

History
UNFOLDING

CHRISTENDOM AFTER ROME'S FALL



MindSparks
CHALLENGING STUDENTS TO THINK HISTORICALLY

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Introduction

Europe's "Dark Ages"

This MindSparks set is the first of two covering the history of Christian Europe and the Byzantine Empire in the Middle Ages.

This set focuses on the chaos and disorganization following the collapse of the Roman Empire, and on the further disruptions that kept Western Europe on the defensive in the ninth and tenth centuries. As a result of this turmoil, Western Europe stagnated, while daily life came to center almost entirely on a narrowly circumscribed local sphere. The main factor countering this process was the Roman Catholic Church and its growing power, wealth, and responsibility for the preservation of culture and learning. Meanwhile, in the eastern half of Christendom, a very different situation existed. There, something of the imperial order of Rome survived in the form of the Byzantine Empire. And there, Christianity was much more subordinate to political authority than in Western Europe.

A second set, *Christendom: The High Middle Ages* (HS845), carries this story forward to the early stages of the Renaissance.

This set uses 12 visual displays to focus on several of the key themes in its story. Each lesson uses three visual displays to explore one broad topic. Briefly, the four lessons are as follows:

The West Under Attack

The maps and illustrations here focus on the geographical factors that help explain how the Western Roman Empire fell apart under the assaults of nomadic or semi-nomadic Germanic tribes, beginning in the fourth century CE.

The Early Church

Here the emphasis is on some key aspects of Christian teachings, in particular, those regarding the relationship of Christian spiritual authority to political or secular authority.

Two Christian Empires

The illustrations here help to focus on the contrasting nature of the Carolingian and Byzantine empires.

Invasion and Retreat

The focus here is on the new wave of invasions in the ninth and tenth centuries and their impact on Western Europe.

Using Photos, Cartoons, and Other Visuals to Teach History

Many textbooks are full of colorful visuals. However, all too often these visuals function primarily as window dressing. They make the text more entertaining, or at least more palatable. Only occasionally do the visuals in textbooks do more than offer simple pictorial reinforcement of ideas already presented in the text. In many cases, they pander to the visual orientation of the young while doing little to help young people master the challenges of the visual media that dominate their lives.

By way of contrast, our approach to using visual materials emphasizes their unique strengths as historical documents. The lessons in this booklet focus students on the visual symbols and metaphors in editorial cartoons, the dramatic qualities of certain photographs, the potential of many images to make abstract ideas more specific and concrete, the implicit biases and stereotypes in certain images, their emotional power, and their ability to invoke the spirit of a time and place. In the process, we make every effort to strengthen students' visual literacy skills in general, as well as their ability to think critically and engage in spirited but disciplined discussions.

How to Use This Booklet

The booklet is divided into four lessons, with three illustrations per lesson. Each lesson consists of the following:

A BACKGROUND INFORMATION SHEET This page provides brief summaries explaining the three illustrations on which the lesson is based and their relevance to the lesson's objectives.

DIGITAL IMAGES The booklet's PDF allows you to project the images for use in your class discussions.

DISCUSSION-ACTIVITY SHEETS

Each sheet displays one illustration. It includes a sequence of questions to help you plan an all-class discussion while using the projected images. The questions take students step by step through an analysis of the illustration. If you wish, you may reproduce these pages and hand them out. In addition to the discussion questions on the illustration itself, one or two follow-up activities are suggested. Some of these can be made into individual assignments. Others will work best as small-group or all-class activities.

OBJECTIVES

1. Students will better understand some of the factors that led to the fall of the Roman Empire.
2. Students will better appreciate some geographic factors affecting Europe's early history.

The West Under Attack

Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION**Illustration 1**

The Roman Empire once stretched from the eastern Mediterranean all the way to the British Isles. Its many borderlands were very hard to police. Just beyond them lived rough, warlike bands of Germanic peoples. As the empire weakened, these peoples began to look on it with less fear. In the fourth century CE, tribes such as the Goths, the Vandals, and the Lombards began invading. As this map shows, these tribes were often themselves being pushed out of their lands by other tribes also on the move, such as the Huns of central Asia. A vast movement of nomadic peoples soon helped to seal the fate of the Roman Empire.

