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MIDDLE AGES: The Ages of the Middle Ages

The Middle Ages was the period of European history lasting from the A.D. 400's through the end of the 1400's. Many people believed that after the Roman Empire collapsed in western Europe during the 400's, culture and society declined until the revival of Greek and Roman ideas. In fact, sometimes the Middle Ages are incorrectly called the Dark Ages! But the Middle Ages were a dynamic time in human history. To understand what happened during these years, historians split this long historical era into three smaller periods: the early Middle Ages, the High Middle Ages, and the late Middle Ages. What are the differences? Let's find out!

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FIND IT!

Find the answers to the questions below by using the "Search" tool to search key words.

Since this activity is about Middle Ages, you can start by searching the key word "Middle Ages."

Write the answers on the lines provided or below the question.

1. The name "Middle Ages" describes the period from about the 400's through the _____.
2. The Middle Ages are also known as the _____ period.

One era ends, another begins

The Middle Ages began as the ancient Roman Empire ended. Find out about this big change. Mark the following statements as "True" or "False."

3. _____ At its height, the Roman Empire included much of Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East.
4. _____ Governing the huge Roman Empire was difficult and complex, and the empire became politically unstable in the A.D. 200's.
5. _____ The Roman Empire became permanently divided into two parts—the North Roman Empire and the South Roman Empire.

***Users of the Advanced database can find extension activities at the end of this webquest.**

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MAP IT!

In the late 300's, the Huns, a central Asian people, were invading the area north of the Black Sea.

They pushed the Germanic tribes living north of the Roman Empire toward the empire. Many Germanic groups moved into the empire.

6. On the modern-day map below, show the parts of the empire where the following Germanic groups established themselves in the 400's.
- a. Visigoths
 - b. Vandals
 - c. Angles, Saxons, and Jutes
 - d. Franks
 - e. Ostrogoths



7. When was the last official emperor of the West Roman Empire deposed?

8. What happened to the East Roman Empire?

The Early Middle Ages

The early Middle Ages began in the 400's lasted through the 900's.

9. In the early Middle Ages, Germanic groups divided the West Roman Empire into many small

_____.

10. What happened to towns and trade after the West Roman Empire ended?

11. List five ways the Christian church preserved aspects of culture and society in western Europe after the end of the Roman Empire.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

12. Draw lines to match these terms and definitions describing the main form of land ownership and use that developed by the 800's during the early Middle Ages.

