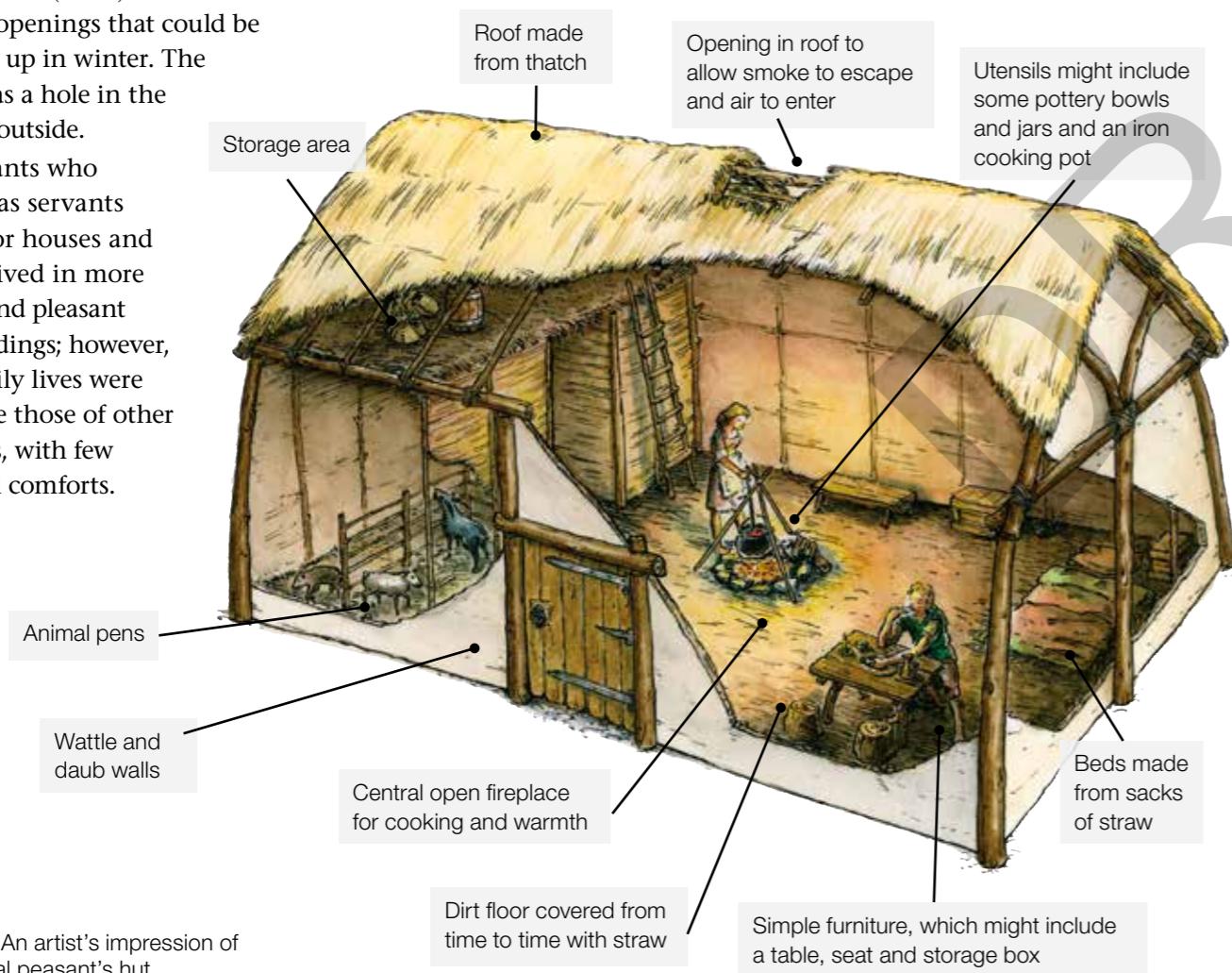
In addition to fashion, food and entertainment, there were also marked differences between rich and poor in terms of living conditions.

## Living conditions for the poor

Conditions for the poor were not very comfortable. Peasant farmers often lived in a one- or two-roomed hut shared with domestic animals such as chickens and pigs (see Source 1). This was often one of a number of similar huts on a feudal manor (see Source 1 on page XX). These huts were usually dirty, sooty, smelly and dark. Walls were mostly a mixture of mud, manure and sticks (called wattle and daub). They might be painted white with lime. Roofs were made from thatch (straw). Windows were

narrow openings that could be boarded up in winter. The toilet was a hole in the ground outside.

Peasants who worked as servants in manor houses and castles lived in more secure and pleasant surroundings; however, their daily lives were hard like those of other peasants, with few personal comforts.



Source 1 An artist's impression of a medieval peasant's hut

## Living conditions in towns and cities

During the medieval period, towns across Europe were usually small, with populations of only a few hundred people. Some, however, grew into larger cities over time. The wealthy townspeople often lived in larger houses, close to the centre of town. The poor lived in dirtier, more cramped quarters. Narrow cobbled or dirt streets separated rows of wooden buildings with thatched roofs where these people lived. The buildings were a serious fire risk – they were made of highly flammable materials and people lit fires and candles inside for warmth and light.



Source 2 The restored bedroom of the French king Henri III in the Château de Blois in France. Often the beds of the wealthy had blankets, sheets, feather pillows, fur covers and linen curtains. Tapestries covered up draughty cracks in the stone walls of castles.

## Living conditions for the wealthy

The rich included kings and queens and their extended families, feudal lords and their ladies, and the families of knights. When not fighting wars, the wealthy led mostly comfortable lives, often in manor houses and castles. The Church, too, had great wealth and certain members lived very comfortably despite their vow of poverty.

In times of peace, castles were the settings for feasts, workshops, markets, romance, raising and entertaining children, crafts and music. They were also the focal point for military training, the day-to-day running of the realm, and for administering justice.

A typical day for a lord's family began when the sun rose. By then, servants were preparing meals and had lit the fires in the kitchen and great hall.

The noble family would wash in tubs (often with the help of servants) and dress. They would also visit the garderobe (a medieval toilet), which was a small, cold room with a seat that opened directly onto a stinking pit or moat below. A chamber pot kept in the bedroom was typically used for toilet visits during the night. Strips of torn fabric were used as toilet paper.

After breakfast, the lord and lady would usually visit their private chapel. The lord's tasks for a day might include making decisions about the manor, receiving rents, presiding over a manor court and planning to visit another castle he owned. At night, there might be a feast for an important guest (perhaps the king) or to celebrate something special, such as the end of a tournament.

### Check your learning 9.7

#### Remember and understand

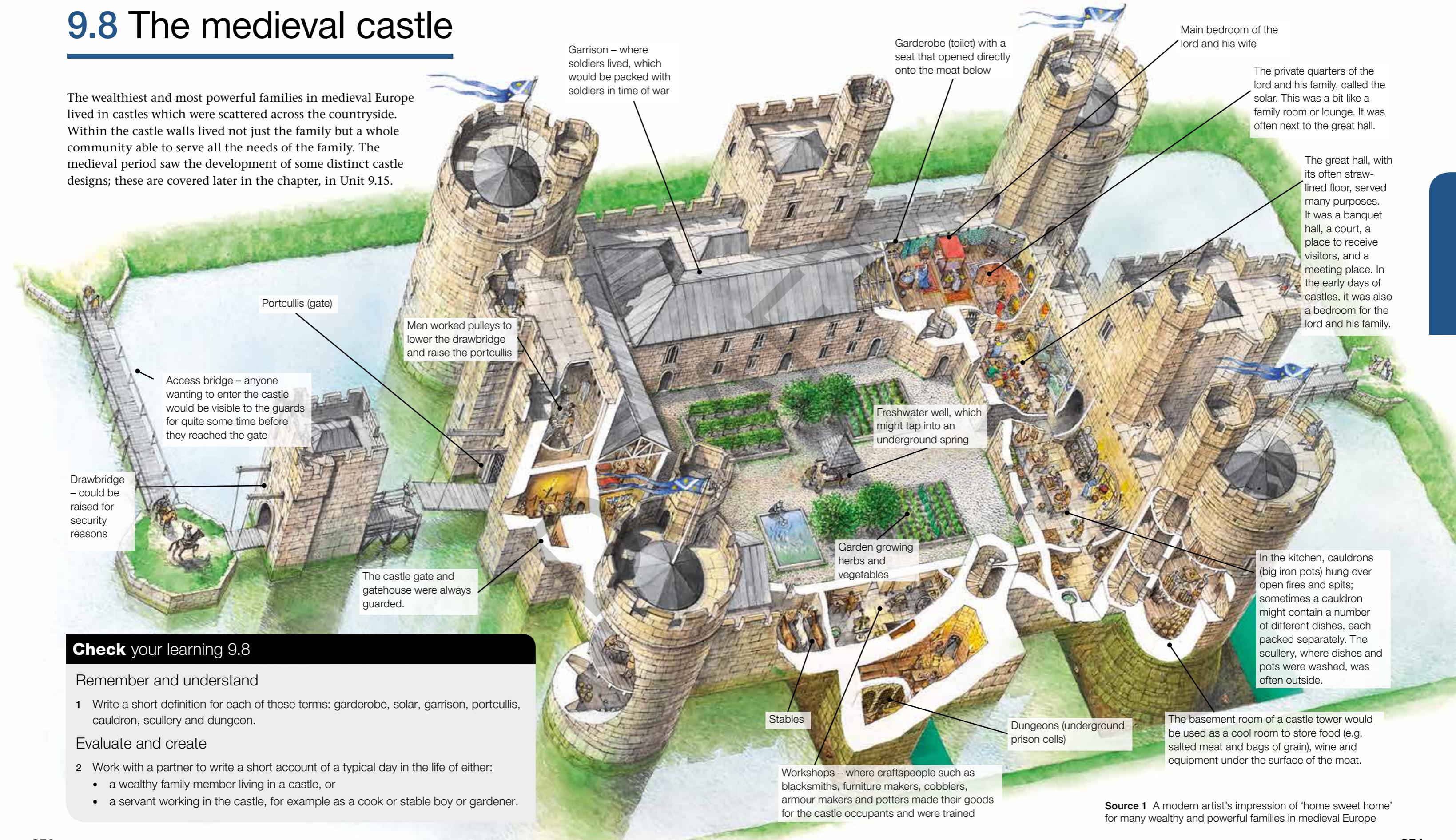
- 1 What were some of the typical activities and events that took place in medieval castles?
- 2 How would a typical lord in medieval Europe spend his day?
- 3 Why was there a high risk of fires in medieval towns?

#### Evaluate and create

- 4 Work in groups to construct a model of either the hut of a poor medieval family or the bedroom of a wealthy medieval noble. Share responsibilities, including research, preparing materials, assembling the model and presenting it to the class.