Illustrations 2A & 2B

The Germanic invasions were aided by geography. Northern Europe provided few natural defenses against invaders from the east. For example, Illustration 2A shows Hadrian's Wall, which the Romans built across England to protect themselves against attacks from northern invaders. The thick forests and open plains of northern Europe did little to stop the migration of Germanic tribes and their relentless pressure on Rome's northern frontier. Illustration 2B is a modern artist's idea of how the movable huts of these early migrating Germans might have looked. Natural barriers such as forests and mountains did help to divide up the invading peoples in ways that would keep the new, emerging Europe split into many kingdoms and principalities.

Illustration 3

By the end of the fifth century, the western half of the Roman Empire was under the control of various Germanic kings. For example, there were the Ostrogoths in Italy and the kingdom of the Visigoths in Spain. Only one Germanic state would prove long-lasting, the kingdom of the Franks. In 476 CE, Rome's Western emperor was deposed and not replaced. After that, another emperor remained at Constantinople, the capital of the Eastern half of the Roman Empire. This half is what historians today call the Byzantine Empire. At the time, its inhabitants still thought of their realm as the Roman Empire and of themselves as Romans. The Byzantine Empire would last for almost 1000 more years. By acting as a barrier against invaders from Western Asia, it would play a key role in enabling a new European civilization to emerge and grow.

Lesson 1—The West Under Attack

Illustration 1



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Discussing the Illustration

1. The yellow and purple areas on this map mark the eastern and western parts of a great empire at around 400 CE. What empire was that?
2. At this time, the Roman Empire had already started to fall apart. The arrows on the map help to show why the empire started to collapse. Can you explain what these arrows show?
3. The Roman Empire was one of the mightiest empires the world had ever seen. From what you see here, and from your knowledge of history, can you explain some reasons why the Romans were unable to resist the Germanic invaders?
4. As the arrows on the map imply, the many peoples invading the Roman Empire were nomadic or semi-nomadic. What does this mean? Why might this help explain the sudden movements of people all across Central Asia and northern Europe at this time?

Follow-up Activities

1. **Small-group activity:** Divide up the invading tribes or peoples named on the above map equally among the members of your group. Find out more about them and what led them to migrate to Western Europe. Make a copy of the map and use it as the key element in a bulletin-board display on these migrations. Write a page on each group. Find illustrations to add to your display. Give a brief talk to the class explaining your bulletin-board display.
2. Read more about what life was like as a citizen of the late Roman Empire. Imagine you are a young Roman citizen living in one of the Western European lands shown here. It is the early 400s, and your region has been victimized by numerous Germanic attacks. Write a letter to a relative in the city of Rome, telling that relative what you've been experiencing. Share your letter with the class.

Lesson 1 — The West Under Attack

Illustrations 2A & 2B

2A



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2B



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Discussing the Illustrations

1. Illustration 2A shows one part of the northern border of the Roman Empire. It is a fortification completed around 127 BCE. Can you name it and the land it was in? How does this view of it help explain the problems the Romans faced in defending their long borders?
2. Illustration 2B is one modern artist's idea of one village of the early Germanic tribes causing the Roman Empire so much trouble in its last centuries. How does the illustration help explain the ability of these groups to migrate, invade, retreat, and migrate yet again?
3. Europe's northern forests and mountains were only partly effective as barriers against invaders. On the other hand, Europe's unique geography did act to keep the invaders divided into separate groups. This also helped to make Europe a land of many small, separate states. What geographical features helped to keep Europe divided up in this way?