manors

crops or services used to pay a landlord for farmland

tenants

large estates of land

rents

people who rented out portions of their land to others

landlords

people who paid to farm land they did not own

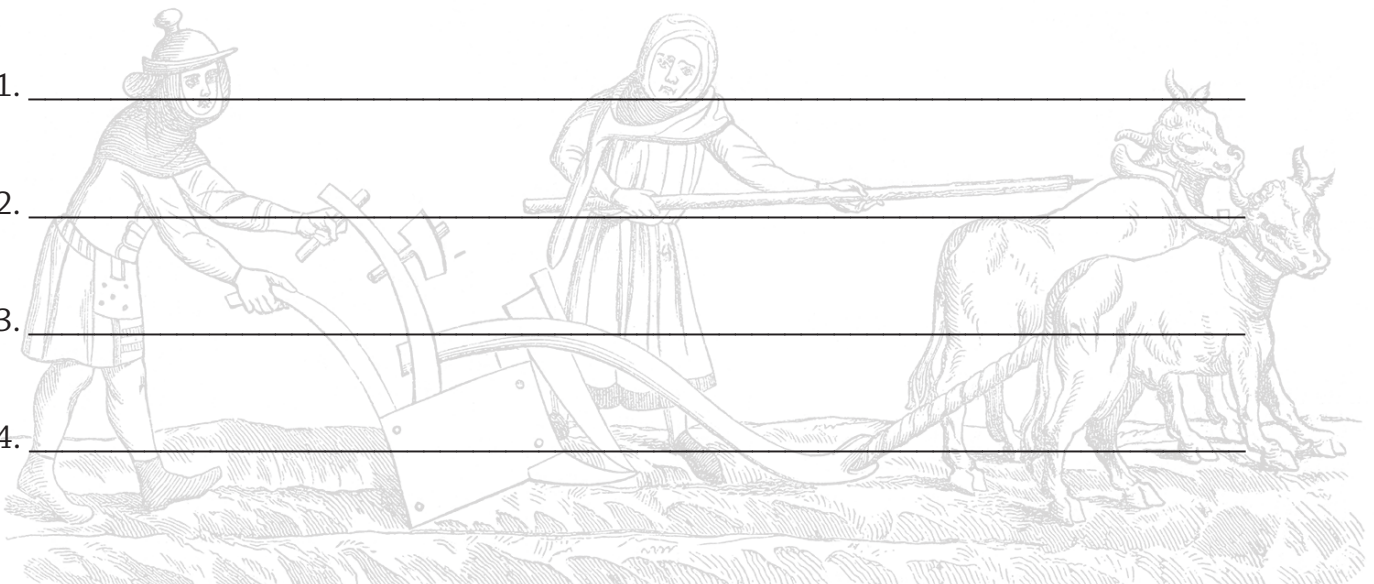
13. Name four developments that increased farm production starting in the early Middle Ages.
(Hint: Read the section about peasants in the part of the article called "Lives of the people.")

