

Travel Back in Time

Teacher Information

Unit Overview

To best meet the Sunshine State Standards and the abilities of the average third grader, we have focused this unit on aspects of the Middle Ages that entice the students to learn. Our main focus is between the years of 1200 and 1300, although we make references to significant events before and after this focus period. Various timelines are provided to assist students in referencing events.

Since the feudal system of government was prevalent in Europe during this period and because third grade students can relate to many aspects of this system, we focus our efforts in this area.

We are very aware of the lack of appropriate graphics and pictures available to third grade teachers. We offer extensive timelines, pictures, and activities that are third grade appropriate. All pictures are copyright-free. We are also sharing our Web sources for added teacher support.

This unit consists of four separate lesson plans. This file gives a general overview with each subsequent lesson plan providing the teacher information associated with that particular lesson.

Background Information:

Middle Ages Overview

The period of history known as the Middle Ages lasted from about 400 until 1400 AD. After the fall of the Roman Empire, from about 400 to 800 A.D., was a period known as the Dark Ages. During this time disorder was the norm. Barbarian tribes from Germanic territories invaded villages. Communication and legal systems deteriorated. Around 800, King Charlemagne helped reunite Europe, building libraries and schools of learning and encouraging the spread of Christianity. Organized religion helped establish law and order. After Charlemagne, King Otto of Germany helped control the invasions by the northern aggressors, especially the Vikings. King Otto's kingdom became known as the Holy Roman Empire because the Pope in Italy supported him. Even after medieval society became more organized in the late eleventh century, Viking war parties from Scandinavia continued invasions into Europe. During this time, the feudal system of government became prevalent. Land was of utmost importance as the amount of land one controlled was a reflection of one's power and status.

After 1000, Europe became more stable. Trade brought new wealth to a greater number of people. Towns and cities flourished. The Catholic Church became one of the most powerful institutions in the world. The Church sponsored schools of learning and certain forms of artistic expression. But natural disasters, like famine and the Black Plague, as well as corruption in the Church and among feudal lords, led to discontent and change. Eventually, new ideas and scientific discoveries paved the way for the Renaissance.

Crusades Overview

The Crusades were an opportunity for Europeans to travel and see what other areas of the world had learned. Because of what Europeans saw during the Crusades, European technology, science and culture advanced. Trade routes were also begun to support the crusaders. These trade routes led to exploration. What follows is a teacher background on the crusades. Time line at <http://perso.wanadoo.fr/bbcp/english/index.html>

The Crusades

During the Middle Ages, Europeans were Christians, most being Catholic. These Christians called their religion "the one true faith." There were also many non-Christians living outside Europe at this same time. Some of these non-Christians were Arab Muslims and Seljuk Turks, who lived in the Middle East and northern Africa. Jewish people also lived in this same region.

Muslims felt as strongly about their Islamic prophet, Muhammad, as Christians did about Jesus Christ. Muslims had lived in the city of Jerusalem for more than four hundred years, practicing their religion called Islam. Also living in this region were Jewish people, who believed in the prophet Abraham and practiced their religion called Judaism. The Turks also occupied parts of this region where Jesus Christ had lived. Christians called this entire region occupied by the Muslims, Jews, and Turks the Holy Land.

The word **crusade** comes from a Latin word meaning "marked with a cross." A red cross on a white background became the symbol for the Crusades and replaced the coat of arms used by individuals. The Pope, who had strong control over European Christians, wanted the people to take part in crusades to get back the Holy Lands and to convert Turks, Muslims, and Jews into Christians. The Pope also wanted the lands and riches of the Middle East.

In 1096, Pope Urban II declared the first crusade. This first army was made of French peasants and serfs. These "soldiers" had no fighting experience but were eager to go on the crusade, since it would mean escaping their miserable lives for a while. Upon arriving in Turkey, most of the crusaders were killed. The following year an army of knights and their families and servants traveled back to Turkey. By the time this army, 30,000 strong, reached Jerusalem, more than half had died. In one of the bloodiest battles of the crusades, Jerusalem was finally captured from the Turks. Many Christians moved to Jerusalem to live. Non-Christians were killed, converted, or forced to move.

In 1187 the great Muslim leader, Saladin, led his army to recapture Jerusalem. King Richard the Lion-Hearted knew he could not defeat Saladin, so he offered a peace treaty. The treaty allowed European pilgrims to safely visit the Holy Lands. Over time many trade routes opened up between the Middle East and Western Europe. For the next 30 years, Christians from Europe continued fighting the Muslims. By the end of the thirteenth century, the Holy Land was in the hands of the Muslims once again. Militarily the crusades were a failure.

The Crusades marked the beginning of the downfall of the feudal system of government. The leaders and warriors were of the noble class. Their

numbers dwindled, as they became casualties of war. The common class began to look elsewhere for protection. Cities with merchants began to prosper as more peasants left the land to pursue a trade and the protection the urban life offered.

The most important effect of the Crusades was economic. The Italian cities prospered from the trade with the Crusaders.

Robin Hood - overview

Tales of Robin Hood and his gang of outlaws began to surface during the Middle Ages. It is said that Robin Hood was a knight who became indebted to his lord while away at war. Because he could not pay his debt, he hid in the woods. Feeling that the feudal system of government that required each person to pay a tithe to the lord he served was unfair and caused hardship on the poorer people, Robin Hood and friends would rob from the rich and give to the poor. Truth or fiction? No one knows for sure, and there is evidence to support either view. However, this is interesting reading for third graders and is definitely a story they can relate to.

For more information about Robin Hood, see <http://www.robinhood.co.uk> and <http://members.tripod.com/HumbleKnight/outlaws.html>.

Internet sites

The following sites were used to gather information and graphics for this unit. They are also excellent sites to use as examples with your students for **SS.A.1.2.2.3.1** (Student uses a variety of methods and sources to understand history - knows sources of information about ancient history.)

- <http://www.clipartcastle.com/clipart.htm> - wonderful clipart (also includes some sorcery, needs adult guidance)
- <http://eawc.evansville.edu/chronology/extract.cgi?year=1050&place=me&dir=dn#anchor> - medieval information by time periods
- <http://www.millersv.edu/~english/homepage/duncan/medfem/domestic.html> - describes medieval domestic life (many informative links)
- <http://www.learner.org/exhibits/middleages/townlife.html> - very descriptive site for the Middle Ages
- <http://www.medievalonline.com> - a multitude of links about every aspect of medieval life
- <http://humanities.uchicago.edu/images/heures/heures.html> - a collection of calendar graphics

Other sites are included in the other lesson plans that are part of the unit "In Days Of Old".