

Glossary

A

abacus An instrument used to teach math. An abacus has a wooden frame with rows of moveable beads on it.

Abrahamic Covenant The agreement in which God promised Abraham that his descendants would become a great nation and that through them all the nations of the world would be blessed.

Achaemenid The name of the Persian dynasty that began with Cyrus II.

acupuncture A medical procedure of poking needles into the skin at certain points on the body to relieve pain or cure sickness; originated in ancient China.

agora A busy marketplace and meeting place in ancient Greece.

amphitheater A large outdoor theater.

amulet A large ornament worn on a necklace and thought to protect the wearer from evil spirits.

ancestor worship A belief that the spirits of ancestors live on in the afterworld and have powers to help or punish people who are still alive.

Angles A Germanic tribe who invaded the British Isles in the Middle Ages.

anthropologist A scientist who studies the origins of man.

apostle One of the twelve disciples of Christ; one of the early church leaders chosen by Christ.

appease To satisfy or make calm.

archipelago A large group of islands.

artisan A skilled craftsman.

Aryans Nomads who moved into the Indus Valley around 1500 and conquered the people of northwestern India. *Arya* means “noble” in Sanskrit.

Asia Minor The peninsula between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean Sea; present-day Turkey.

Assembly A group of citizens who met together to make laws in ancient Greece.

Assembly of Centuries A powerful group of patricians in early Rome.

assimilate To absorb.

atonement The restoration of the broken relationship between God and man.

Avesta The sacred writings of Zoroastrianism.

Aztec civilization A Mesoamerican society; around 1325–1521.

B

Bantu An early African people.

barbarian The name given by Romans to nomadic people who did not speak Greek or Latin and who did not adopt Roman culture.

basalt A type of volcanic rock from which the Olmecs carved giant heads.

Battle of Hastings The English battle in 1066 in which William of Normandy was victorious over Harold Godwinson; resulted in Harold's death and the ascension of William to the throne.

Black Death A fatal disease known as the bubonic plague that killed one-third of the people in Europe.

bodhisattva A Buddhist who has reached enlightenment but delays nirvana to help others reach enlightenment.

botanist A scientist who studies plants.

Brahman The great god of Hinduism; also called the “world soul.”

Buddhism A religion founded by Siddhartha Gautama. Buddhists follow the Eightfold Path and the Four Noble Truths.

bureaucracy The managing of government through bureaus, or departments, with appointed officials.

Bushmen An African people living south of the Sahara.

Byzantine Empire The eastern part of the Roman Empire, also known as the Eastern Roman Empire; ruled first by Constantine.

C

ca. Abbreviation for *circa*, meaning “around.”

calligraphy The art of fine handwriting.

canopic jar A special container for an organ of a dead body.

Carolingian Empire The Frankish empire under the rule of Charles Martel and his descendants.

cartouche An oval shape containing hieroglyphs of a name written inside.

caste A strict social class a person is born into in India.

causeway A land bridge.

cenote The name given to a deep sinkhole that the Mayans got water from.

chinampa A floating garden island made of twigs, limbs, sticks, and silt; created by the Aztecs.

chivalry A special code of behavior that taught a knight to be generous, loyal to his lord, skillful and brave in battle, faithful to the Roman Catholic Church, and protective of women.

Chou The dynasty that began ruling China around 1000 BC.

Christians Followers of Christ.

city-state A city and the surrounding land and villages it controls.

civilization A group of people who establish cities, government, social classes, specialized jobs, arts, science, written language, and religion.

clan A group of families descended from a common ancestor.

classical age A time in a civilization's history that is thought to be its high point of cultural development and achievement.

clergy Religious leaders during the Middle Ages.

coat of arms A distinctive emblem that identified a knight in battle.

codex A type of book the Mayans made.

Colosseum A large arena where events were held to entertain the Roman people.

conquistador A Spanish conqueror.

Council of Nicaea A meeting of Byzantine bishops; it defined what Christians should believe about each person of the Trinity.

covenant A binding agreement.