1. _____

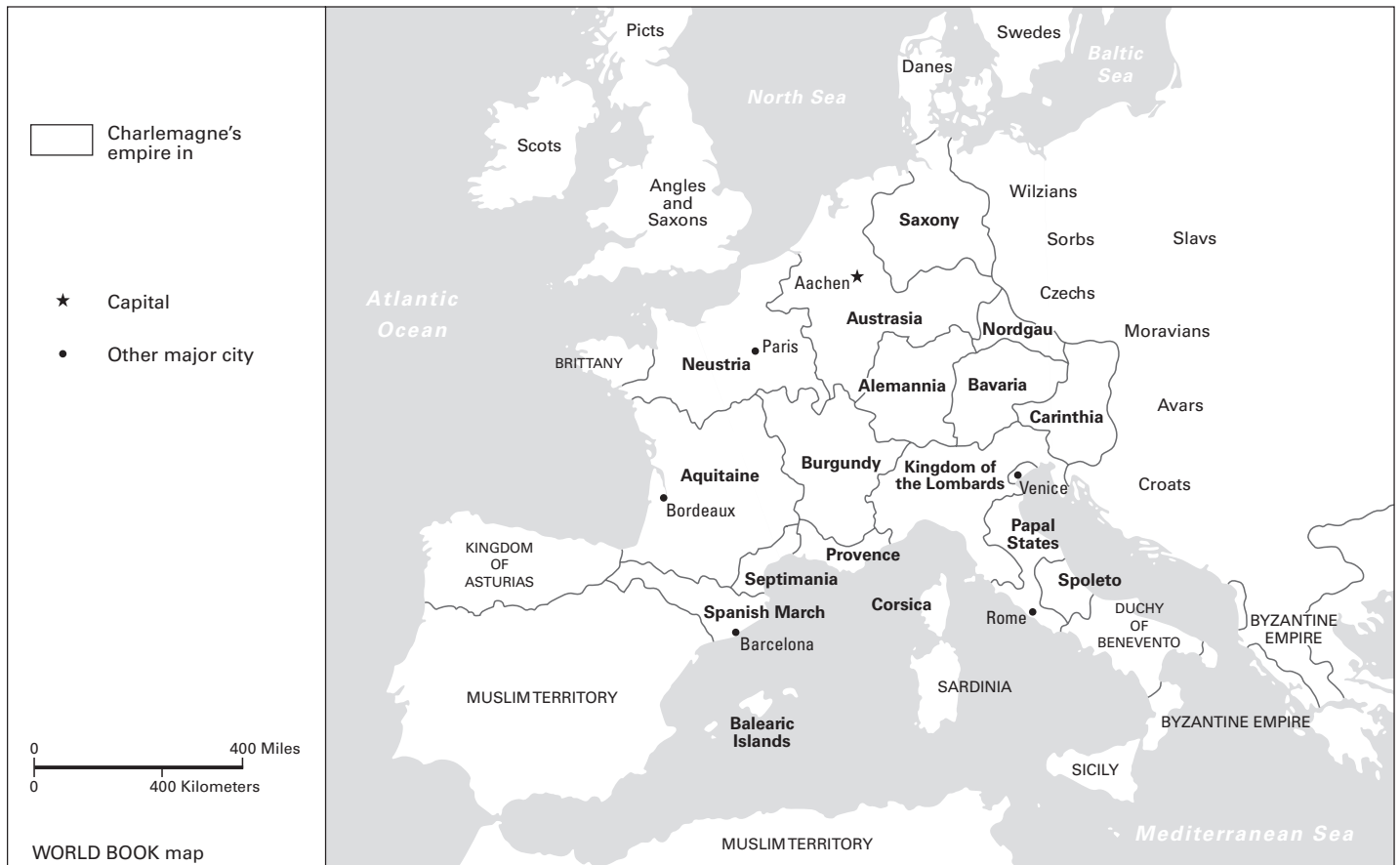
2. _____

3. _____

4. _____



14. The most powerful ruler of the early Middle Ages was Charlemagne, king of the Franks. In 800, the pope crowned him with the title “emperor of the Romans.” On the outline map of Europe below, shade in the lands ruled by Charlemagne. (Hint: See the “Charlemagne” article to answer this question.)



15. How did Charlemagne help bring about the Carolingian Renaissance?

16. Match the region of Europe with the description of people or events from about the 800's to 1000's.

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| France | strong lords rivaled the king's authority |
| Scandinavia | the most powerful post-Carolingian kings came from here |
| Germany | the religion and culture of the Byzantine Empire influenced society |
| Russia | Vikings called it home |

Mark the following statements as “True” or “False.”

17. _____ Otto the Great extended his rule across Germany and into central Spain.
18. _____ From the 800’s to 1000’s the Czechs, Poles, and Slovaks came under the influence of western European culture and the Roman Catholic Church.

The High Middle Ages

The High Middle Ages, the high point of the Middle Ages, lasted from about 1000 to 1300. Many capable rulers provided strong governments as well as periods of peace and security during the High Middle Ages.

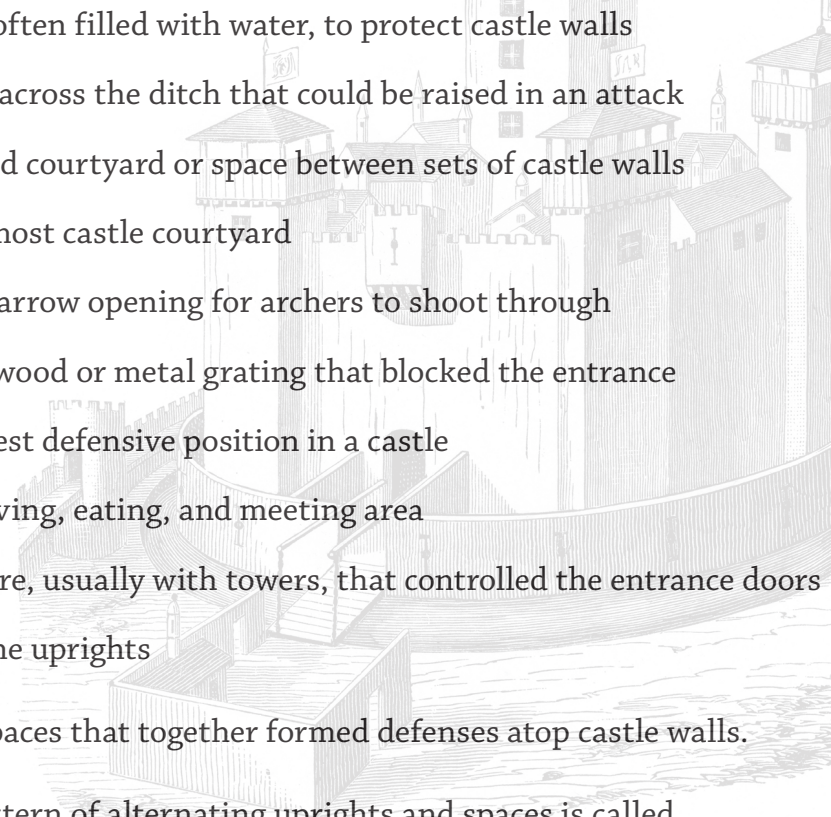
19. Name three types of goods made in medieval cities. Include at least one that was often produced by women, and circle the number to show which it is.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