## 9.8 The medieval castle

The wealthiest and most powerful families in medieval Europe lived in castles which were scattered across the countryside. Within the castle walls lived not just the family but a whole community able to serve all the needs of the family. The medieval period saw the development of some distinct castle designs; these are covered later in the chapter, in Unit 9.15.



### Check your learning 9.8

#### Remember and understand

- 1 Write a short definition for each of these terms: garderobe, solar, garrison, portcullis, cauldron, scullery and dungeon.

#### Evaluate and create

- 2 Work with a partner to write a short account of a typical day in the life of either:
  - a wealthy family member living in a castle, or
  - a servant working in the castle, for example as a cook or stable boy or gardener.

**Source 1** A modern artist's impression of 'home sweet home' for many wealthy and powerful families in medieval Europe

## 9A rich task

# The achievements of medieval women

The societies of medieval Europe were dominated by men. The Pope and bishops controlled the Catholic Church, and the king and his nobles governed all other social and legal matters. The man was the head of his household, just as the king was the head of his kingdom. Both noble and peasant women were expected to work in the family home until they were married. After marriage, they had to run their husband's household and raise children. Typically they received very little education and had few rights. Every woman was required to obey her father or husband in all matters and was not able to make decisions for herself. Despite these challenges and restrictions, some women in medieval Europe became very influential and their stories live on to this day.



Source 1 A 19th-century artist's impression of Eleanor of Aquitaine

### Eleanor of Aquitaine (1122–1204)

During her lifetime, Eleanor of Aquitaine was queen of France and England, and also ruled England as **regent**. She was an intelligent, creative and sensitive woman. Eleanor was born in France in 1122. She was the daughter of the Duke of Aquitaine and heir to his land. When her father died, however, the land became the property of Louis VI, the French king. When she was 15, she married the king's son and later became queen of France. She took part in the Second

Crusade alongside her husband, taking 300 women to fight and help care for the wounded. She was not happy with Louis VII and the marriage was annulled (declared non-existent) in 1152. In 1154 she married the Duke of Normandy, who later became Henry II, the king of England. Eleanor supported her sons when they revolted against Henry in 1173, and was imprisoned for 16 years. When Henry II died she was released, and helped rule England with and for her eldest son, Richard the Lionheart.

### Joan of Arc (1412–1431)



Source 2 A 19th-century artist's impression of Joan of Arc

Joan of Arc was born in 1412 in a small French village called Domrémy. As the daughter of a peasant farmer, she received no education apart from the lessons of the Church. When she was 13, she believed she began to see visions and hear the voices of saints. They told her that she would help the French defeat the English and so secure the coronation of Charles VII, then crown prince of France.

Aged 18, she travelled in men's clothing to see Charles. Her conviction and faith inspired many nobles and common people. She helped lead the French to victory, and in 1429 Charles was crowned. Less than a year later, Joan was captured and imprisoned by the English. Wanting to discredit the new French king, they accused her of **heresy**. Because she refused to confess that she did not hear the voices of saints she was burned at the stake in 1431.



### Christine de Pizan (1363–c. 1430)

Christine de Pizan was born in Venice in 1363. Her father was Tomasso de Pizzano, a respected physician. She grew up at the court of King Charles V of France, where her father made sure she received a good education. At 14, Christine married Etienne du Castel, a court secretary, and they had three children. In 1389, however, her husband died. Her father and the king were now also dead, and she decided to support her family by writing. Over the next 50 years, Christine wrote many poems, essays and books. As well as entertaining stories and love poems, she wrote serious works about the place of women in society, defending them against those who dismissed them as ignorant and worthless.

Source 3 A 19th-century artist's impression of Christine de Pizan

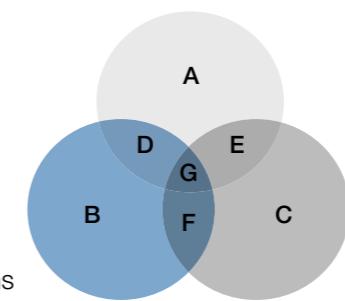
### skilldrill

#### Using Venn diagrams to compare information from a range of sources

Venn diagrams are simple diagrammatic tools that help you organise your thinking. They help to quickly identify the similarities and differences of two or more things. These 'things' can be anything – people, events, political systems and so on. Venn diagrams are a useful tool to compare information you have gathered from a range of sources.

To complete the Venn diagram in Source 4, follow these steps:

**Step 1** Think about how each of the three things you are comparing are different. Record these individual features in the non-overlapping sections (A, B and C).



Source 4 A Venn diagram

### Extend your understanding

Consider the place of women in Australian society today. Create a table to compare the ways in which women's social positions are similar, and the ways in which they are different.

Investigate the following areas:

- home life
- legal rights
- work and roles performed
- access to education
- family.

**Step 2** Then think about how two of the things are similar or share common features. Write any features that are common to A and B in section D, features common to A and C in section E, and features common to B and C in section F.

**Step 3** Finally, think about the features that all three things have in common. Record these common features in section G.

### Apply the skill

Use the written and visual sources about the three women provided to compare, select and use the most relevant information as evidence. Copy the Venn diagram from Source 4 into your notebook, and arrange facts from the written and visual sources to show what they had in common and what was different about them.

Consider the following topics:

- family connections
- education
- type and extent of influence.

In order to collect this information you may need to conduct some additional research on the Internet.

#### Comparison of women's social positions in modern Australia and in medieval Europe

Similarities	Differences

# 9.9 New empires, kingdoms and rulers

The medieval period in Europe was a time of great change. New groups of people moved and settled across the region; new empires and kingdoms were established; new ideas and beliefs spread throughout the population; and important events such as wars, famines and plagues brought about changes at all levels of society.

The kingdom of the Franks was one of the most important kingdoms in medieval Europe. During the 8th and 9th centuries, it was dominated by the Carolingian Dynasty, which rose to power at a time of great instability in Europe. The Carolingian kings commanded a powerful military force and had a close relationship with the Catholic Church. They created a single kingdom out of much of Western Europe and played a key role in converting tribal groups, such as the Saxons, to Christianity.

The Carolingian **monarchy** was at its most powerful during the reign of Charles I (also known as Charlemagne). Under Charlemagne, the Christian lands of Western Europe were united to form the Carolingian Empire.

The Carolingian Empire did not last long after Charlemagne's death in 814. His son, Louis the Pious, and grandson, Charles the Bald, headed an empire increasingly at war with itself. By 887, the empire had largely been reduced to a few smaller kingdoms. These laid the foundations of what we know today as France, Germany and Italy.



**Source 1** An artist's impression of Pepin the Short, one of the Carolingian kings and father of Charlemagne and Carloman I

## Arrival of the Vikings

The decline of the Carolingian kings was helped by the arrival of the Vikings between about 850 and 1050. Initially they raided coastal settlements and monasteries in England, Ireland, Scotland and coastal France. Over time, however, they came to control large areas of medieval Europe, settling in places they had previously attacked and raided. They built new towns, like Dublin, the capital of modern Ireland, and set up their own kingdoms, such as the **Danelaw** in England.

## The Normans

In France, the Vikings established a strong base. In 911, a Viking leader named Hrolf defeated the Frankish king, Charles the Simple (a descendant of Charlemagne). Hrolf forced Charles to pay a heavy penalty – a **fief** (a grant of land) in a region of western France. This area became known as Normandy, which derives its name from 'Norman' meaning 'Northman' or 'Viking'. In return for this land, Hrolf promised to stop raiding and to convert to Christianity.

In their new country, the Vikings (or Normans) adopted and refined some of the political and cultural practices of the Franks, including their language. By the early 11th century, the Normans had made further conquests in Europe and established a kingdom in southern Italy.

## The Normans in England

The Normans also had long-standing interests in England. For example, Emma of Normandy (the sister of Richard II, Duke of Normandy) had married the English king Ethelred II. Their son, Edward the Confessor, became king of England in 1042. During his reign, many Normans became involved in English politics.



**Source 2** A scene from the Bayeux Tapestry (an embroidery retelling the Battle of Hastings, made in around 1080). This scene shows the mounted soldiers of William, Duke of Normandy, attacking the Saxon foot soldiers of Harold Godwinson.

When Edward the Confessor died without an heir to the throne in 1066, a number of people believed they had a right to rule England. One contender, Harold Godwinson (the powerful Earl of Wessex), had himself crowned king that year. Harold claimed that Edward had promised him the throne on his deathbed.

Edward's cousin William, Duke of Normandy, was another contender for the throne. He also claimed that Edward had promised him the throne on his deathbed. Later that year, he invaded England to take the throne for himself. William's army defeated Harold's army at the Battle of Hastings. King Harold was killed, shot in the eye with an arrow. William (who became known as William the Conqueror) was then crowned King William I of England. For more information on the Battle of Hastings, turn to 9B Rich task on pages XX-XX.

After 1066, William I and his Norman nobles began imposing their rule on the English. Many of the former **Anglo-Saxon** nobility fled to Denmark, Scotland and Wales. William claimed their lands, giving some to the Church and some as fiefs to his loyal followers and knights as a reward.

The Normans built castles in their new kingdom to protect their territory and enforce their rule. They also introduced the system of **feudalism** already common across mainland Europe.

## Check your learning 9.9

### Remember and understand

- Who were the Carolingian kings and why were they so powerful?
- Why is Charlemagne considered to be one of the most significant rulers of the medieval period in Europe?

### Apply and analyse

- Explain how a large region of France came to be ruled by the Vikings. What was this region called?
- Why did Harold Godwinson and William of Normandy both believe they were legitimate contenders for the English throne in 1066?

### Evaluate and create

- Explain the relationship between the Battle of Hastings in 1066 and the beginnings of a feudal system in Britain.
- Draw a simple sketch diagram showing how the system of feudalism worked.

# 9.10 Significant individual: Charlemagne

Charles I (742–814), more commonly known as Charlemagne (meaning Charles the Great), was one of the most important kings in medieval Europe. Charlemagne and his brother Carloman both took the throne of the Frankish kingdom when their father, Pepin the Short, died in 768. After Carloman's death in 771, Charlemagne ruled in his own right.

He was active in overseeing his kingdom and regularly travelled around it. He also set up a network of messengers to report back to him on what was happening. Under his rule, his kingdom rose to dominate Western Europe.

## Charlemagne, the man

Much of what we know about Charlemagne today was written by Einhard, a scholar and dedicated servant of Charlemagne. Einhard's accounts were written at the request of Charlemagne's son, Louis the Pious, between 817 and 836.



Source 1 An artist's impression of Charlemagne leading his troops over the Swiss Alps on a military campaign to conquer new territories

Source 2 A medieval bust of Charlemagne, Emperor of the Romans



Source 3 A selection of statements describing Charlemagne

[Charlemagne] was large and strong, and of lofty [grand] stature ... the upper part of his head was round, his eyes very large and animated, nose a little long, hair fair, and face laughing and merry. Thus his appearance was always stately and dignified, whether he was standing or sitting ...