Crusades Religious campaigns of the Roman Church to free Jerusalem from Islamic rule.

cuneiform Wedge-shaped writing.

currency Money; any material of value that is exchanged for goods or services.

cylinder seal A clay cylinder used to imprint one's signature.

Cyrus Cylinder A cylinder seal found at an ancient Babylonian temple; contains a message about King Cyrus's respect for Marduk, the false god of Babylon.

D

daimyo Chief Japanese nobles or powerful warlords who had military and economic power to rule over their lands.

daric The coin used in the Persian empire; named after Darius I.

Davidic Covenant The agreement in which God promised to establish David's throne forever. Jesus is the fulfillment of this promise.

deity Having the nature of a god.

delta A fan-shaped area of fertile land at the mouth of a river.

democracy A form of government in which the people of the country have the power.

descendant A person whose family line can be traced to a certain person or group.

desert A region receiving less than 10 inches (25 cm) of rain a year.

dharma The duty a Hindu believer must follow to become part of Brahman.

Diaspora The scattering of the Israelites to many other nations at the time of the Babylonian captivity.

dike A wall that prevents flooding.

doctrine What a certain group believes and teaches; a belief or principle.

dominion The authority to rule.

drawbridge A bridge that can be raised or lowered to prevent or allow passage.

dynasty A line of kings or rulers who belong to the same family.

E

Edict of Milan The decree by Constantine in AD 313 that legalized Christianity.

enlightenment The act of giving someone knowledge or understanding.

epic A long poem about the actions of a hero.

Epic of Gilgamesh A Mesopotamian poem describing the adventures and eternal life of Gilgamesh, a legendary hero.

Epicureanism The belief that everything, including men, gods, and the world, is only matter and that people do not have to fear gods or what may happen after death.

etiquette Proper actions and responses that are expected in society; manners.

Etruscans An advanced ancient civilization with a Hellenistic culture on the Italian Peninsula.

Exodus The Israelites' departure from Egypt.

F

fable A story designed to teach a lesson.

Fall (of man) The breaking of God's law by Adam and Eve with the consequence of sin for them and all people.

fall of the Roman Empire The collapse of the Roman government in AD 476.

Fertile Crescent A curved region from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean Sea.

feudalism A system of organizing and governing society based on land and service.

fief A tract of land given by a lord to a vassal.

Franks A tribe of people who conquered Gaul.

freeman Skilled craftsman on a manor.

friar A Catholic clergyman who lived among the people, lived simply, owned no property, and taught people how to live good lives.

Fujiwara A Japanese ruling family who gained power by marrying into Japan's imperial family.

G

gatehouse A stronghold for the gatekeeper at the gate in the wall of a castle.

Gentiles A name given to Greeks and other people who are not Jews.

gladiator An armed Roman who fought animals or other men in an arena such as the Colosseum.

gospel The message of God's redemption of man through Jesus Christ.

Gregorian calendar The reformed version of Julius Caesar's calendar; now used by most countries.

griot An African oral storyteller.

H

Hagia Sophia An important and beautiful church in Constantinople.

haiku A type of Japanese poem that has a verse form with seventeen syllables and an aspect of nature or seasons.

Hammurabi's Code A collection of Mesopotamian laws written by Hammurabi.

Han The dynasty that began ruling China around 202 BC.

Hanukkah The yearly celebration by the Jews of the rededication of the temple after their victory over the Syrians.

Harappan civilization People from the ancient cities of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro.

Hellenistic A term describing Greek culture as it spread into other lands through Alexander the Great's conquests.

hieroglyphics A system of writing made of picture symbols.

Hinduism A religion developed in India by the Aryans.

hippodrome An open-air stadium.

holy day A special day during the Middle Ages for which people were often released from work. The word *holiday* comes from this term.

Hyksos A people who invaded Egypt at the beginning of the New Kingdom; their technology included bronze and iron weapons and horse-drawn chariots.

I

icon A sacred image representing Christ, Mary, the saints, or other sacred objects.

Ides of March The fifteenth day of March on the Roman calendar; the day on which Julius Caesar was assassinated.