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SEE IT!

20. For this question see the “Castle” article, including the drawing labeled “Stone castle of the Middle Ages.” Name these parts of a castle.

- 
- _____ – ditch, often filled with water, to protect castle walls
 - _____ – bridge across the ditch that could be raised in an attack
 - _____ – fortified courtyard or space between sets of castle walls
 - _____ – innermost castle courtyard
 - _____ – long, narrow opening for archers to shoot through
 - _____ – heavy wood or metal grating that blocked the entrance
 - _____ – strongest defensive position in a castle
 - _____ – main living, eating, and meeting area
 - _____ – structure, usually with towers, that controlled the entrance doors
 - _____ – are stone uprights
 - _____ – open spaces that together formed defenses atop castle walls.
 - _____ – The pattern of alternating uprights and spaces is called.

21. Why did some landless farm laborers move to towns?
22. Who conquered in England in 1066?
23. The Italians in Genoa, Pisa, Venice, and other towns built _____ of _____ to carry trade goods across the _____ Sea to trading centers in Spain and northern Africa.
24. List four ways that belonging to a guild helped merchants and craftworkers living in towns.
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
25. How did the French kings Philip II and Louis I strengthen royal government in France?

26. If you were a learned and talented artist, philosopher, or scientist during the High Middle Ages, where did you most likely find your support and inspiration?

The Late Middle Ages

The late Middle Ages lasted from about 1300 to about 1500.

27. How did a climate change in the 1300's impact agriculture and European society?



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MAP IT! (Hint: Find the answer to the next two questions in the “Black Death” article.)

28. Examine the map titled “Black Death.” How long did it take for the epidemic to spread through Europe?
29. What did the outbreak of plague do to transform European society?

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FIND IT! (Hint: Return to the “Middle Ages” article for these last questions.)

30. In the late Middle Ages, governments tried to pass laws to make peasants continue to pay high rents and to stay on the land rather than move to towns. What did some of the peasants do?
31. How long did the series of conflicts between England and France known as the Hundred Years’ War actually last?
32. What period of great artistic and cultural achievement in European history began during the late Middle Ages?
33. How did the switch from writing most literature in Latin to writing in vernacular (native) languages such as English, French, or Italian influence society?
34. How did the invention of the printing press change society?

Early, High, or Late?

35. Based on what you now know about the Middle Ages, put a letter in the space before each person or topic to indicate whether it most belongs in the Early Middle Ages (“E”), High Middle Ages (“H”), or Late Middle Ages (“L”). If you are curious about any of the people or topics, each one has its own article within the World Book database.