Follow-up Activities

1. The Germanic invasions succeeded in part because of Europe's geography. There were also few natural defenses standing in the way of nomadic invaders entering Europe from Central Asia. Find out more about the Huns, for example, and prepare a report on their movements into and through Europe in these centuries. Explain where the Huns came from, whom they fought and what role geography played in helping or thwarting their migrations.
2. Hadrian's Wall was 73 miles long. Learn more about how it was built and why. How tall and thick was it? How was it manned? How were soldiers stationed near it supplied? How good a job did the wall do, and against what groups was it meant to protect? Write a brief essay explaining what you learn. Find other photos or drawings of the wall to supplement your written essay. Post your essay and the illustrations you find on a bulletin-board.

Lesson 1—The West Under Attack

Illustration 3



Discussing the Illustration

1. In the late third century CE, the Roman Emperor Diocletian divided the empire into halves, the East and the West. What do you know of his reasons for doing this?
2. Diocletian thought that dividing the Empire into two provinces would make it easier to run and easier to defend against attacks by the Germanic tribes. Do you think he was right? Why or why not?
3. In time, the eastern half of the Roman Empire came to be known by another name. One early ruler of that eastern half later tried to reunite the two halves of the Roman Empire. Can you name him and his half of the empire? Using this map, explain what parts of the empire was he unable to win back? Why do you think he failed to reconquer these areas?
4. Some historians say the Byzantine Empire turned out to be a good thing for Europe and the small kingdoms that developed there in the centuries after the fall of Rome. What do you think these historians mean?

Follow-up Activities

1. **Small-group activity:** By the end of the fifth century, the western half of the Roman Empire was under the control of various Germanic kings. As the Roman Empire in the west fell, the empire in the east remained. It became known as the Byzantine Empire. Divide your group in half. Have one half find five important characteristics of the Germanic kingdoms that formed in the west. Have the other half do the same for the Byzantine Empire. Give a brief talk to the class summarizing your findings.
2. The Byzantine Empire takes its name from Byzantium, the name of the original settlement that became Constantinople and, later, Istanbul. Constantinople had a very important location in relationship to Europe and the rest of the Eurasian continent. Learn more about the early history of Constantinople. Write a brief essay explaining how its location helped to make this such a historically important city.

OBJECTIVES

1. Students will better understand the ideas of some early Christian thinkers about the Church's relationship to the larger society.
2. Students will better understand how big a break with the past the triumph of Christianity was.

The Early Church

Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION**Illustration 1**

According to a later account, on the eve of a battle in 312 CE, the Emperor Constantine saw a cross above the sun, as shown here, and the Latin words *in hoc signo vinces*—"by this sign you shall conquer." After winning the battle, Constantine supposedly saw Christ as the bringer of victory. Whatever the truth, Constantine did turn away from the pagan gods of Rome, and he did convert to Christianity. He was the first Roman emperor to do so. The persecution of Christians over three centuries came to an end. Later, under Emperor Theodosius, Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire.

Illustration 2

The Romans believed in many different gods, all supported by the power of the Roman state. Christians put their faith in one universal God, whose son they said was Jesus Christ. Jesus was not a political leader of any community. As the passage from *Luke* suggests, he urged Christians to obey political authority ("Caesar") but not confuse it with God's authority. One of the most famous early Christian thinkers, St. Augustine, further developed this idea in his book *City of God*. For him, the heavenly city of God had little in common with the earthly city of Rome. For early Christians, in other words, political power and religious authority were different and often hostile to one another.

Illustrations 3A & 3B

After the Western empire collapsed, the leader of Christianity was a religious figure, not an emperor. That figure was the bishop of Rome, or the Pope. Illustration 3A is of Pope Gregory I (590–604). He did exercise some political power, as when he helped defend Italy against Lombard invaders. Yet the Catholic Church's power remained primarily spiritual. This was even more apparent in the lives of the monks and nuns who withdrew from society in order to give over their lives to serving God. Monastic orders grew up where monks lived, prayed, and labored to support their monasteries. Illustration 3B is the Benedictine monastery of Montserrat in Catalonia, Spain. Many monks in such places spent time copying and preserving sacred texts such as the Bible, as well as other classics of Greek and Roman literature. Learning would be kept alive in these places in the "dark" ages ahead.