He ... was temperate [controlled] in eating, and particularly so in drinking, for he abominated [hated] drunkenness in anybody ... While at the table, he listened to reading or music.

He ... had the gift of ready and fluent speech, and could express whatever he had to say with the utmost clearness. He was not satisfied with command of his native language ... [he] was such a master of Latin that he could speak it as well as his native tongue.

He ... cherished [valued] with the greatest fervour [passion] and devotion the principles of the Christian religion, which had been instilled into him from infancy [childhood].

Translated extracts from *Life of Charles the Great*, a biography of Charlemagne, written by Einhard

## Charlemagne, the conqueror

Over his lifetime, Charlemagne fought many wars. His victories expanded the territory under his control. He was helped by the armies of his loyal supporters. Charlemagne had earlier given many of these men grants of land, a common practice among

the Franks. This was done partly so they could support themselves, and partly so they could equip themselves to help Charlemagne in battle. It also encouraged their ongoing loyalty and support.

## Charlemagne, the leader

Charlemagne did not just lead in battle. He was also a leading thinker, introducing many political and social reforms. For example, he set up a common system of currency, bringing back coins as the means of buying and selling goods and services as the Romans had done hundreds of years earlier. He also encouraged the arts and education, setting up a number of schools for both peasants and nobles alike. Many of the cultural and artistic traditions of the Greek and Roman empires were brought back to life during Charlemagne's rule. As a result, the period of his rule is often described as the Carolingian Renaissance.

His leadership encouraged many new developments in literature, architecture and the arts.

## Charlemagne, Emperor of the Romans

Charlemagne had always had a close relationship with the Catholic Church. In 799, he came to the aid of Pope Leo III. The Pope, accused of adultery, had fled Rome. His accusers had threatened to gouge out his eyes and cut out his tongue. Charlemagne escorted the Pope back to Rome and forced his reinstatement.

Pope Leo III was understandably grateful to Charlemagne. On Christmas Day in 800, the Pope crowned Charlemagne as Emperor of the Romans. This endorsement from the Pope not only reinforced Charlemagne's position as the most powerful king, but also ensured that the Catholic Church remained a strong force in Europe (as the ancient Roman Empire had been). Kings that followed Charlemagne were referred to as Holy Roman Emperors.

## Charlemagne's death

In late 813, Charlemagne crowned his son Louis the Pious co-emperor. Shortly after, on 28 January 814, Charlemagne died. He had ruled for 47 years.



Source 4 An artist's impression of Charlemagne, who established a number of schools for boys from different social classes during his rule

## Check your learning 9.10

### Remember and understand

- 1 Explain who each of the following people were:  
Charlemagne's father, his brother, his son.
- 2 How did giving grants of land to his closest supporters benefit Charlemagne?

### Apply and analyse

- 3 Consider the statements in Source 3 and answer the following:
  - a Are these accounts primary or secondary sources? Why?
  - b Do you think these accounts are truthful and reliable? Give reasons for your answer.
- 4 Why do you think the Pope decided to crown Charlemagne Emperor of the Romans?

### Evaluate and create

- 5 Conduct research to learn more about the regions of Europe ruled by Charlemagne. On a blank map of Europe, shade the area ruled by Charlemagne when he and his brother took the throne. Next, shade the area covered by his empire at the height of his rule. Use two different colours to distinguish between the two areas. Now use your atlas to discover which modern European countries were originally ruled by Charlemagne.
- 6 Provide three reasons why you think Charlemagne deserves to be considered a significant individual.

# 9.11 The spread of Christianity

One of the most significant and lasting changes that took place across Europe during medieval times was the spread and adoption of Christianity. Christianity was one of the legacies of ancient Rome. At first, Roman emperors made every effort to stamp out Christianity across the empire, even feeding Christians to the lions. But over time it became accepted and was declared the official religion of the Roman Empire in the late 4th century CE. As a result, Christianity was well established as a religion in Europe when the Roman Empire collapsed and the medieval period began. Its influence and relevance was kept alive by the Catholic Church (today referred to as the Roman Catholic Church). Christianity influenced the arts, education, medicine, architecture and even wars. It also affected medieval Europe's relationships with other societies, such as the Muslim nations of the Middle East.



**Source 1** Canterbury Cathedral in England is significant not only because of its impressive architecture but also because it played a vital role in the lives of medieval Christians.

The influence of Christianity across Europe increased under the rule of Charlemagne. He supported missionaries that travelled across Europe converting people who were not Christians. He was a dedicated and passionate believer in Christianity and made constant efforts to improve the religious life across his realm. He defended the Church with his forces and protected the Pope from his enemies in Rome. In 800, the Pope crowned Charlemagne Holy Roman Emperor in order to strengthen ties between the Church and the ruler of Europe.

## The organisation and influence of the medieval Church

The Church and its leader, the Pope, had great power and influence over almost every person in medieval society. From a very early age, all people, from the very rich to the very poor, were educated in the customs and traditions of the Church that would grant them salvation (entry into heaven). The desire to gain entry into heaven and the terrible fear of hell were strong incentives for people in medieval times to obey Church rules and customs.

By the middle of the 11th century, the Church was a well-organised hierarchy, reaching every level of medieval society. Small parishes, headed by priests, were set up across every region. These parishes were organised into larger dioceses, headed by bishops. Bishops were responsible for all religious affairs. They controlled church courts, which sat in judgement of cases involving members of the clergy and church property, and also ruled over other matters like marriages and wills.

Most importantly, bishops also held the authority to **excommunicate** any Christian who did not follow Church law. Excommunication prevented people from participating in church services or receiving the sacraments (sacred rituals) – meaning they would spend eternity in hell.

In addition to exercising great power over people in medieval society, the Church also provided many benefits. More than anything, it provided a stable



**Source 2** An illumination (an illustration decorated with gold or silver) from an early 15th-century French manuscript showing a school lesson

and unifying system of beliefs and rules that all Christians were bound to follow. The Church was also responsible for providing a great deal of practical help. In most parishes the Church established schools and universities, provided care for the poor and sick, and offered legal advice and other community services.

## Holy pilgrimages

As Christianity spread across Western Europe, people of all social classes started to set out on journeys to places of religious importance (such as shrines and burial sites). These journeys, known as **pilgrimages**, were designed to prove Christians' loyal devotion to God. Each region of Europe had its own sites popular with pilgrims; however, the most sacred pilgrimage site for all Christians was the Holy City of Jerusalem. The Holy Land had been held by Muslim Arabs since 637 CE, but Christian pilgrims had been allowed to travel there freely. This changed in 1050, when a group known as the Seljuk Turks, who had recently converted to Islam, took control of Jerusalem. They began harassing pilgrims and refusing them entry to the city. These events led to the start of a series of religious wars known as the **Crusades**.



**Source 3** An artist's impression of Christian pilgrims travelling to a shrine at the Canterbury Cathedral in England. This shrine attracted many pilgrims during the Middle Ages.

## Religious warfare – the Crusades

The Crusades were a series of religious wars between Christians and Muslims between 1096 and 1270 to gain control over key religious sites in and around the city of Jerusalem – an important spiritual and religious location for believers of both Christianity and Islam.

Historians argue about the total number of wars that were fought, but most agree that eight major crusades took place (see Source 4).

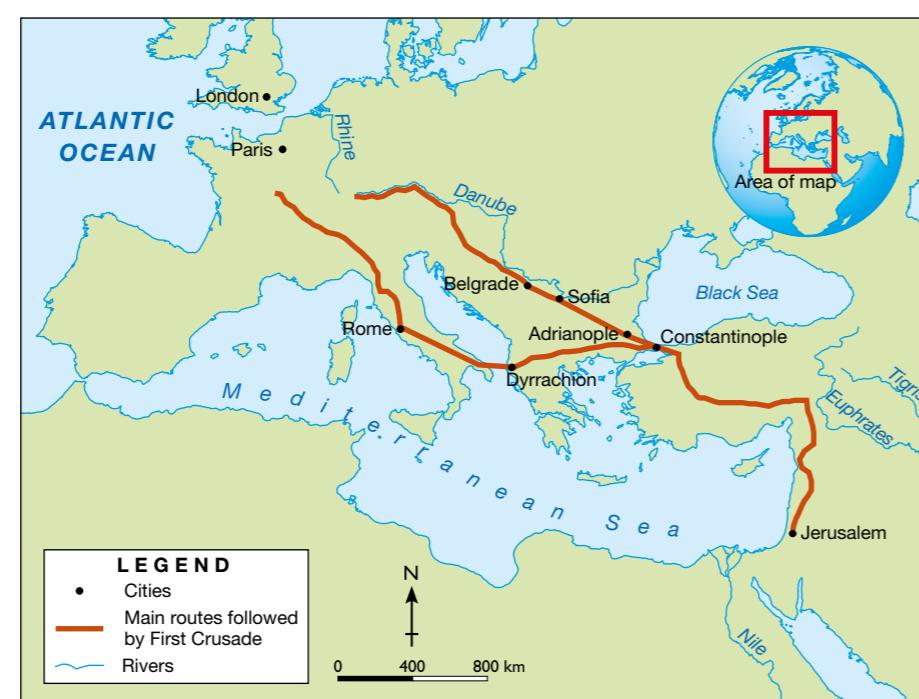
**Source 4** The dates of the eight major Crusades

Date	Crusade
1096–1099	First Crusade
1147–1149	Second Crusade
1188–1192	Third Crusade
1202–1204	Fourth Crusade
1217–1222	Fifth Crusade
1228–1229	Sixth Crusade
1248–1254	Seventh Crusade
1270	Eighth Crusade



**Source 5** An artist's impression of a battle during the First Crusade, painted in 1490

THE ROUTES OF THE FIRST CRUSADE



Source 6

Source: Oxford University Press

### The start of the Crusades

Following the takeover of Jerusalem by the Seljuk Turks in 1050, Christian pilgrims and traders no longer felt safe in the region. Many believed that this new Islamic regime would also move to invade Constantinople, capital of the Byzantine Empire (formerly the Eastern Roman Empire), which was under Christian rule. This growing threat caused the Byzantine emperor to ask for support from Pope Urban II in 1096. In response, the Pope rallied Christians all over Europe to fight for control of Jerusalem and to help defend other Christians in the Middle East against the Turkish invaders. This was the start of the First Crusade.

People from all walks of life – from kings to peasants – joined the Crusades. Young people were particularly caught up in the desire to fight in the name of Christianity. Many young peasants who took part in the Crusades were encouraged by their local parish priests to join the fight. The priests believed that young people, free from 'sin', would make more successful Crusaders than older people.