_____ Carolingian art – art style developed around the time of Charlemagne

_____ Vikings – Norse raiders, traders, conquerors, and settlers

- _____ Henry II of England – expanded royal authority over law courts and justice
- _____ printing press – new technology
- _____ Saint Thomas Aquinas – great religious scholar
- _____ Geoffrey Chaucer – wrote famous stories in English
- _____ King Arthur – legendary British king who resisted Anglo-Saxon invasions
- _____ Hundred Years’ War – series of conflicts between England and France
- _____ Black Death – deadly plague epidemic
- _____ start of the Hanseatic League – start of a league of northern European trade cities

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 1:

Imagine you received a one-way ticket back in time on the world’s only time machine. You want to use it, but just learned that you would have to live in the Middle Ages. Sounds like fun, right? Luckily, you can choose the era you prefer: the early Middle Ages, the High Middle Ages, or the late Middle Ages. Write a short essay to explain your choice. What are you most excited to see, experience, and learn? What parts of your chosen period make you nervous?

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 2:

Read about trade fairs in the section of the “Middle Ages” article on the “Economic recovery” during the High Middle Ages. Imagine you are a peasant living on a small manor in France in the year 1220. You hear about a trade fair nearby and decide to try to sell some of your crop of onions there. Create a colorful map or brochure to entice others to go. Make sure your map or brochure describes what they might see at the fair. Include pictures of places and people that may be useful in guiding others to your onion stand.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 3:

Examine the pictures in the “Middle Ages” article labeled “Life in the Middle Ages” and “Food production in the Middle Ages.” Both pictures come from a book completed in the early 1400’s. They belong to a series of paintings illustrating the 12 months of the year.

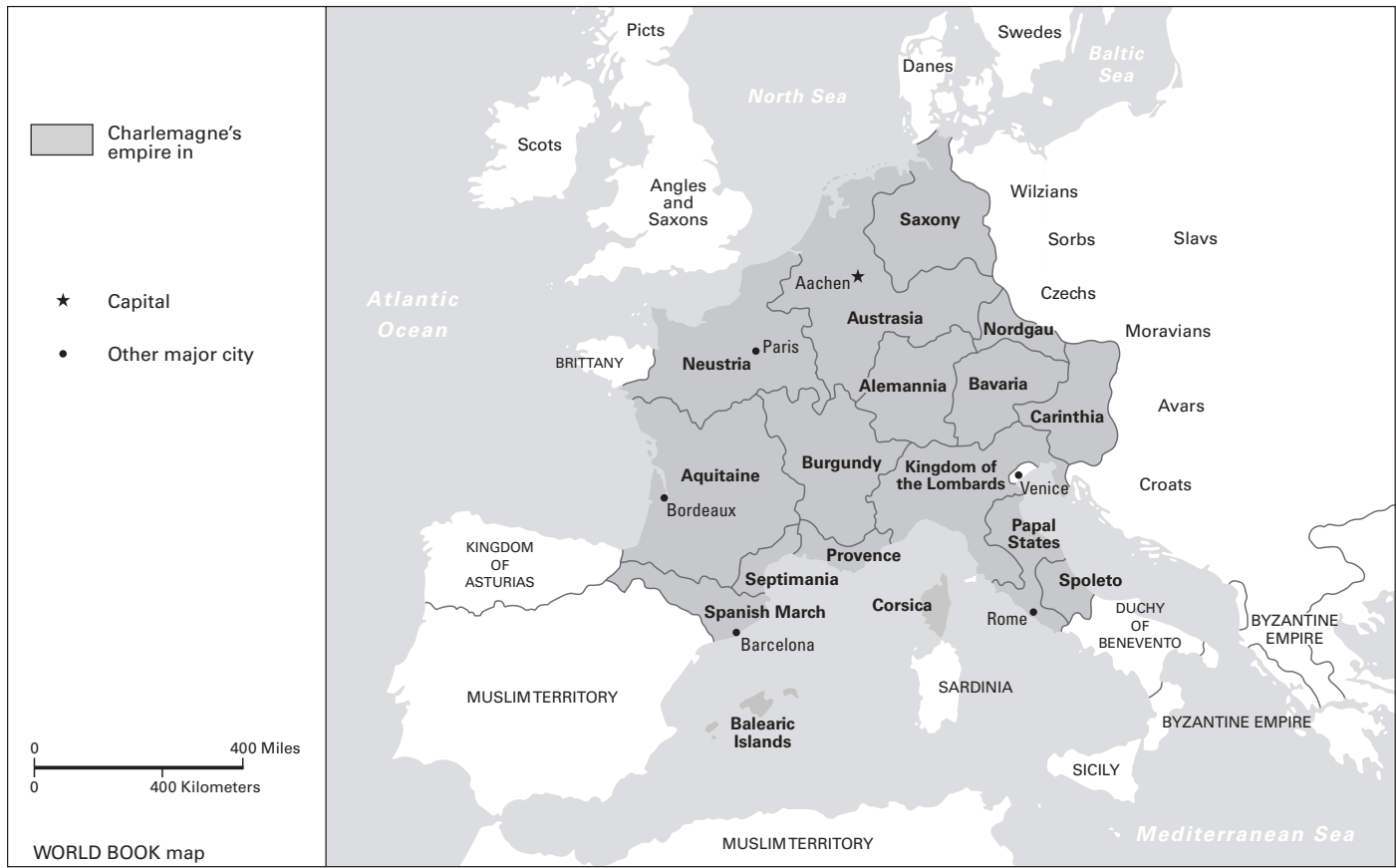
Pick a place and a month. Then create a similar illustration of medieval life—for example, life at a king’s court in December, September harvest on a manor, or a June trade fair in a French town.