Lesson 2—The Early Church

Illustration 1



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Discussing the Illustration

1. A later legend says that in 312 CE, on the eve of a battle, a Roman emperor saw a cross above the sun with the words, “in hoc signo vinces.” Can you name that emperor and the meaning of this sign? What view of this legend does this illustration (from a much later time) seem to take? How reliable is this image as evidence of what really happened?
2. Victory in that battle convinced Constantine to take a step of huge historical importance. Can you explain?
3. By becoming a Christian, Constantine turned away from the religious beliefs of the Romans. What do you know about those beliefs and the ways in which they differed from the beliefs of the Christians?
4. Later in the fourth century, Emperor Theodosius the Great made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire. Romans had persecuted Christians at various times for centuries. Why do you think Christianity was able in the end to triumph throughout the Roman Empire?

Follow-up Activities

1. As the first emperor to rule in the name of Christ, Constantine was a major figure in the early history of Medieval Christian Europe. Learn more about Constantine the Great. Prepare a brief talk to the class in which you describe the most important events in his life. Use this image and any others you find to illustrate your talk.
2. **Small-group activity:** Most Roman citizens were “pagans.” That was true even after Constantine made Christianity the official religion of the empire, though paganism steadily declined after that. What is meant here by the term “paganism”? Who were the Roman gods and goddesses? How was Christianity different from Roman paganism, and why was it able to spread throughout the empire even in the face of great hostility? As a group, prepare a brief talk to the class about Roman mythology and the effect of Christianity on Roman culture and society.

Lesson 2—The Early Church

Illustration 2



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The glorious city of God is my theme in this work—a city surpassingly glorious . . . [and] we must speak also of the earthly city, which, though it be mistress of the nations, is itself ruled by its lust of rule. . . . For to this earthly city belong the enemies against whom I have to defend the city of God.

St. Augustine,
opening lines of *City of God*

And he said unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's.

Luke 20:21–26

Discussing the Illustrations

1. On the left is a drawing of St. Augustine, an early Christian leader. What in the painting helps to depict St. Augustine as a beloved and holy man?
2. St. Augustine wrote a famous book called *City of God*. He insisted the city of God was very different from another city, one with enormous political power in the world. What other city do you think that is?
3. What do you think Augustine means here by the phrase “city of God,” and how do you think he sees it as differing from the city of Rome?
4. The message in the *City of God* is like the saying of Christ here from *Luke* in the New Testament. What do you think these words from *Luke* mean?
5. St. Augustine's *City of God* was written shortly after the Gothic sack of Rome in 410 CE. How do you suppose St. Augustine viewed that event? What attitude toward the future the Roman Empire do you think he wanted Christians to adopt?

Follow-up Activity

1. **Small-group activity:** St. Augustine is perhaps the best known of a group of Christian thinkers often called the “Church Fathers.” From about 100 to 500 CE, various Church Fathers wrote books explaining Christianity. These books gave the standard Christian teachings to the people of the Roman Empire—both in the west and in the east. Have each member of your group pick one of the following figures and learn more about him. Then as a group give a class talk. Explain why each of these early writers should be seen as a “Church Father,” and what ideas each one is most famous for.

Western Fathers:

Augustine
Ambrose
Gregory I (Pope)
St. Jerome

Eastern Fathers:

Athanasius
Basil
John Chrysostom
Gregory of Nazianzus

Lesson 2—The Early Church

Illustrations 3A & 3B

3B

3A



Stock Montage, Inc.