Although most people joined the Crusades to return control of the Holy Land to Christians, many people also went for other reasons. During this deeply religious time, most Christians believed that taking part would be a sure way of gaining entry into heaven when they died. Some were also hoping to find wealth and fame; others were looking for adventure.

## The effects of the Crusades

Although there were eight major Crusades, only the first was successful in bringing Jerusalem under Christian control. All remaining Crusades were either designed to protect the gains made during the First Crusade or motivated by a desire for wealth and fame. By the time of the Eighth Crusade in 1270, the Holy Land had not been regained by the Christians and many Crusaders had never returned home at all. Some were killed in battle for the Holy Land, while others died of disease or injuries. Others were sold as slaves, never to see their homes and families again.

The Crusades did, however, have enormous effects on Europe and its people. Crusaders who returned home brought new wealth, new ideas, new customs and new products (such as foods, spices, perfumes, pearls and precious stones). The power and wealth of the Church increased greatly. Trade with the East also increased. Goods from the East poured into Europe through trading ports in Italy. With the growth in trade came the desire to explore and discover unknown lands. This, in turn, brought new ideas, greater knowledge and more inventions.

People's lives improved. New trade and opportunities often meant greater wealth, and with this wealth came better living standards, health and access to education and work. The Crusades were also responsible for weakening the system of feudalism that had dominated Europe for centuries. Many lords had mortgaged or sold their estates before heading off on Crusades and many more never returned at all. All of these changes led to a move from a land-based economy to a money-based economy. All of this contributed to increased commerce in towns – causing them to grow into cities.

### Some effects of the Crusades

- New inventions and devices (e.g. the windmill, the magnetic compass, new ways of drawing maps)
- New products and goods (e.g. foods, perfumes, precious metals and stones)
- New castle designs and weapons
- Weakening of the feudal system and the development of a more money-based economy
- The growth of more towns and cities
- New ways of practising medicine (Arabic medicine was far more advanced than that in Europe at the time)

**Source 7** Some of the new ideas and technologies Crusaders brought back to Europe from the Holy Land



**Source 8** An artist's impression of a medieval Crusader

## Check your learning 9.11

### Remember and understand

- 1 Why was the Catholic Church so influential in the lives of all people in medieval Europe?
- 2 List some of the positive contributions made by the Catholic Church to society in medieval Europe.
- 3 What event caused Pope Urban II to call for people to go on the First Crusade?
- 4 Why did so many Christians take up Pope Urban's call to go on a crusade?

### Apply and analyse

- 5 When did the First Crusade take place? What was the goal of this crusade?
- 6 List three reasons why the Crusades were such significant events for societies across medieval Europe.

### Evaluate and create

- 7 Consider what you have read about the takeover of Jerusalem by Seljuk Turks in 1050.
  - a What was the immediate effect on the Middle East region of Jerusalem's takeover by this group of people? Why?
  - b Predict what might have happened in 1096 if Pope Urban had ignored the Byzantine emperor's request for support.

# 9.12 Other causes of change across medieval Europe

All societies change over time, even if this change is very gradual. New developments, new ideas or contact with other societies often bring about changes. Sometimes these changes can be positive, other times they can be negative. This was certainly the case in medieval Europe.

## Major events

In the late medieval period, there were three major events that brought about changes to societies across Europe:

- the Black Death – This pandemic arrived in Europe in 1347, reducing the population by about a third. Its most common form was the **bubonic plague**. It was caused by bacteria found in the blood of the rat flea. Medieval Europeans knew nothing about germs, and paid little attention to hygiene.
- the Great Famine – This famine mainly affected northern Europe (including England) from 1315 until 1317. The poor suffered greatly. A monk described how ‘plump dogs were stolen ... men and women in many places secretly ate their own children’.
- the Hundred Years War – This war was fought between England and France between 1337 and 1453. The English were driven out of Normandy, ending their claim to the crown of France. A young



Source 1 The Black Death killed millions of people across Europe, as depicted in this medieval manuscript.

## Long-term impacts of these changes

Systems such as feudalism and Christianity had helped to stabilise the societies of medieval Europe over hundreds of years. There were, however, changes from the 13th century onwards that made people more aware of the world beyond Europe and their place in it. In time, this led to a number of social and political movements. Some movements questioned aspects of Church power and influence (the **Reformation**), while other movements looked to build on the knowledge and teachings of ancient Greece and Rome (the **Renaissance**). Some movements even challenged ways of thinking and learning about the world by testing new theories in the areas of medicine, biology and astronomy (the **Scientific Revolution**).

Some of these new ways of looking at things were helped by new inventions such as:

- the magnetic compass – invented by the Chinese, it seems to have been first used in Europe in the late 12th century to help sailors navigate the English Channel
- the astrolabe – an ancient navigation tool used across the European and Islamic world. Together with the magnetic compass, the astrolabe enabled European sailors to travel across oceans to claim new lands
- the printing press – invented by Johannes Gutenberg around 1450, it revolutionised people’s access to the written word. Books could now be produced quickly and cheaply. Most importantly, new ideas could spread rapidly.

## Check your learning 9.12

### Remember and understand

- What major events in the 14th century led to significant changes in medieval societies?
- Which areas of Europe were most affected by the Great Famine?

### Apply and analyse

- In your own words, describe some of the factors that led to the Peasants’ Revolt of 1381.

Source 3 A magnetic compass



Source 4 An astrolabe was used to chart the movements of planets and stars.

### Evaluate and create

- Conduct some further research on the magnetic compass, the astrolabe and the printing press. Create a short report outlining how each of these inventions helped bring about change in medieval Europe. Include information on the following:
  - the effect on people in Europe
  - the effect on trade in Europe
  - the effect on European exploration.

## 9B rich task

# The Battle of Hastings

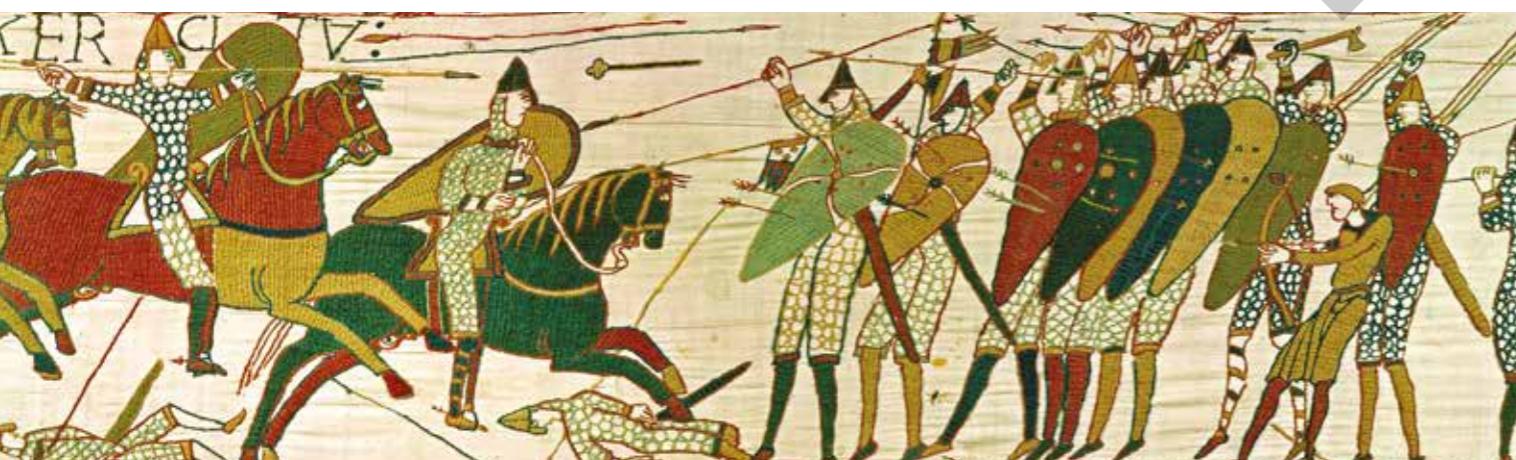
The Battle of Hastings is one of the most significant battles in medieval Europe. It took place at Hastings in the south of England on 14 October 1066. The forces of the newly crowned king of England, Harold Godwinson, and William, Duke of Normandy, fought for the English throne. Harold was killed, and William was crowned king. This marked an end to Anglo-Saxon rule and the start of Norman rule in England.

Norman rule changed England forever – there were changes to the government, the Church, language and everyday life.

There are a number of different primary and secondary sources that retell the events of the Norman invasion and the Battle of Hastings. Three of these are described here:

### 1 The Bayeux Tapestry

One of the best primary sources is a 70-metre embroidered cloth known as the Bayeux Tapestry. It is a valuable document for the study of medieval weapons, warfare, architecture and clothing. It tells a story that begins around 1064 and ends in October 1066, with the



**Source 2** A section of the Bayeux Tapestry depicting William and his Norman troops fighting the English army

death of King Harold at the Battle of Hastings. The exact origin of the tapestry is not known. One story claims that Matilda, William the Conqueror's wife, sewed the tapestry. Other accounts claim it was probably commissioned in the 1070s by Bishop Odo of Bayeux, half-brother of William the Conqueror.

### 2 The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle

Written between the 9th and 12th centuries, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* is a collection of seven volumes written by Anglo-Saxon monks in England. The Chronicle is written in Old English (the language of the Anglo-Saxons). It recounts events and tells the story of England. A few brief descriptions of the Battle of Hastings appear in the Chronicle, but in some cases the entries were made several years after the battle took place.

#### Source 1

William came against him [Harold] by surprise before his army was drawn up in battle array [formation]. But the king [Harold] nevertheless fought hard against him [William] ... and there were heavy casualties on both sides.

Many English deserted from the line, and very few stood firm with him [Harold]: yet from the third hour of the day until evening he resisted his foes with the utmost courage ... But alas, after so many had fallen on both sides, Harold himself was slain [killed] as the evening shadows lengthened. King Harold was dead ... and many good men. God granted the victory to the [Normans] because of the sins of the English people.

An extract from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, retelling the events leading up to the death of King Harold

### 3 The writings of William of Poitiers

William of Poitiers served as a knight in Normandy before becoming a priest. When William, the Duke of Normandy, became king of England in 1066, William of Poitiers was appointed his personal chaplain. In 1073, William wrote *The History of William the Conqueror*. The book contains the most detailed written account we have of the Battle of Hastings.

### skilldrill

## Drawing conclusions about the usefulness of sources

A useful source will add to your understanding of a historical period or event. The source needs to be relevant to your investigation and reliable. Ask yourself the following questions to determine the usefulness of a source:

- What type of source is it?
- Who wrote or created the source?
- Why was it written or created?
- Is it balanced or does it present only one point of view?
- Is it based on fact or opinion?
- Is there enough information and detail for the source to be of use to my inquiry?
- Does the information support and reinforce evidence from other sources?