TEACHER PAGE

ANSWERS:

1. The name “Middle Ages” describes the period from about the 400’s through the 1400’s.
2. The Middle Ages are also known as the medieval period.
3. True
4. True
5. False
The Roman Empire became permanently divided into two parts—the East Roman Empire and the West Roman Empire
6. Labels on the map:
 - a. Visigoths—present-day Spain and southwestern France
 - b. Vandals— present-day North Africa
 - c. Angles, Saxons, and Jutes— present-day island of Great Britain
 - d. Franks—mainly present-day France
 - e. Ostrogoths— present-day Italy
7. The last official emperor of the West Roman Empire was deposed in A.D. 476.
8. It survived, as the Byzantine Empire, until 1453.
9. In the early Middle Ages, Germanic groups divided the West Roman Empire into many small kingdoms.
10. *Answers will vary, but may include some of the following:*
Towns in the post-Roman period continued to be centers of population, economic production, and political power. Some towns shrank, but others grew. New towns also appeared, especially as more trade developed in northeastern Europe. Economies were particularly strong in realms that emerged in present day France, Belgium, and the Netherlands.
11. *Answers will vary, but may include some of the following:*
Christian bishops had begun to take on such government responsibilities as overseeing law courts and maintaining city walls. They also cared for the poor and looking after travelers. Early medieval bishops worked closely with rulers to maintain their kingdoms. Around 600, Christian rulers and church officials began organizing efforts to send missionaries to the non-Christian areas of Europe. Cathedrals and monasteries became centers of learning. They preserved ancient books and founded most schools in Europe. Religious institutions, especially monasteries, played an important role in developing and spreading technology, such as new farming techniques and water mills to grind grain.
12. manors—large estates of land
tenants—people who paid to farm land they did not own
rents—crops and services used to pay a landlord for farmland
landlords—people who rented out portions of their land to others
13. *Answers will vary, but may include some of the following:*
 1. People invented a heavy plow that was more effective at turning over the wet, heavy soils of northern Europe.
 2. The introduction of a horse collar that allowed farmers to use horses as well as oxen to pull heavy loads.
 3. The use of water mills to grind grain into flour freed up laborers for other tasks.
 4. The spread of windmills into Europe.
 5. Peasants moved into thinly-settled frontiers, cleared forests, and drained swamps to increase farmland.