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Discussing the Illustrations

1. As Christianity spread, the Church of Rome became very important. Rome was considered special by Christians because both St. Peter and St. Paul, two followers of Christ, were believed to have been killed there. In time, the bishop of Rome came to be seen as the leader of Christians everywhere. By what special title was the bishop of Rome soon known?
2. Illustration 3A is of Pope Gregory I, under whom the early Christian Church came to have more power, both politically and spiritually. What view of Gregory and his goals as Pope is conveyed by this illustration?
3. As the power of the Church grew, many Christians continued to seek a spiritual life separate from the political or social world. Monks and nuns lived apart from the rest of society in order to devote their lives to serving God. Such monasteries as Montserrat in Spain (Illustration 3B) were also important centers of learning. How does this photo suggest these various aspects of monastic life?

Follow-up Activities

1. **Small-group activity:** Learn more about St. Benedict, who lived as a monk in Italy at the end of the fifth century. Learn about the book he wrote, *The Rule of St. Benedict*. Also, learn more about Monte Cassino, the monastery he founded in Italy, as well as other famous Benedictine monasteries such as Bury St. Edmunds in England, Cluny in France, or Montserrat in Catalonia, Spain. Create a colorful and informative bulletin-board display titled, “St. Benedict, the Father of Western Monasticism.”
2. Learn more about daily life in an early medieval monastery. What was a typical day like? Imagine it is the Middle Ages. You are a monk, or a nun, and you have been asked to speak to a group of local townsfolk about what your purpose as a monk or nun is, and what goes on at the monastery all day. These “townsfolk,” of course, are your classmates. Present your talk to the townsfolk and try to answer any questions they have.

OBJECTIVES

1. Students will better understand the Carolingian Empire.
2. Students will better understand the differences between Western European and Byzantine ideas about religious and political authority.

Two Christian Empires

Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION**Illustration 1**

For a time, the Medieval Kingdom of the Franks was ruled by the Carolingian family. The most famous Carolingian was Charlemagne, who became ruler in 768 CE. Charlemagne was soon able to unite much of Western Europe for the first time since the end of the Roman Empire. In 800, Charlemagne traveled to Rome to help Pope Leo III fend off attacks from rebellious Romans. He put down the rebellion, and on Christmas Day he attended Mass at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. There, Pope Leo surprised everyone by crowning Charlemagne emperor of the Romans. This illustration is one artist's idea of what the coronation might have looked like. By crowning Charlemagne, the Pope hoped to restore the Western Roman Empire. The coronation showed how powerful the Pope had become in Western Europe. Yet it also suggests a separation of roles between the Church, on the one hand, and the secular rulers of Western Europe, on the other. The Pope might crown an emperor, but he was not himself an emperor.

Illustration 2

During his reign, Charlemagne encouraged a new interest in learning in Western Europe. He encouraged bishops and abbots throughout his land to improve their schools and libraries and open them to more than just their own monks. His own palace at Aachen became Europe's greatest center of learning. He is shown here surrounded by the scholars there. This cultural revival is often referred to as the "Carolingian Renaissance."

Illustration 3

In the Western Roman Empire, Germanic states were established loosely under the Pope's spiritual control and guidance. Meanwhile, Roman political customs and the notion of supreme imperial power remained alive in the Byzantine Empire. Byzantine emperors combined political and spiritual power, including the right to appoint the leader of the Eastern Orthodox Church, the official church of Byzantine Christianity. The Byzantine mosaic here is a 12th-century image of Emperor John II Comnenus and Empress Irene with the Virgin Mary and Jesus as a child. This helps highlight the supreme religious as well as political authority of the Byzantine emperors. In a sense, they were seen as the earthly rulers of both the "city of God" and the "city of Man."

Lesson 3—Two Christian Empires

Illustration 1



Stock Montage, Inc.

Discussing the Illustration

1. Of all the Germanic states that arose in Europe after the fall of the Roman Empire, only one even seemed close to becoming a true successor to Rome. Can you name it and its most famous king, shown here?
2. In 800 CE, Charlemagne went to Rome to defend Pope Leo III from attacks by rebellious Romans. After ending the rebellion, Charlemagne attended a Christmas Day Mass at Rome's St. Peter's Basilica where something unexpected happened. From this illustration of that event and your history knowledge, explain what happened. How does this illustration suggest the event's drama and importance?
3. The crowning of Charlemagne as emperor stunned the onlookers. It seemed to mean that the Western Roman Empire, with Charlemagne as its leader, had been reborn. But Charlemagne did have some doubts about being given this title by the Pope. What do you think were the reasons for his misgivings? What does this event suggest about the developing relationship of church and state in Medieval Europe?

