







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

Lesson 6: 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 <a href="https://www.history.com/news/6-reasons-the-dark-ages-werent-so-dark">https://www.history.com/news/6-reasons-the-dark-ages-werent-so-dark</a> 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, <u>Long Walk to Freedom</u>



**Things Change Over 1000 Years!** 









1000 Years in the (not so) Dark!

Barbaric tribes come into the Roman lands to steal and to find better places to live. Such groups include the Anglo-Saxons, the Vandals, the Visogoths, and the Huns. Some keep moving to new areas. Some settle and make their conquered lands their home.

Barbaric Invasions

350 - 800 CE

Emperor Constantine I has made Constantinople his capital in 330. About 412, protective walls are built to keep the city safe from invaders. Justinian I rules from 527- 565. He wants to reunite the western and eastern empires but cannot do so.

Eastern Roman Empire Continues

Charles Martel's grandson, Charlemagne united much of Western Europe. The expanded Frankish state that Charlemagne founded is called the Carolingian Empire. and he is considered the father of both the French and the German Monarchies. He wants to spread Christianity and is crowned "Emperor of the Romans" in 800 by Pope Leo III. The first castles are built around this time.

Charles Rules

410 - 476 CE

412 - 565 CE

768 - 814 CE

#### Rome Falls

The Roman Empire has been split into two sections. The Western Roman Empire is still ruled by Rome. In 410 the Visogoth king, Alaric, attacks Rome for three days. In 476 the last Roman emperor, Romulus Augustus, is thrown out of Rome by German invader Odoacer.

#### **Muslim Invasions Halted**

732 - 741 CE

Along with barbarians from the north, Muslims begin to conquer lands from the south. Charles Martel, the Frank king, stops the Muslims' northward push in 732.

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

Rome, Florence, Venice, and other Italians 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

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

871 - 899 CE 1096 - 1099 CE

840 CE 1000 - 1200 CE 1189 - 1215 CE

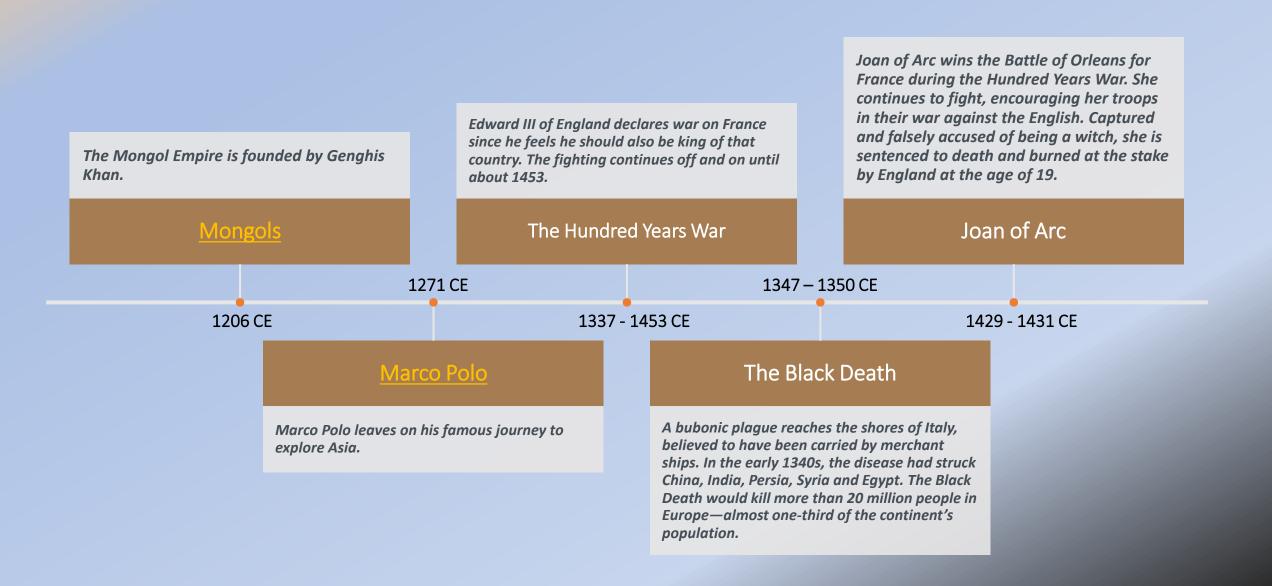
#### Alfred the Great of England Rules

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.

#### 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.

1000 Years in the (not so) Dark!



## **Appendix**

**Action Links** 

MORE FUN, MORE FACTS

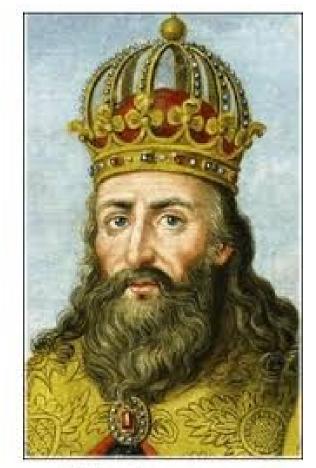
ABOUT THE MOST SIGNIFICANT

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



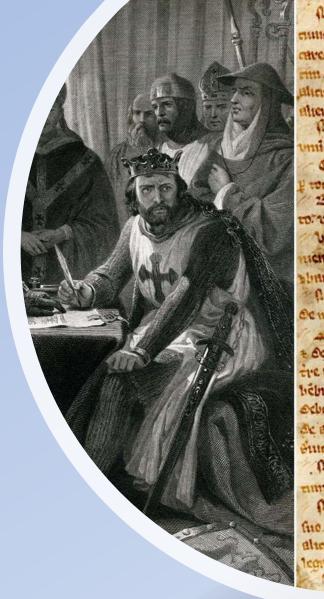
Capture of Constantinople by the Fourth Crusade in 1204



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.



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# 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.