14. *Map of Charlemagne's empire from the Charlemagne article, to show what areas the student should have shaded in to answer the question.*



15. *Answers will vary, but may include the following:*

He worked to protect and reform the church. He supported education and scholarship. He established a school at his palace in Aachen. Teachers from across Europe gathered there. They organized schools and libraries and copied ancient manuscripts. These activities caused a new interest in learning called the Carolingian Renaissance.

16. France—strong lords rivaled the king's authority

Scandinavia—Vikings called it home

Germany—the most powerful rulers of the post-Carolingian era came from here

Russia—the religion and culture of the Byzantine Empire influenced society

17. False. Otto I, also known as Otto the Great, extended his rule across Germany and into central Italy.

18. True

19. *Answers will vary, but may include some of the following:*

Towns served as centers for producing such necessary goods as ceramics, cloth, glass, iron tools and weapons, and leather goods. Women often worked with their husbands in a family's business. They also worked independently in such occupations as silk weaving and beer brewing.

20. moat – ditch, often filled with water, to protect castle walls
 drawbridge – bridge across the ditch that could be raised in an attack
 bailey (or ward) – fortified courtyard or space between sets of castle walls
 inner bailey (or inner ward) – innermost castle courtyard
 slit window – long, narrow opening for archers to shoot through
 portcullis – heavy wood or metal grating that blocked the entrance
 keep – strongest defensive position in a castle
 great hall – main living, eating, and meeting area
 gatehouse – structure, usually with towers, that controlled the entrance doors
 Merlons are stone uprights and crenels are open spaces that together formed defenses atop castle walls.
 The pattern of alternating uprights and spaces is called crenellation.
21. Some landless laborers moved to towns where they could live as free citizens.
22. William, the duke of Normandy
23. Italians in Genoa, Pisa, and Venice, and other towns built fleets of ships to carry trade goods across the Mediterranean Sea to trading centers in Spain and northern Africa.
24. *Answers may include:*
- provided protection against unfair business practices
 - established prices and wages
 - settled disputes between workers and employers
 - helped townspeople gain more self-government
 - forced a lord to grant the people a charter that gave them certain rights of self-government
 - often ran town governments
25. *Answers will vary, but may include the following:*
 The French King Philip II, also known as Philip Augustus centralized the government, tightening royal authority over some of the most powerful French nobles. His grandson Louis IX expanded the royal administration of justice throughout his realm.
26. The Christian church. From 1100 to 1300, almost all the great ideas and artistic achievements reflected the influence of the church.
27. Around 1300, climate changes made weather in western Europe slightly cooler and wetter. As a result, the agricultural practices could not sustain the increased population. Famines and floods caused widespread hardship.
28. The disease reached Europe in 1347. It spread across the continent from 1347 to 1352.
29. Consumers and skilled workers died by the thousands in cities, devastating some local economies. Labor shortages caused by high death tolls led to increased wages, attracting many peasants to the cities. Some rural villages simply disappeared.
30. Some peasants rose up in bloody revolts.
31. They lasted from 1337 to 1453, or 116 years.
32. the Renaissance

33. The increasing use of the vernacular opened a new literary age, and gradually brought learning and literature to the common people.
34. The introduction of the printing press in Europe in the mid-1400's meant that books and documents could be made more cheaply and became available for many more people to read.
35. E Carolingian art – art style developed around the time of Charlemagne
E Vikings – Norse raiders, traders, conquerors, and settlers
H Henry II of England – expanded royal authority over law courts and justice
L printing press – new technology
H Saint Thomas Aquinas – great religious scholar
L Geoffrey Chaucer – wrote famous stories in English
E King Arthur – legendary British king who resisted Anglo-Saxon invasions
L Hundred Years' War – series of conflicts between England and France
L Black Death – deadly plague epidemic
H start of the Hanseatic League – start of a league of northern European trade cities

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES 1, 2, AND 3: Answers will vary.