### Apply the skill

Use the sources and information in this section to draw conclusions about their usefulness and reliability. When examining a range of different sources, it is often helpful to gather your information into a table or graphic organiser.

- 1 Copy the table below into your notebook and complete it using the information provided. Alternatively, create your own graphic organiser (such as a Venn diagram) to draw conclusions about the sources.

### Source 3

[The Duke of Normandy] hastily built a fleet of three thousand ships. At length he brought this fleet to anchor at St Valery in Ponthieu [in France] where he filled it with mighty horses and most valiant men, with hauberks [armour] and helmets. Then when a favourable wind began to blow, he set sail, and crossing the sea he landed at Pevensey [in England] where he immediately built a castle with a strong rampart [defensive wall].

An extract from *The History of William the Conqueror* by William of Poitiers, retelling the events leading up to the Battle of Hastings

Source name	Source type (primary/secondary)	Key questions to determine the usefulness of each source
Source 1: <i>The Bayeux Tapestry</i>	Type of source:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who created the source?</li> <li>• Why was it created?</li> <li>• Is it balanced or does it present only one point of view?</li> </ul>
Source 2: <i>The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i>	Type of source:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who wrote the source?</li> <li>• Why was it written?</li> <li>• Is it balanced or does it present only one point of view?</li> </ul>
Source 3: <i>The writings of William of Poitiers</i>	Type of source:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who wrote the source?</li> <li>• Why was it written?</li> <li>• Is it balanced or does it present only one point of view?</li> </ul>

- 2 In what ways are the three sources similar? In what ways are they different?
- 3 Based on your findings, which of the three sources provided do you think is the most reliable and useful? Give reasons for your answer.

### Extend your understanding

- 1 The complete Bayeux Tapestry is a rich source of information about the Battle of Hastings. Use the Internet to collect images of the full Bayeux Tapestry. Make a flow chart showing the major events in the Norman invasion of England (including the Battle of Hastings) using the images from the tapestry. Most sites that show the full tapestry will provide commentary about what is happening in each panel. Consider using the following format:

January 1066  
Edward the Confessor, King of England, dies

# 9.13 Developments in architecture, literature and music

The medieval period in Europe lasted for about 1000 years. Over this time, there were many important developments and achievements that affected the lives of people – some were cultural and social (such as developments in music, literature and the law, and the growth of towns), while others were technological (such as developments in architecture, weapons and warfare).

## Architecture

A lasting example of these developments in medieval Europe is its architecture. Most European towns and cities settled during the medieval period still have buildings that date back almost 1000 years. These buildings include churches, **monasteries**, manor houses, town halls, castles and cathedrals (see Source 1).

### Gothic style

A major development in medieval architecture was the Gothic style. It originated in France during the 12th century and was popular across Europe until the 16th century. Gothic architecture, with its use of pointed arches and large windows, ornate decorative patterns and tall spires, was commonly used when designing and building cathedrals (see Source 1). Large stained-glass windows in these cathedrals played an important role in retelling important religious messages. Images in the windows were used to convey biblical stories because many people could not read.

## Literature

Few people in medieval Europe could read or write. Those who could were often members of the clergy – mostly priests, monks and a few nuns. All documents were written by hand until very late in the medieval period. This was a time-consuming process, with books taking years to produce.



**Source 1** Completed around 1240, Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris is one of the most famous Gothic cathedrals in the world.

Medieval manuscripts contained laws or administrative information about a kingdom or a landholding. Some rulers also arranged for others to write accounts of their lives or those of their ancestors. It was rare for the common people to write anything, even diaries or letters. This fact greatly limits our knowledge of how the poor lived in medieval Europe. Most medieval manuscripts related to religion, including copies of the Christian Bible and prayer books.

### Illuminated manuscripts

Some medieval manuscripts were ornate works of art, known as illuminated manuscripts. They featured highly detailed illustrations decorated with gold and silver, often depicting scenes related to the text.

Illuminated manuscripts were significant historical documents. For a start, they were very valuable. Many materials and skilled craftspeople were needed to make them. They were generally written on parchment or on vellum (a material made from the skin of sheep, goats or calves). Paints were made from plants, ground-up semi-precious stones, charcoal and spices to give them bright and vibrant colours. Sometimes even earwax and urine were used to create colours. Gold and silver were also painted onto manuscripts.

### The invention of the printing press

When the printing press was invented in Germany by Johannes Gutenberg around 1450, it revolutionised reading and writing across Europe. Books became quicker and cheaper to produce, which made them more readily available to common people. This increased the number of people who could read and write, and also meant that the Church no longer had control over the types of books that people could read.

### Music

Music played an important role in medieval life. It marked the end of harvests, provided entertainment for people at all levels of society, and was an important part of religious life.

Although most popular music from medieval times has been lost, traces of tunes to which peasants sang and danced can be found in modern folk and traditional music. Most sources of evidence for medieval music survive from more formal settings, such as church services and coronations.



**Source 2** A stringed medieval instrument called a dulcimer



**Source 3** A page from an illuminated manuscript created in the 15th century, which records the New Testament gospel of John

## Check your learning 9.13

### Remember and understand

- What are two features common to the Gothic style?
- In what areas of medieval life was music important?

### Apply and analyse

- Why was the invention of the printing press a significant development in the lives of medieval people? How did it change the course of history?
- Consider what you have learned about illuminated manuscripts.
  - Explain what an illuminated manuscript is.
  - List some of the materials used when creating illuminated manuscripts.
  - Why might such documents be thought of as significant?

### Evaluate and create

- Design your own Gothic cathedral either on paper or using computer software. Conduct further research to plan your design. Include a floor plan (as seen from directly above) and a close-up sketch of two important features.

# 9.14 Crime and punishment

## Options

How different developments influenced life in medieval Europe is discussed in the context of the following topics:

- Crime and punishment
- Military and defence systems
- The growth of towns, cities and commerce.

Choose only ONE of these topics for study.



Throughout the medieval period in Europe, laws were extremely harsh and punishments were even harsher. Those in charge of law (kings and the nobility) believed that peasants and common people would only behave properly if they feared what would happen to them if they broke the law. Even the most minor offences had serious punishments.

Under feudalism, different courts dealt with different types of offences. Minor matters, such as a woman gossiping and nagging her husband, were heard by village courts. If found guilty, a woman like this (known as a scold) would be forced to wear a 'scold's bridle' (see Source 2). More serious matters, like a peasant's son being educated without the lord's permission, were heard by manor courts. If found guilty, a peasant might be fined or put in the stocks.

The most serious charges were dealt with in Church courts (for charges such as **heresy** and **witchcraft**) and the King's court (for charges of **treason**). Confessions for such crimes were often obtained under torture (with the use of thumbscrews and other devices). If found guilty, people could be executed by being burned or skinned alive. Traitors were frequently executed by being hanged, drawn and quartered. This involved first hanging a person, cutting him down while still alive, then pulling out his intestines while he watched, and finally attaching each of his hands and legs to a horse and having the horses pull him apart.

**Source 1** This painting from 1471 shows an ordeal by fire. The woman is trying to prove her dead husband's innocence of a crime against the king by holding a red-hot iron bar in one hand and her husband's head in the other.



**Source 2** A medieval engraving of a woman wearing a 'scold's bridle' being paraded through the streets by her husband. While wearing the mask it was impossible to speak. Some scold's bridles had bells on top to draw even more attention to the woman wearing it, increasing her humiliation.

## Trial by ordeal

The legal system of early medieval Europe required accused persons to prove their innocence. They did this by swearing an oath before God. Sometimes the oath of the accused was tested using trial by ordeal. There were two types of ordeal:

- ordeal by fire – The accused held a red-hot iron for some time, put an arm in a fire or walked across burning coals. If, after three days, the burn was not healing, they were seen to be guilty (see Source 1).

- ordeal by water – The accused placed an arm in boiling water, with the same test as above. They also could be bound and tossed into a river. If the body floated, they were seen to be guilty.

## Trial by combat

Another trial commonly used for members of upper classes was trial by combat, where the accused fought the accuser. Sometimes a champion (such as a strong knight) fought on behalf of a weaker party. The winner (or whoever they represented) was innocent – God was believed to ensure this. Guilty people were punished or killed. They might have ears or hands cut off, or worse.

## Changes to the medieval justice system

In 1154, Henry II became king of England. The various types of courts continued to exist during his reign, but Henry also wanted all his subjects to have access to royal justice. So he and his court (the king's court) travelled around the land, hearing cases. At this time, judges also began recording court decisions.

Over the centuries, this initiative continued to be refined. It set the basis for today's common law, as practised in England and in Australia – where judges' decisions, and the penalties for them, are based on similar examples from the past. Another initiative of Henry II was trial by jury. It, too, continues to this day as a key part of the Western justice system.

## The Magna Carta

By the early 13th century, John was king of England. He was unpopular because he raised taxes, fought a series of unsuccessful wars and upset the Pope. The Pope was so angry that he banned religious services in English churches.

The nobles decided to act. They negotiated with King John, forcing him to sign a charter (legal agreement) known as the **Magna Carta**. The Magna Carta marked a significant legal development in England because it required the monarch to be subject to the will of others, not just God. No longer could he rule exactly as he saw fit. This is seen as one of the first steps towards the development of legal and political rights for 'the people' and the start of modern democracy.

The Magna Carta also abolished trial by ordeal. No more could people be condemned, tortured or killed on the grounds of suspicion or rumour.



**Source 3** An artist's impression of King John of England reluctantly signing the Magna Carta

## Check your learning 9.14

### Remember and understand

- 1 What were some of the different courts in medieval Europe? What sort of cases were heard in each court?
- 2 How was the medieval practice of trial by ordeal changed by the Magna Carta?

### Apply and analyse

- 3 The words 'Magna Carta' mean 'Great Charter' in Latin. Do you agree that it was 'great'? Discuss in pairs and present your ideas to the class.
- 4 Do you think that trial by ordeal was fair? Give reasons for your view.

# 9.15 Military and defence systems

Warfare was one of the chief ways a medieval kingdom in Europe could become powerful (either by fighting to expand its territory or by defending itself against invaders). The focus was often on capturing the enemy's stronghold, usually a castle. Castles were typically built in places that were easier to defend – on top of a cliff or hill, on an island, or jutting out into a lake.

## Castle fortresses

In times of peace, castles were home to important rulers or wealthy feudal **lords** and their families, servants and **vassals**. At these times, only a small group of soldiers was needed to guard the castle. In times of war, however, castles became hives of military activity as the ruler or lord called on his supporters to defend the castle by supplying him with foot soldiers, armour, weapons and often horses.