Iliad An epic poem of ancient Greece written by Homer.

Immortal A special soldier for the king in ancient Persia.

imperial court A group of nobles who live near, serve, and advise the ruler.

inspiration (of Scripture) God's breathing out the Scriptures, using holy men to record them.

irrigation A way of supplying water to land or crops.

Islam The religion started by Muhammad.

J

jihad A holy war fought for the cause of Islam.

Judaism The monotheistic religion of the Jews.

jury A group of local people who give a verdict on a matter in court.

Jutes A Germanic tribe that invaded the British Isles.

K

kami The gods or nature spirits of Shintoism.

kamikaze The name given by the Japanese to the typhoon that helped them defeat the Mongols; a name for a Japanese suicide pilot during World War II.

karma The Hindu belief that the result of a person's deeds, good or bad, determines a person's state in reincarnation.

knight A mounted soldier who defended a manor during the Middle Ages.

kofun A giant circular, square, or keyhole-shaped burial mound built by the Japanese aristocracy during the Yamato dynasty.

L

Latins A group of settlers from central Europe who were the first people to live in Italy.

Law of the Twelve Tables The Roman law written on twelve bronze tablets.

Legalism The belief that people are evil by nature and so must be controlled by strict laws.

legend A story that has been passed down for generations.

legion Three to six thousand military men.

linguist A scholar who studies languages.

linguistics The study of the structure and changes of languages.

lintel The beam above a door.

lord A noble.

Lord's Supper A church ordinance by which Christians remember Christ's sacrifice on the cross; the last meal Jesus had with His disciples; Communion.

lyre A type of harp.

M

Maasai African people of the Nilotic language group from present-day Sudan and South Sudan who were known for herding cattle.

magi The name for priests in ancient Persia.

Magna Carta An important document that nobles forced King John of England to sign. It limited the king's powers and guaranteed certain rights to the people.

Mahayana Buddhism The branch of Buddhism that came to China.

maize Corn.

Mandate of Heaven The Chou belief that heaven gave the king his right to rule but required him to rule righteously.

manor A large farming community during the Middle Ages.

marathon A race that is 26.2 miles long; named after a city in ancient Greece.

Mayan civilization A Mesoamerican civilization; around AD 250–900.

medieval Of or relating to the Middle Ages. The term comes from the Latin words *medius* (middle) and *aevum* (age).

mercenary A foreign soldier hired to fight for a country.

Meroitic A script language developed by the people of Kush.

Messiah The Old Testament name for the promised Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

Middle Ages A period in Europe after the fall of the Roman Empire; AD 476–1400.

Middle Kingdom The name the ancient Chinese gave their civilization because they thought it was the center of the earth.

migrate To move from one country or region to settle in another.

Minoan civilization The earliest known civilization in Greece.

moat A wide trench filled with water surrounding a castle; meant to keep out attackers.

monarchy A form of government with one ruler.

monastery A large secluded dwelling where monks live and work.

monk A clergyman who lives a secluded life of devotion and service to the Roman Catholic Church.

monotheism The belief in one god.

monsoon A wind that reverses direction with the change of season.

Mosaic Covenant The agreement in which God gave the nation of Israel His law through Moses. Through obedience to the law, Israel would be blessed and other nations would see the greatness of God.

mummy A dead body that has been preserved from decaying.

Muses The goddesses whom the Greeks believed presided over the arts.

Muslim A person who follows Islam.

Mycenaean civilization An early civilization in Greece.

myth A legend or traditional story that explains a part of nature; often about gods and goddesses.

N

New Covenant The agreement in which God promised to give His Holy Spirit and to transform the hearts of His people to love and obey Him.

Nika Revolt The Byzantine revolt under Justinian, put down by Belisarius.

nilometer A device used to measure the Nile's water levels.

nirvana The Buddhist belief of a state of complete enlightenment where a person has peace and freedom from desires and wants.

nun A woman who takes religious vows of service to the Roman Catholic Church.

O

oasis A fertile area in the desert with water.

obsidian A sharp, glass-like volcanic rock that the Mayans used to make blades of tools and weapons.

