

Have you ever wondered?
Grandpa's History Lessons
that Matter

Lesson 6:
The Middle Ages
(5th – 15th Century)

The Middle Ages (5th – 15th Century)

INTRODUCTION:

- *The Middle Ages, or Medieval Times, in Europe was a long period of history from the 5th – 15th Century. That's 1000 years! It covers the time from the fall of the Roman Empire to the rise of the Ottoman Empire.*
- *This was a time of castles and peasants, guilds and monasteries, cathedrals and crusades. Great leaders such as Joan of Arc and Charlemagne were part of the Middle Ages as well as major events such as the Black Plague and the rise of Islam.*
- *When people use the terms Medieval Times, Middle Ages, and Dark Ages they are generally referring to the same period of time. The Dark Ages is usually referring to the first half of the Middle Ages from the 5th – 9th Century.*
- *After the fall of the Roman Empire, a lot of the Roman culture and knowledge was lost. This included art, technology, engineering, and history. Historians know a lot about Europe during the Roman Empire because the Romans kept excellent records of all that happened. However, the time after the Romans is "dark" to historians because there was no central government recording events. This is why historians call this time the Dark Ages. But were the Dark Ages really dark? See <https://www.history.com/news/6-reasons-the-dark-ages-werent-so-dark> for a very good answer.*

"It happens in humans, too. Some behaviors that seem harsh to us now ensured the survival of early man in whatever swamp he was in at the time. Without them, we wouldn't be here. We still store those instincts in our genes, and they express themselves when certain circumstances prevail. Some parts of us will always be what we were, what we had to be to survive – way back yonder." – From Where the Crawdads Sing by Delia Owens

"No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite." — Nelson Mandela, Long Walk to Freedom



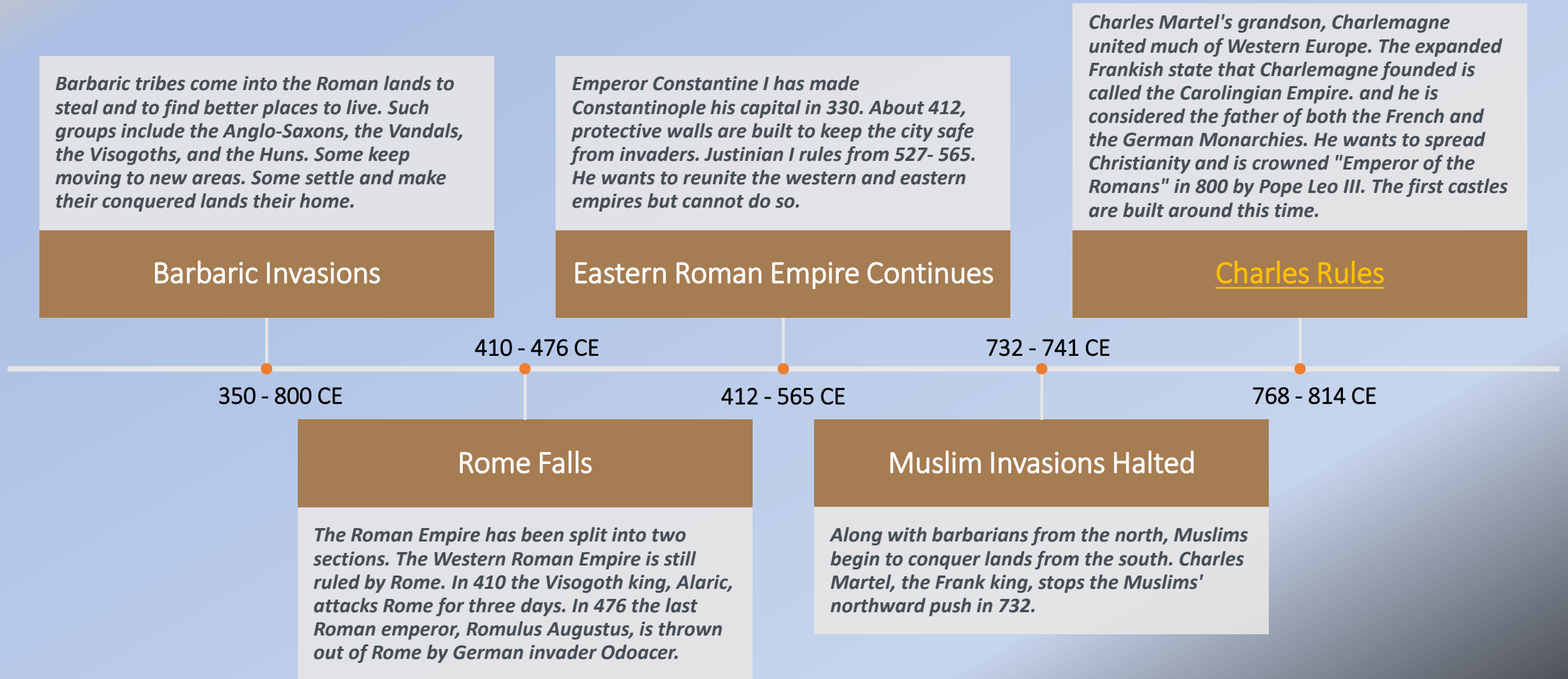
The Middle Ages (5th – 15th Century)

Things Change Over 1000 Years!