## Knights and soldiers

In medieval Europe, **knights** were obliged to fight for their lord in times of war as well as recruit others to fight for him. Some recruits were professional soldiers, men of the upper social class. They might be the younger sons of noble families, wanting to improve their standing through military service. Such soldiers were often called men-at-arms. Other fighting recruits were commoners or peasants. These men usually came straight from the fields or towns to fight. They often had no formal training and fought as foot soldiers because they could not afford horses. Their weapons and armour were much simpler than those of knights and men-at-arms.

## Military training

To stay fit and trained for war, knights fought jousts. Often these were public spectacles. Heavily armoured knights charged each other on horseback holding wooden lances ahead of them. Sometimes a long wooden fence, called a tilt, separated the charging horses. The idea was to knock an opponent off his horse.



**Source 1** An illustration from a medieval manuscript showing a joust between Jean Chalons, an Englishman, and Loys de Beul of France in 1446



**Source 2** This modern-day re-enactment of a medieval tournament shows two knights on horseback jousting.

Larger contests between hundreds of knights on horseback and soldiers on foot were also held during the medieval period. These events, known as tournaments, were mock battles similar in principle to military training exercises today. By the 13th century, tournaments had become colourful spectacles (like carnivals) that created great excitement among medieval communities.

**keyconcept:** Continuity and change

## Changing castle design

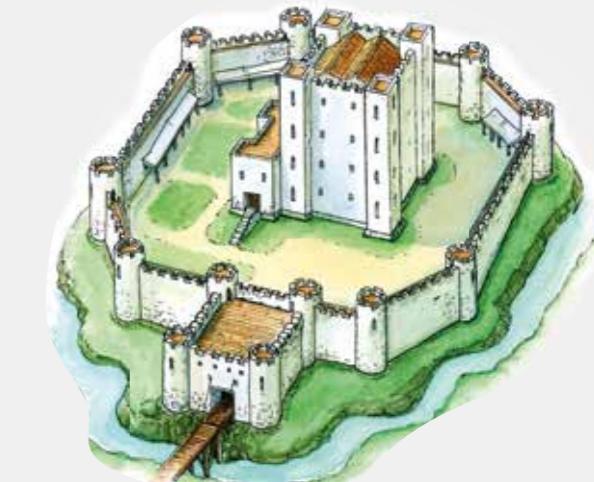
Over the medieval period, certain elements of castle designs changed and developed, improving on weak features and strengthening those that worked. Three castle designs evolved over the medieval period in Europe:

### Motte-and-bailey castles

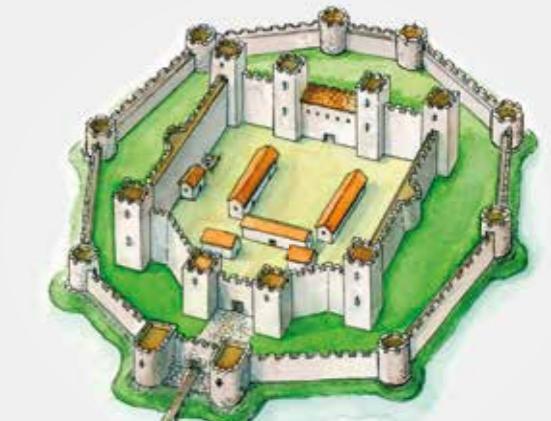
Early fortresses were called motte-and-bailey castles. The motte was a raised area (such as a hill) on which a wooden fortress was built. Below it was an open area called the bailey, where barns, workshops and stables were located. Both the bailey and motte were encircled by a gated timber palisade (fence-like barrier, made of logs), a ditch (sometimes filled with water) and an earth bank.



**Source 3** A motte-and-bailey castle



**Source 4** A stone castle with a keep



**Source 5** A concentric castle

### Stone castles with keeps

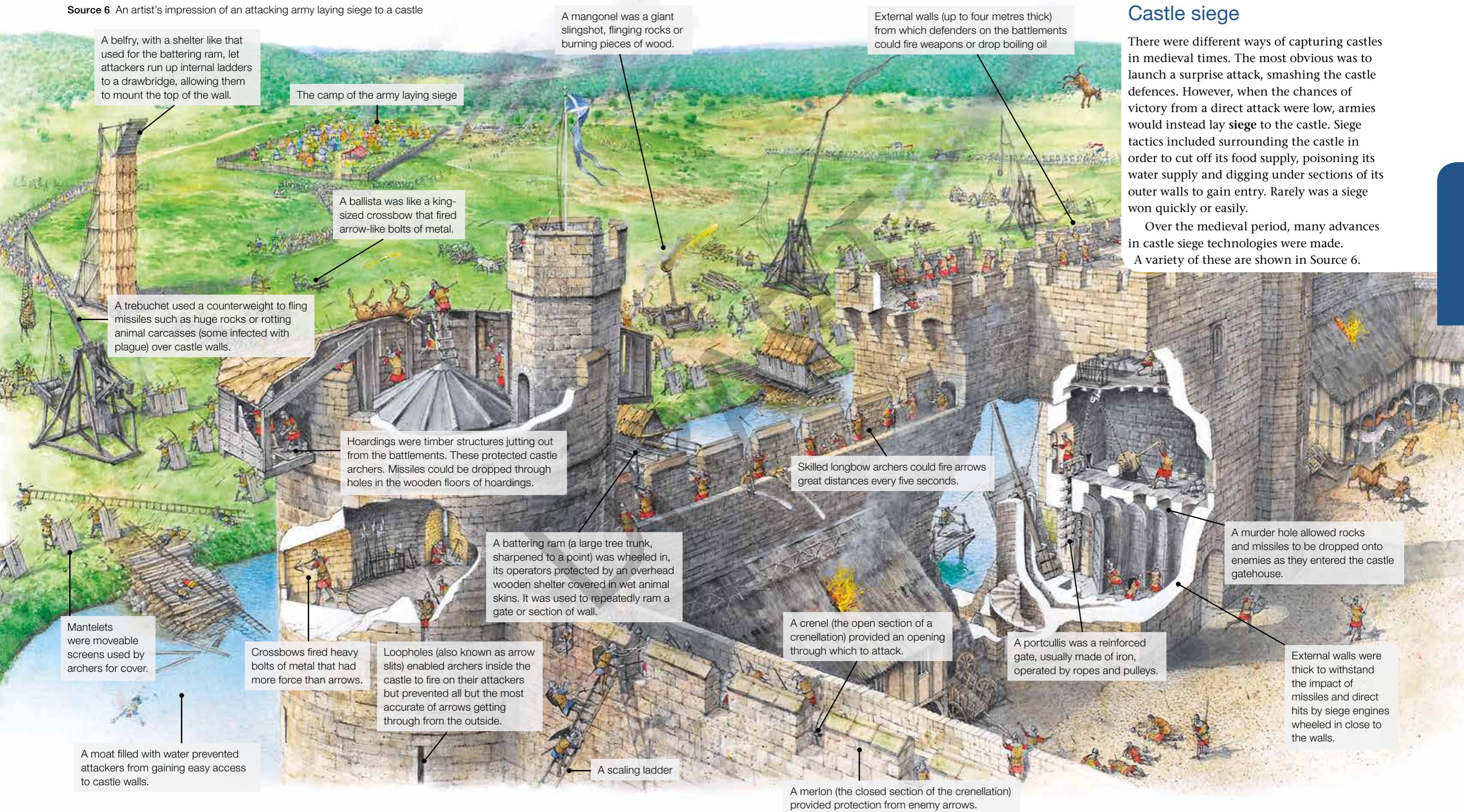
By the late 10th century, stone structures (called keeps) were starting to replace the wooden fortress in the motte-and-bailey design. These keeps, usually rectangular and up to four storeys high, were fitted out to withstand a **siege**. Thick stone walls replaced the palisade and a wide moat replaced the ditch. Access to the castle was via a drawbridge.

### Concentric castles

Two hundred years later, the concentric castle emerged. It was based on designs Crusaders had seen in the Holy Land. This stone and/or brick castle had two outer walls (with battlements) to provide an extra barrier against attack. The outermost wall was often curved. The wall closest to the centre was the highest. There was a greatly reinforced gatehouse, but no keep.

For more information on the key concept of continuity and change, refer to page XX of 'The history toolkit'.

Source 6 An artist's impression of an attacking army laying siege to a castle

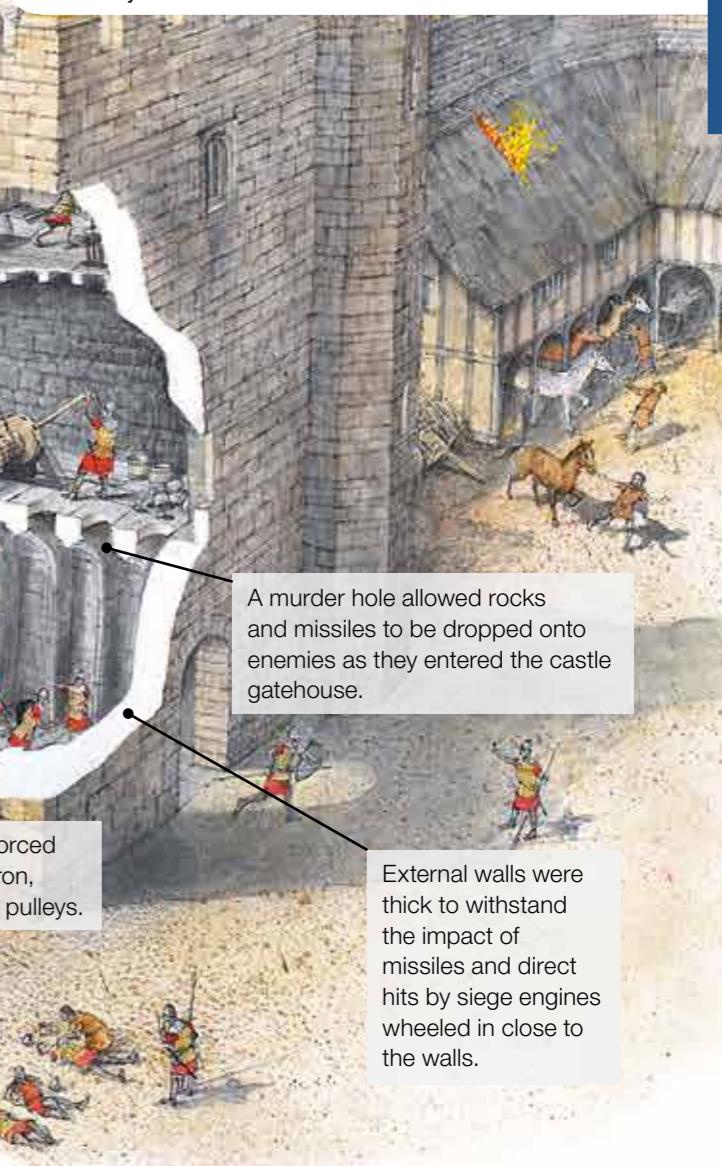


## Castle siege

There were different ways of capturing castles in medieval times. The most obvious was to launch a surprise attack, smashing the castle defences. However, when the chances of victory from a direct attack were low, armies would instead lay **siege** to the castle. Siege tactics included surrounding the castle in order to cut off its food supply, poisoning its water supply and digging under sections of its outer walls to gain entry. Rarely was a siege won quickly or easily.