Follow-up Activities

1. In the year 800, after helping Pope Leo III put down a rebellion, Charlemagne attended the Christmas Day Mass in Rome's St. Peter's Basilica. It was there, quite unexpectedly, that Pope Leo placed a crown on his head and proclaimed him emperor of the Romans. The onlookers were shocked. Imagine you are a member of Charlemagne's court and are one of the onlookers in this painting. Write a letter to an adviser back at Charlemagne's court at Aachen describing what happened in this scene and your thoughts on what this means. Use your imagination in trying to make the letter as realistic as possible. Share your letter with the class.
2. Charlemagne had some doubts about the idea of being crowned by the Pope. Yet at the same time, he clearly wanted the title. What was he concerned about? Read more about Charlemagne and in particular about his coronation as emperor. Pretend you are Charlemagne and write a journal entry for the day after the coronation expressing your concerns.

Lesson 3—Two Christian Empires

Illustration 2



The Granger Collection, New York

Discussing the Illustration

1. Charlemagne valued learning and education. This was unusual in Western Europe in the centuries since the fall of Rome. Why do you think that was so?
2. This 19th-century illustration shows Charlemagne with the scholars he brought to his palace school at Aachen. How does the painting stress his interest in learning? How reliable do you think this visual is as evidence of Charlemagne and his school?
3. Why might a king at that time have seen education as important? Do you think the value of learning to a king in Charlemagne's times was the same as its value to political leaders today? Why or why not?
4. Charlemagne and those in his own royal family line were known as the Carolingians. Historians therefore refer to the cultural achievements that occurred under Charlemagne as the "Carolingian Renaissance." What does the term "renaissance" mean here? Why do you think the cultural achievements of the Carolingians are seen as a kind of renaissance?

Follow-up Activities

1. **Small-group activity:** It is not clear how well-educated Charlemagne himself was. But it is clear that he did promote learning at his palace and in monasteries throughout his kingdom. The above image shows Charlemagne with scholars and students at the school he established at his palace at Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle). Using this image as a guide, create and perform a short, one-act play that brings to life this scene as the members of your group imagine it. But base your play also on what you are able to learn about life at Charlemagne's court.
2. Alcuin of York was Charlemagne's personal tutor. He played a very important role in the Carolingian Renaissance. What was that role? Learn more about Alcuin's entire life. If possible, find a few brief quotes from Alcuin himself on his life. Use these in a brief talk to the class about Alcuin, his life, and his role in the Carolingian Renaissance.

Illustration 3



The Granger Collection, New York

Discussing the Illustration

1. The Pope's crowning of Charlemagne suggested to some that the church was even more important than any emperor or any other king or queen. Why might it be seen this way?
2. In the Byzantine Empire, the relationship of the emperor to the head of the church was the opposite of the one in Western Europe, which claimed to put the Pope above all worldly rulers. Can you explain?
3. In this 12th-century Byzantine mosaic, Byzantine Emperor John II Comnenus and Empress Irene are seen along either side of the Virgin Mary and Jesus as a child. Some historians might say this aptly expresses the notion of the emperor as the supreme religious as well as political leader of the Byzantine Empire. Do you agree that the mosaic expresses this idea? Why or why not? What else about the mosaic seems different from West European artistic styles in the Middle Ages?