The Middle Ages (5th – 15th Century)

1000 Years in the (not so) Dark!



The Middle Ages (5th – 15th Century)

1000 Years in the (not so) Dark!

After Charlemagne's son dies, The Carolingian Empire weakened and was divided into three parts, ruled by Charlemagne's grandsons. The middle of the three kingdoms was weak and was absorbed by the eastern and western kingdoms. These two kingdoms would emerge as the modern countries of France and Germany.

A Divided Kingdom

840 CE

871 - 899 CE

Alfred the Great of England Rules

Alfred the Great defeats the Danes (Vikings) in 878. In 886 he captures London. He signs a treaty, splitting England between him and the Danes. As a ruler Alfred encourages education by establishing schools.

Rome, Florence, Venice, and other Italian towns become city-states. The feudal system begins. Kings give sections of land called fiefs to lords in exchange for help during wars. The lords can give land to knights. The peasants work the land in exchange for food and protection.

City States and Feudal Systems

1000 - 1200 CE

1096 - 1099 CE

First Crusade

Religious people go on pilgrimages to visit sacred Biblical sites. When the Seljuk Turks rule, they forbid visits to the Holy Land. The Pope calls for a crusade against the Seljuks. Eventually the crusaders take the city of Jerusalem. There will be eight crusades in all between now and 1272.

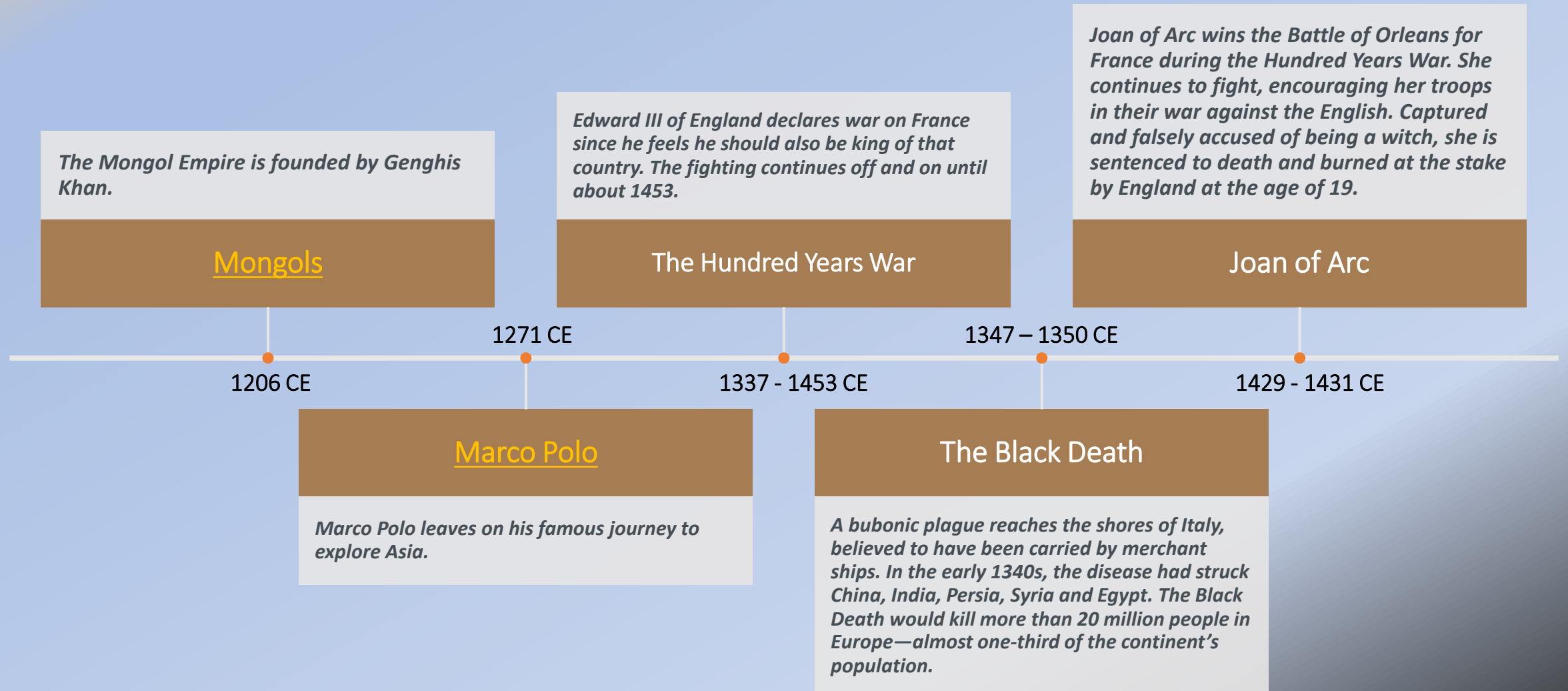
In 1189 Richard I (the Lionheart) becomes King of England. In 1215 rebels oppose King John of England, but they have no ruler to take his place. Instead they have him sign a document, the Magna Carta, stating that there is no divine right of kings. Later generations of Englishmen would celebrate the Magna Carta as a symbol of freedom from oppression.