Over the medieval period, many advances in castle siege technologies were made.

A variety of these are shown in Source 6.



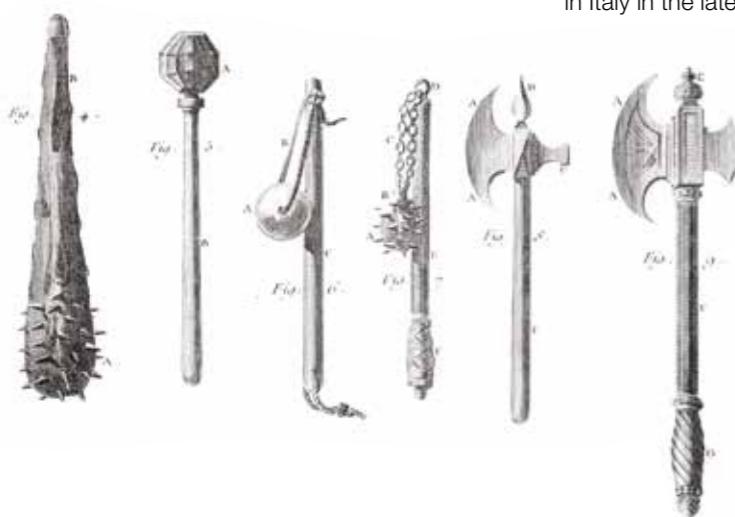
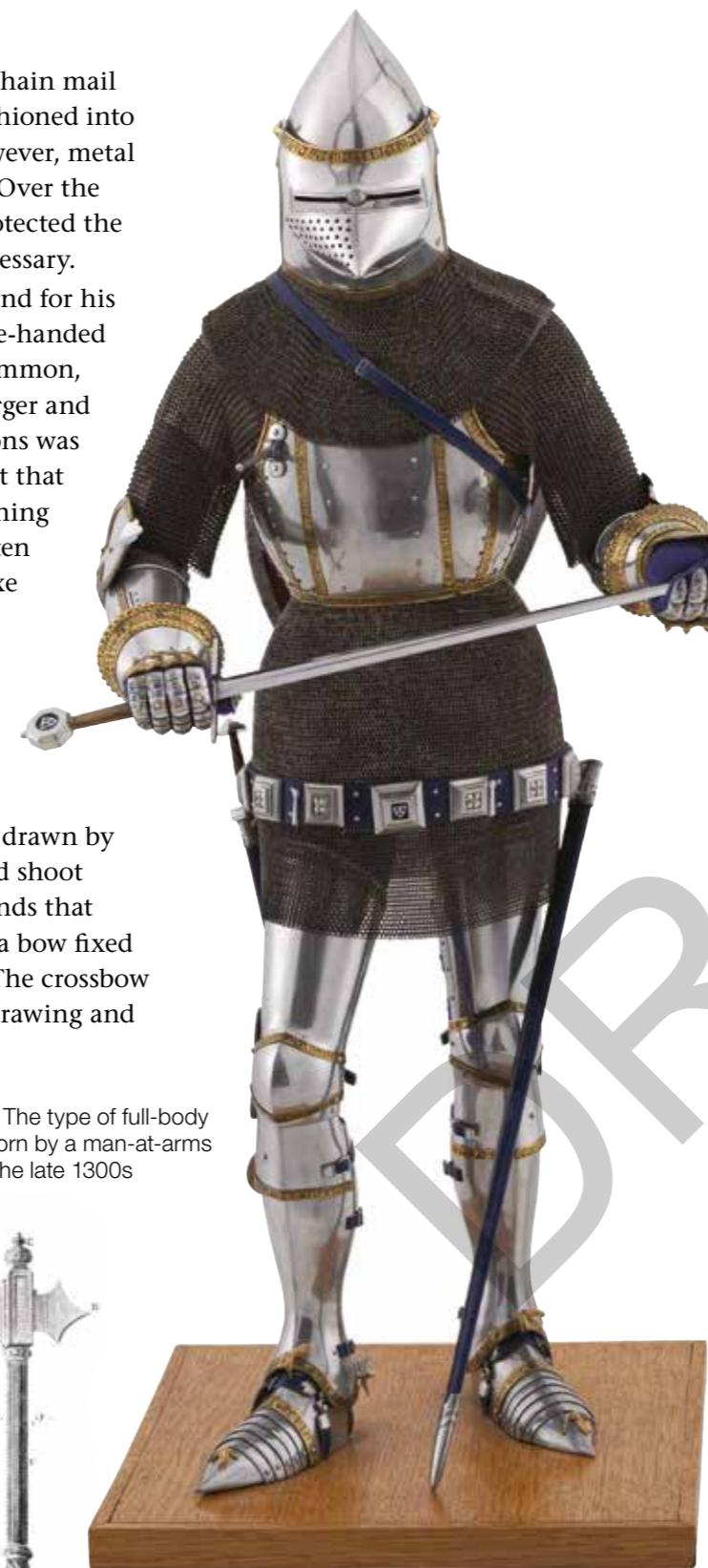
## Medieval warfare

Until about the 12th century, armour was made of chain mail (small hoops of iron linked together), which was fashioned into a knee-length tunic. From about 1300 onwards, metal plate armour became more common (see Source 7). Over the years, its design changed further so it eventually protected the whole body. Full-body armour made shields less necessary.

When using a shield, the fighter had only one hand for his sword, so early swords were lighter and made for one-handed use. As armour changed, and shields became less common, the design of swords also changed – they became larger and heavier for two-handed use. The aim of these weapons was not so much to cut as to bash. Two free hands meant that other weapons such as the mace (an iron club), morning star (a spiked club like a mace), flail (a metal ball, often spiked, attached to a chain and handle) and battleaxe could be more easily used (see Source 8).

The bow and arrow was also a popular weapon during the medieval period. Archers were an important force used in medieval battles because their arrows were easily able to pierce through armour. There were two main types of bow – the longbow and the crossbow. The longbow was a bow drawn by hand which released an arrow. A skilled archer could shoot arrows very quickly, releasing arrows every few seconds that would travel over long distances. The crossbow was a bow fixed across a wooden stock with a groove for the arrow. The crossbow required less skill to use as it had a mechanism for drawing and releasing the arrow.

**Source 7** The type of full-body armour worn by a man-at-arms in Italy in the late 1300s



**Source 8** An illustration of a range of medieval weapons, including a spiked club (left), mace (second from left), flails (third and fourth from left) and battleaxes (fifth and sixth from left).



**Source 9** A 15th-century illustration depicting the siege of the French walled city of Orléans in 1429 during the Hundred Years War. It shows the English forces using cannon fire to attack the city walls.

## Gunpowder

Gunpowder reached Europe from China during the 13th or 14th centuries, where it was first developed 400 to 500 years earlier. Gunpowder was another factor that helped to end Europe's feudal system. It did so by changing how wars were fought.

It was first used effectively during the Hundred Years War between France and England (see Source 9). Now castle walls could be more easily broken down using weapons fired with gunpowder. By the 15th century, different forms of cannon were becoming commonplace.

The use of firearms in warfare gradually reduced the importance of knights on horseback. Early firearms increased the distance between fighting armies. They also meant that all soldiers in battle now required armour. This made it more expensive to equip an army. Kings, rather than nobles, had to take responsibility for this increased cost. As a result, the importance of knighthood began to diminish. In place of knights, new types of professional soldiers emerged who led new types of troops.

## Check your learning 9.15

### Remember and understand

- 1 Name three locations where a castle might commonly be built for security.
- 2 What two main purposes did castles serve in feudal Europe?

### Apply and analyse

- 3 Explain briefly how both castle design and armour design changed over time. Where relevant, explain what aspects of each continued (even if in another form).
- 4 Study Source 6.
  - a List three ways of defending a castle under attack.
  - b List three tactics or items an attacking army might use to force the surrender of a castle.

### Evaluate and create

- 5 Draw a flow chart to show some of the ways gunpowder changed medieval warfare, both in the short and long term.

# 9.16 Towns, cities and commerce

During the early part of the medieval period, societies and economies of Europe were based around agriculture and land ownership. These various kingdoms were largely divided into feudal estates and manors, owned by nobles and farmed by peasants. For centuries, this system was successful because these peasants needed the protection of these nobles and their knights against attacks from barbarians; however, from about 900 CE on, these attacks began to ease. This meant that common people no longer needed the protection from their lords and the system of feudalism began to weaken. Slowly, people began moving and living in towns.

Over the next few centuries, a number of other events further weakened feudalism and fuelled the growth of towns. The Crusades, in particular, played an important role. Before heading off to fight, some lords sold their estates; others never returned at all. Those who did return brought new ideas, new customs and new products to trade. As trade increased, so too did the number of towns. Over time, many of these towns grew into cities. By 1200, there were about 600 cities in Europe, three times

as many as there had been 50 years earlier. Many cities also had cathedrals, so they attracted Christian pilgrims as well as merchants.

## Types of towns

Across Europe, a number of different types of town began to pop up. Many grew up around castles or manor houses that had been established for hundreds of years, while others were newly settled close to ports, rivers and roads that were important for trade and transport. As trade increased, so did the size and populations of these towns. To begin with, the populations of these towns across Europe were largely made up of people who had left manor estates. Many of the peasants that resettled there went on to earn a living as skilled craftspeople, labourers or merchants.

## New markets, new goods and booming commerce

Not all those who drifted from feudal manors settled immediately in towns. Some chose to travel around as wandering 'salesmen'. The goods they offered for sale were often cheap and basic, but the best profits came from selling goods like spices, oils and perfumes from faraway places. The risks of sourcing these goods, though, were high – pirates, harsh landscapes, extreme weather and attacks by wild animals claimed the lives of many merchants and traders. Despite the dangers, some merchants made huge profits and returned to settle in towns in order to establish thriving businesses.

## The growth of businesses and guilds

Merchants in medieval Europe mainly sold their goods in marketplaces and at huge open-air fairs held each year. Buyers flocked to these displays and purchases were often made in bulk and taken away the same day on carts.

Over time though, permanent shops and businesses were built and those who worked in the same craft or specialist occupation (such as butchers or carpenters) started banding together to form



**Source 1** The medieval city of Fribourg, in Switzerland. Many of its medieval buildings still remain, including St Nicholas Cathedral.

organisations known as **guilds**. Guilds were similar to modern-day unions and professional organisations in one. They were particularly common in large Italian cities where trade was the main industry. Guild members met regularly to discuss quality standards, conditions of work, fair pay and prices, and to set up apprenticeships for young workers.