Follow-up Activities

1. **Small-group activity:** Learn more about the history of the Eastern Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire. In particular, learn all that you can about the ways in which it was similar to the Western Roman Catholic Church, as well as all the ways in which it differed. The final split between the Eastern and the Western churches did not come until 1054. Learn more about this final split. Now, create a chart showing the differences and similarities between the two churches. Use your chart in a brief presentation to the class in which you explain why the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church finally split.
2. Find out more about Byzantine religious art. Now learn more about a movement called "Iconoclasm" in the Byzantine Empire in the eighth and ninth centuries. What did this movement try to do, and why? Prepare a brief report for the class. If possible, include some illustrations of Byzantine art that you feel will help clarify what Iconoclasm was all about.

OBJECTIVE:

1. Students will better understand how the chaos of the ninth and tenth centuries further added to Europe's troubles and forced much of Europe back to a local level of existence.

Invasion and Retreat

Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION**Illustration 1**

The earlier raids by Germanic tribes had brought about the end of the Roman Empire in the West. Later, in the 800s and 900s CE, Europe was again beset by invasions. Charlemagne's Carolingian Empire began to collapse shortly after his death in 814. The new invasions came from Magyars in the east, Muslims in the south and, most importantly, Vikings in the north. Also known as Norsemen ("Northmen"), the Vikings were Germanic peoples from Scandinavia. They were excellent shipbuilders. The long, narrow design of their ships allowed them to sail up rivers, attack far inland, and slip away just as fast. They were fierce warriors. Among the Vikings' first victims were monks on the northeast coast of England, who prayed, "From the fury of the Norsemen, deliver us O Lord."

Illustration 2

The new wave of invasions led to a nearly total collapse of any kind of central authority in Europe. And from this chaos a new kind of social order developed. For safety and defense, many people retreated into small, isolated communities, each one dependent on a powerful land-owning lord. The fortified manor house here suggests the local and rural basis of this life, as well as its insecurity. Parts of the manorial lands would be assigned to individual peasants, who gave the lord crops and labor in exchange for his promised protection. Under attack, the people of the manor would gather in the manor house. This relationship of the land-owning lord to the peasants is often referred to as "manorialism."

Illustration 3

Because war and invasions made trade almost impossible, the manor was largely a self-sufficient community. That is, it produced nearly all the goods necessary to survive. In addition to the manor house, a manor included fields for livestock and crops, forests, and a village where the peasants lived. Most peasants were serfs—that is, they were bound to the lord and could not leave the manor without permission. But unlike slaves, serfs could not be sold as property. Life on a manor was grueling for peasants. A poor, technically low level of life prevailed in much of Western Europe. This 11th-century image shows a peasant using a very simple plow drawn by two oxen with collars around their necks.

Illustration 1



Stock Montage, Inc.

Discussing the Illustration

1. The raids by Germanic tribes in the early Middle Ages put an end to the Roman Empire in the west. Later in the 800s and 900s CE, Western Europe was again beset by invasions. The new invasions came from the Magyars in the east, the Arab Muslims in the south, and from the group shown here. Can you identify this third group of invaders?
2. The Vikings came from the Scandinavian lands of northern Europe. In fact, they were sometimes called “Northmen” or “Norsemen.” What are some present-day nations in these Scandinavian lands?
3. One reason the Vikings were so successful when they attacked other lands had to do with the excellent ships they had. What do you know about these ships? Using this illustration, identify some features of the typical Viking ship that would have given the Vikings such an advantage in raids and attacks against villages and cities in Europe.

Follow-up Activities

1. **Small-group activity:** Build a model of a Viking longship. If your local hobby store does not have one, the people there can probably tell you where to find one. Also, learn more about the unique shipbuilding techniques of the Vikings and why the longship was especially well-suited for attacking inland settlements. Have each group member look into a different aspect of Viking shipbuilding. Finally, as a group, and with your model as the centerpiece, give a class talk explaining the Viking ship and its unique place in history. You may want to include other visuals in your talk, such as maps and other illustrations.
2. The Vikings founded the present-day cities of York (England), Dublin (Ireland), and Kiev (Ukraine). They also played an important role in settling France’s Normandy region. Find out more about the early Viking history of any one of these places and write a short report. Share your findings with the class.