- Richard the Lionheart
- King John & Magna Carta

1189 - 1215 CE

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Appendix

Action Links

MORE FUN, MORE FACTS

ABOUT THE MOST SIGNIFICANT

PEOPLE AND EVENTS

IN THE MIDDLE AGES

Charlemagne

The Carolingian Renaissance

- Charlemagne (742-814), or Charles the Great, was king of the Franks, 768-814, and emperor of the West, 800-814. He founded the Holy Roman Empire, stimulated European economic and political life, and fostered the cultural revival known as the Carolingian Renaissance.
- Soon after becoming king, he conquered the Lombards (in present-day northern Italy), the Avars (in modern-day Austria and Hungary) and Bavaria, among others.
- Charlemagne was a strong leader and good administrator. As he took over territories he would allow Frankish nobles to rule them. However, he would also allow the local cultures and laws to remain. He had the laws written down and recorded.
- He violently crushed all opposition to him or his religious and cultural reforms – ravaging the land of the Saxons in a war that lasted for decades. Brutal and violent as his rule may have been, Charlemagne stimulated and regulated cultural and intellectual life as well.



Charlemagne

Crusades Christianity

- The Crusades were military expeditions, beginning in the late 11th century, that were organized by western European Christians in response to centuries of Muslim wars of expansion. Their objectives were to check the spread of Islam, to retake control of the Holy Land in the eastern Mediterranean, to conquer pagan areas, and to recapture formerly Christian territories; they were seen by many of their participants as a means of redemption and expiation for sins. Between 1095, when the First Crusade was launched, and 1291, when the Latin Christians were finally expelled from their kingdom in Syria, there were numerous expeditions to the Holy Land, to Spain, and even to the Baltic; the Crusades continued for several centuries after 1291. Crusading declined rapidly during the 16th century with the advent of the Protestant Reformation and the decline of papal authority.



Modern painting of Mehmed II and the Ottoman Army approaching Constantinople with a giant bombard, by Fausto Zonaro



Capture of Constantinople by the Fourth Crusade in 1204



Dome of the Rock, Jerusalem, reconsecrated as an Islamic shrine when Jerusalem was retaken by Saladin in 1187. (Jonathan Phillips)

Magna Carta

Freedom from Oppression

- By 1215, thanks to years of unsuccessful foreign policies and heavy taxation demands, England's King John was facing down a possible rebellion by the country's powerful barons. Under duress, he agreed to a charter of liberties known as the Magna Carta (or Great Charter) that would place him and all of England's future sovereigns within a rule of law.
- Though it was not initially successful, the document was reissued (with alterations) in 1216, 1217 and 1225, and eventually served as the foundation for the English system of common law.
- Later generations of Englishmen would celebrate the Magna Carta as a symbol of freedom from oppression, as would the Founding Fathers of the United States of America, who in 1776 looked to the charter as a historical precedent for asserting their liberty from the English crown.



Genghis Khan The Mongolian Hordes

- The Mongols were a nomadic people from the steppes of Central Asia. Known as fierce horsemen and warriors, the Mongol clans were united in 1206 by the powerful chief Temujin, later known as Genghis Khan. ... However, Genghis Khan was not only a skilled conqueror, but also a great ruler.



Marco Polo

Italian Trader at the Court of Kublai Khan

- At the height of the Mongol Empire, Marco Polo served Emperor Kublai Khan in China and returned to Venice to write an account of his experiences that would give Europeans some of their earliest information about China.