Odyssey An epic poem of ancient Greece written by Homer.

oligarchy A form of government in which a few people rule.

Olmec civilization One of the earliest known Mesoamerican civilizations.

Olympic Games Special festivals held in the city of Olympia in Greece to honor the gods. The Olympic Games had many athletic contests, and the winners received crowns of laurel leaves.

oracle bones Animal bones or turtle shells used by the Shang in ancient China to predict the future.

oral history Stories about the past that are spoken instead of written down.

orthodox Meaning "right belief"; refers to true believers in the church who defend the truth.

Ostrogoths A Germanic tribe who set up a kingdom in Italy during the Middle Ages.

Ottomans The group of Turks who conquered the Byzantine Empire.

P

page A young boy about the age of seven in his first stage of becoming a knight. He lived in a noble's castle to learn horsemanship and fighting skills and did chores for the lord and lady of the castle.

pantheism The belief that everything in the universe is part of a supreme being.

Pantheon A temple in Rome with the largest dome in the city.

Papal States Conquered Lombard lands given to the Roman Catholic Church by Pepin the Short.

papyrus Paper made from the stems of the papyrus plant.

Parthenon The ancient Greek temple on the Acropolis; known for its many columns and optical illusions in its design.

Parthians A nomadic people from northern Persia that began retaking part of the Persian Empire around 171 BC.

Passover A Jewish celebration that commemorates the Lord's deliverance of the Jews from death and slavery in Egypt.

patrician A member of the wealthy ruling class in ancient Rome.

Pax Romana The period of peace in the Roman Empire that began with the reign of Caesar Augustus.

pedagogue A servant in ancient Greece who accompanied a boy to school to make sure he behaved well.

Peloponnesian War The war between Athens and Sparta that lasted over twenty-seven years.

Persian Wars The wars between the Persians and the Greeks.

pharaoh A ruler of Egypt.

philosopher A scholar who devotes himself to the pursuit of earthly wisdom.

pilgrimage A sacred journey.

plebeian A member of the working class in ancient Rome.

polytheism The worship of many gods.

prehistory The period when humans supposedly evolved and when there were no written records.

Protestant Reformation The religious movement that led to the forming of Protestant churches; when people separated from the Roman Catholic Church and trusted in Christ alone for salvation.

proverb A wise saying that expresses a simple truth.

Punic Wars The three major wars between Rome and Carthage.

Pygmies An African people of small stature who live in the rainforest of the Congo basin.

pyramid A large tomb constructed on a rectangular base with four sloping triangular sides.

Q

Qin The dynasty that began ruling China around 221 BC.

Qur'an (Koran) The Islamic book of Muhammad's visions, written down by his followers.

R

rabbi A Jewish religious teacher.

rainforest A tropical forest filled with huge trees and vines and a large variety of wildlife; receives annual rains of 100 inches (254 cm) or more.

rain shadow desert A lowland area that receives little rain; formed when wind blows water vapor high into nearby mountains.

redemption Christ's act of rescuing a person and freeing him from sin; salvation.

regent A person who rules in place of a rightful ruler who is unable to fulfill his duties because of age, illness, or other reasons.

reincarnation The Hindu belief that after a person dies, he comes back in another form, such as another person, an animal, or an insect.

rendering An artist's interpretation, as in a drawing or painting, of a place or an object.

republic A government ruled by law and representatives chosen by the people.

rhyton A decorative Persian drinking vessel.

Roman Forum A public meeting place in ancient Rome.

Rosetta stone An ancient tablet carved with Egyptian hieroglyphics, Greek, and other scripts; used as a key to decipher Egyptian hieroglyphics; discovered in the Egyptian town of Rosetta in 1799.

S

sacrament A religious ceremony developed by the Roman Catholic Church and believed to provide grace for salvation.

Samaritans A people in the Northern Kingdom of Israel; descendants of conquered peoples who intermarried with Israelites.

samurai A Japanese warrior whose duty was to protect the daimyo; a master of horsemanship, fencing, archery, and jujitsu.