Illustration 2



Stock Montage, Inc.

Discussing the Illustration

1. Especially during and after the invasions of the 800s and 900s, people began to depend much more on local political or military leaders, rather than on more-distant kings or emperors. Why do you suppose they did this? Under such conditions, why might it have been easier for a local leader than for a distant king to gain authority over people?
2. The fortified manor house shown here suggests the local and rural basis of society as well as the insecurity of life then. What details in this illustration offer evidence of the importance of security to people living in this community and the purely local and rural basis of their lives and well being?
3. The word “manorialism” is used to describe the relationship between those lords who held land and the poor people who worked on it. These people are often called “peasants” or “serfs.” What do you know about what life was like for serfs and peasants in Western Europe in the Middle Ages?

Follow-up Activities

1. **Small-group activity:** Learn more about the history of medieval castles. Find images of as many different castles as you can. These images could be an artist’s rendering of what a castle may have looked like. Or they could be photographs of actual castle ruins. Remember that fortified manor houses, like the one shown above, were the earliest castles. As a lord’s wealth increased, such fortified homes often grew into the larger, better-known castles with moats and drawbridges. Use the images you find as the basis of a class presentation.
2. **Small-group activity:** Read more about everyday life in the Middle Ages. Imagine you are living in the manor house shown here. Most members of your group are peasants. Pick two members of the group to be the lord and his wife. Using this illustration as your backdrop, create a one-act play in which the peasants have come to the manor house to talk with the lord about some of their concerns. Present your play to the class.

Illustration 3



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Discussing the Illustration

1. In addition to the manor house, a manor included fields for livestock and crops, forests, and a village where the peasants lived. The assumption was that the lord would protect the manor or village, and the peasants would support the lord with labor and payments in kind. Can you explain what the phrase, “with labor and payments in kind” means?
2. This illustration shows a peasant around 1000 CE. Describe the peasant’s tools and methods. What does the illustration tell you about the kind of work required of the peasants on a manor? How does this kind of farm work differ from farm work today?
3. On a manor, the lord’s fields and needs came first. Perhaps three days a week were all that was left for peasants to work their family strips of land or their garden plots. For the most part, the manor was a self-sufficient community. What does this mean? What do you suppose life was like for all the residents of these communities?

Follow-up Activities

1. Read more about the type of work required of peasants and serfs on a lord’s estate in the Middle Ages in Europe. Use the Internet to find as much information as you can about life on a medieval manor. Then, create an Internet guide for your classmates. List the best sites you find. Give each one a catchy, descriptive title of your own, a brief paragraph summarizing the site’s key features, and the URL. Hand out your guide to the class.
2. Create a glossary of the terms likely to be found when reading about a medieval manor. Some of the terms to include in your glossary are lord, peasant, serf, estate, fief, villein, reeve, bailiff, demesne, and manor. If possible, illustrate your glossary using images you find or draw yourself.

Image Close-ups

The West Under Attack

Illustration 1



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The West Under Attack

Illustrations 2A & 2B

2A



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2B



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The West Under Attack

Illustration 3



© Maps.com

The Early Church

Illustration 1



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The Early Church

Illustration 2



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The glorious city of God is my theme in this work—a city surpassingly glorious . . . [and] we must speak also of the earthly city, which, though it be mistress of the nations, is itself ruled by its lust of rule. . . . For to this earthly city belong the enemies against whom I have to defend the city of God.

St. Augustine,
opening lines of *City of God*

And he said unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's.

Luke 20:21–26

The Early Church

Illustrations 3A & 3B

3B



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3A



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Two Christian Empires

Illustration 1



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Two Christian Empires

Illustration 2



The Granger Collection, New York

Two Christian Empires

Illustration 3



The Granger Collection. New York

Invasion and Retreat

Illustration 1



Stock Montage, Inc.

Invasion and Retreat

Illustration 2



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Invasion and Retreat

Illustration 3



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