## The growth of moneylending and banking

As commerce and trade continued to grow in towns and cities, the need for moneylending, banks and financial record-keeping became more common across Europe. The beginnings of these practices originated long before medieval times, but after the Crusades they became more formalised. Merchants in the Holy Land had been acting as moneylenders for generations, so many of these practices were brought back to Europe by the Crusaders in the 12th and 13th centuries. Loans enabled more goods to be purchased and traded, boosting town economies. Some merchant families became so wealthy they even lent money to kings and royal families. Many also invested in the construction of large public buildings, palaces and works of art in their towns and cities.

## The independence of towns

As time passed, the growing numbers of large towns and the wealth of the people living there brought about the desire for another change. Townspeople wanted more independence from feudal restrictions and more rights. As mentioned, many towns across Europe during the medieval period were settled on land 'owned' by nobles and feudal lords. Many of these lords continued to expect payment for the use of this land, even after the feudal system had weakened – the only change was that they now demanded payment in money rather than crops. Many townspeople came to resent this. They started to present petitions to these lords demanding release from old feudal arrangements and a set of rights. In return for large payments, some towns were given what they asked for and town **charters** were drawn in writing to set out what had been agreed by the lord and the townspeople.



**Source 2** A 15th-century artist's impression of a covered medieval European marketplace

### Rights outlined in many town charters

- The ability to trade freely
- Freedom to enter and leave the town freely
- The right to establish town laws independently
- The ability to hold trials in town courts, rather than the lord's manor court

**Source 3** Some of the rights sought by townspeople and included in town charters

## Check your learning 9.16

### Remember and understand

- 1 What changes caused the growth of towns across medieval Europe?
- 2 How did some of these early towns form, and where?
- 3 Where could people living in towns buy the goods merchants brought back from distant lands?

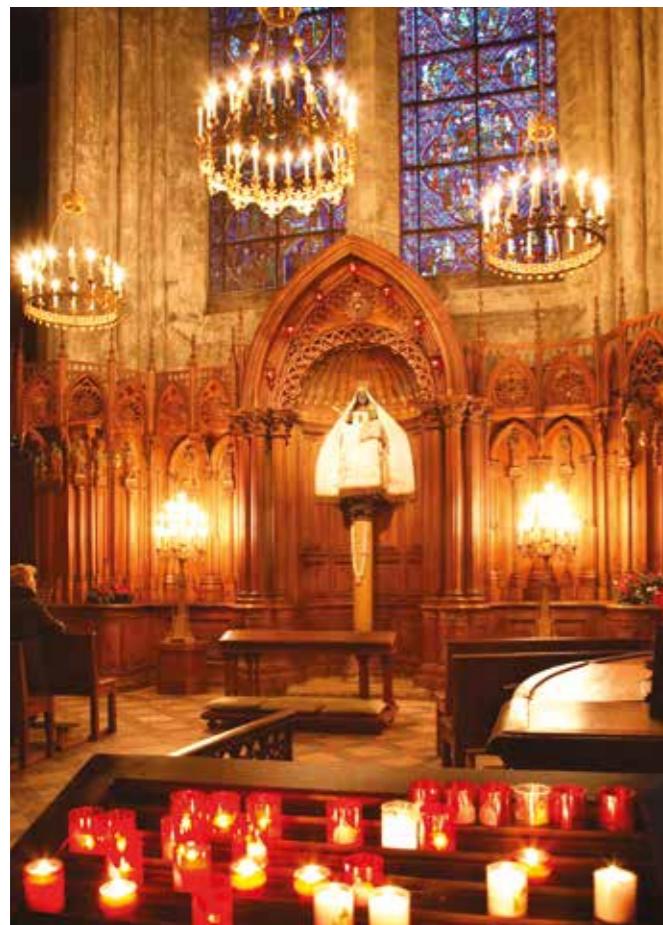
### Apply and analyse

- 4 Explain how and why the practice of moneylending came to be adopted in medieval Europe. Where did this practice originate and how did it become common in Europe?

## 9C rich task

# Medieval architecture and the Catholic Church

The Catholic Church played a key role in the daily lives of almost everyone in medieval Europe. Most medieval Europeans were Christians and lived according to the teachings of the Church.



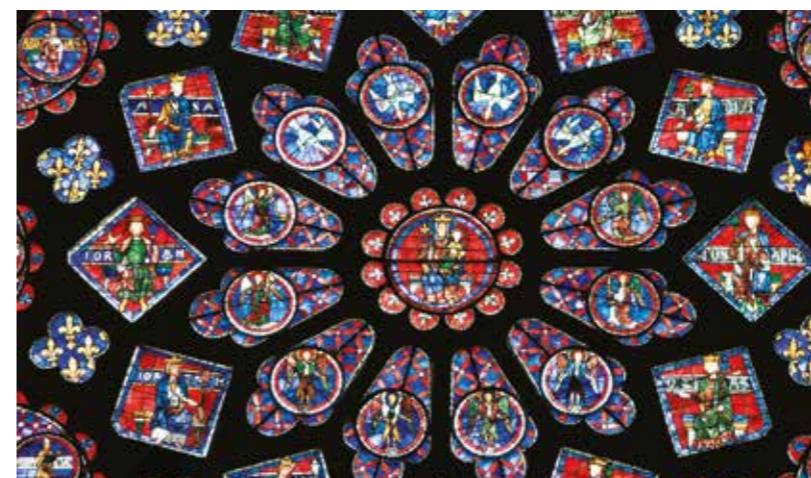
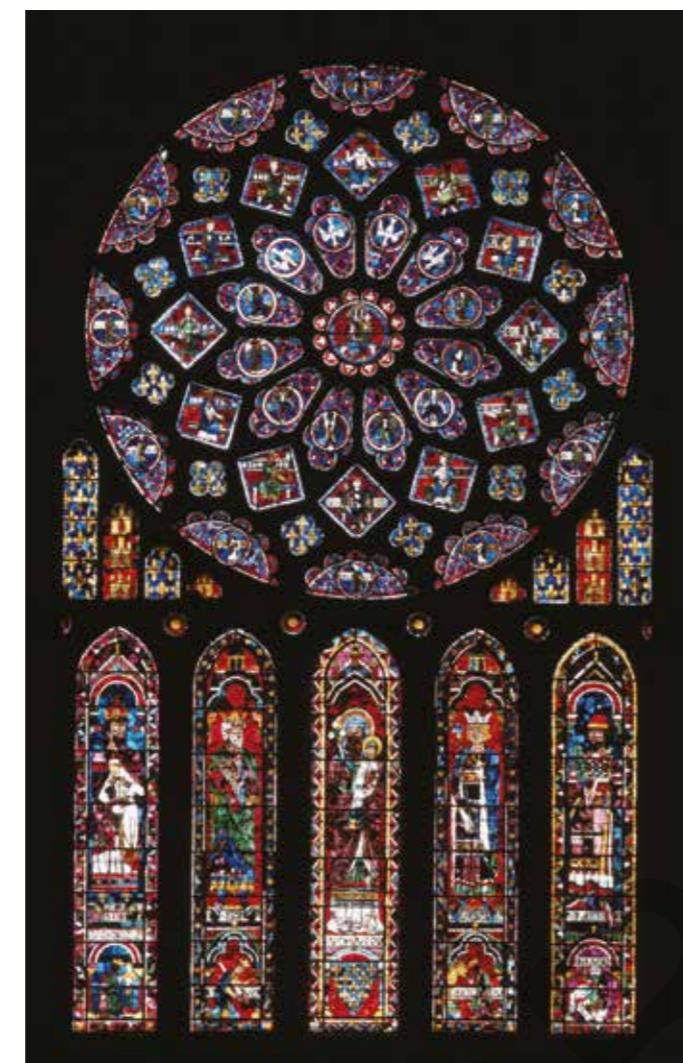
Source 1 The interior of Chartres Cathedral in France



Source 2 The north rose window at Chartres Cathedral in France

Until the 15th century, monks were usually the only people in society who could read and write. In order to form their own opinions and beliefs, common people had to rely on what they were told by village priests, what they heard and saw in religious plays, and what they saw in religious artworks such as stained-glass windows and paintings. Scenes in stained-glass windows retold lessons and stories from the Bible, as well as recounting important historical events. In this way, stained-glass windows played an important part in educating people and ordering society by maintaining the power of the Church and the king.

Chartres Cathedral just south of the French capital, Paris, is an excellent example of a Gothic cathedral. It was built between 1194 and 1250 and features 176 stained-glass windows.



Source 3 A detail of the north rose window at Chartres Cathedral

### skilldrill

#### Identifying the origin and purpose of medieval stained-glass windows

Unlike the windows in most other buildings and houses, the stained-glass windows in medieval churches and cathedrals across Europe were created for a number of reasons. In order to understand these reasons, historians need to ask a number of questions. Analysing sources by asking ‘who’, ‘what’, ‘when’ and ‘why’ questions will help you identify the origin and purpose of the sources. Use the following table to help guide your investigation.

##### Identifying the origin and purpose of primary and secondary sources

<b>Is it a primary or secondary source?</b>	Was the source created at the time you are studying or afterwards?
<b>Who created the source?</b>	Is the creator's personal perspective obvious in the source? Is the creator a member of a particular group, religion or organisation?
<b>When was the source created?</b>	How old is the source? Is it an eyewitness account or was it written/created by someone at a later date? Is the source complete?
<b>Why was the source created?</b>	Was it designed to entertain, persuade or argue a point of view? Did the creator have anything to gain personally from the source? What other events may have been happening at the time and might have influenced the creator or source?

### Apply the skill

- Work individually or in pairs to complete an investigation into the origin and purpose of one of the stained-glass windows at the Chartres Cathedral in France. Use the sources in this section to help you begin an Internet search.
- Once you have chosen the window you would like to investigate, conduct a further search to gather the information you will need to answer the questions in the table. You may not be able to answer every question, but try to answer as many as you can.
- When you have completed your table, share your results with other students in your class. Compare the origin and purpose of the different windows you have researched. Which factors are similar and which are different?

### Extend your understanding

- Make a table comparing the size and appearance of Chartres Cathedral with the average peasant's home (see Source 1 on page XX). Describe how a peasant might have felt when viewing the windows in the cathedral.
- Examine the position of the windows and how they were lit, to explain why they gave the viewer a sense of ‘godliness’ – awe and wonder.
- Many of the windows make strong links between the Church and the king. Identify what those links are. You will need to look for symbols belonging to the royal family.
- Explain how links between the Church and the king in the Chartres windows may have helped to maintain power over the peasants. In your explanation, refer to:
  - the emotional reaction peasants would have had to the windows
  - the way the feudal system functioned
  - the benefits for the Church and nobility of these things being linked in the minds of the peasants.