Sanskrit The written language of the Aryans.

sarcophagus A stone coffin.

Sassanids Rulers of the Sassanian dynasty in ancient Persia; the last of the true Persian kings.

satrap A governor in Persia who ruled a particular province. The satrap was responsible for collecting tribute for Darius and reporting to him.

satrapy A province in ancient Persia.

savanna A region with tall grass and few trees.

Saxons A Germanic tribe that invaded the British Isles during the Middle Ages.

scribe A person who records information in writing.

seismoscope A scientific instrument used to predict earthquakes.

Senate The most powerful branch of the government in the Roman Republic.

Septuagint A Greek translation of the Old Testament.

serf A peasant who lived on a lord's manor, paid rent to his lord, and worked part-time for him.

shadoof A device made from a long pole with a bucket on one end and a weight on the other; used to dip water out of the Nile River.

Shang The dynasty that began ruling China around 1500 BC.

shield wall A barrier formed when medieval soldiers stood close together and held their shields tightly together as a wall.

Shintoism A form of nature worship; the main religion of Japan.

shogun A Japanese military leader who had the most political power in the government and was chosen by the emperor.

social class A group of people in society with the same social position, often determined by economic status.

social pyramid A triangle-shaped diagram that shows the social structure of a society.

squire A boy about the age of fourteen in his second stage of becoming a knight. His responsibilities included helping his master dress, accompanying him on hunts or into battles, and caring for his warhorse.

Stoicism A Greek philosophy that taught that doing one's duty brings happiness.

stucco A decorative plaster.

stupa A dome-shaped Buddhist shrine.

sultan A ruler of the Ottomans.

surplus An amount that is more than what is needed.

synagogue A place where the Jews gather for prayer, Scripture reading, and religious instruction.

T

tabernacle The portable place of worship used by the Israelites in the wilderness; symbolized God's presence with the people.

Taika Reform A series of changes in the Japanese political and economic structure around 645; known as the "Great Change."

Taoism A false religion based on the teachings of Lao Tzu. *Tao* means "the way."

tell A mound made up of layered dirt and the remains of buildings.

Templo Mayor The primary location for the Aztecs' religious ceremonies and rituals; also called the Great Pyramid.

theorem A carefully tested idea.

ting An ornate bronze vessel used in ancient China for cooking meat for sacrifices to the ancestors.

toga A loose, one-piece robe worn by citizens of ancient Rome.

trial by jury A legal practice in which a group of local people (a jury) help decide the outcome of a court trial.

trial by ordeal A legal practice during the Middle Ages in which a person had to undergo difficult physical circumstances to determine his guilt or innocence.

Tribal Assembly The assembly in ancient Rome made up of plebeians.

tribe A group of people who share common ancestors and a common culture.

tribune A leader of the Tribal Assembly in ancient Rome. Ten tribunes made up the Tribal Assembly.

Triumvirate The alliance formed by Gaius Julius Caesar, Crassus, and Pompey to rule Rome.

Trojan War The war between the Mycenaeans and the city of Troy.

Tuareg A nomadic people of the Sahara in northern Africa.

tyrant A ruler who has absolute authority.

U

universal flood A flood in which water covers the entire earth; often used to refer to the Flood of Noah's time.

untouchable An outcast from Indian society; anyone who is not a Hindu, who works with meat, or who has been expelled from his own caste.

V

vassal A person who pledged loyalty and service to a lord and managed his land in return for protection.

Vedas The sacred books of Hinduism.

Vikings Scandinavians who raided parts of Europe during the Middle Ages; also called Norsemen and Northmen.

Visigoths A Germanic tribe that invaded the western half of the Roman Empire during the Middle Ages. After being driven out of Gaul, they continued their rule in Spain.

W

worldview How a person sees and interprets the universe and everything in it.

writ A royal order.

Y

Yamato A Japanese clan that rose to power around AD 250.

Z

ziggurat A pyramid-like temple.

zimbabwe A large stone house built by the Shona people of Africa.

Zoroastrianism The main religion of ancient Persia, founded by Zoroaster.