

Part II – The So-Called Middle Ages
Unit III – Feudalism and the Early Middle Ages

After the Roman Empire declined in the 400s, the Germanic tribes slowly established new kingdoms. The Frankish kings under Charlemagne attempted to rebuild the glory of the Roman Empire, creating a new Holy Roman Empire with the blessing of medieval Europe's newest powerful institution: the Catholic Church, headed by the Pope. Disrupting this alliance were a series of interactions and invasions by Vikings, Muslims, and Magyars. How would the new Europeans adapt to this chaotic period of time? How could they organize their government to provide for the security of Europe?

Fundamental Themes

The feudal system as a solution (and a challenge) to medieval European life
The Vikings transformation of the European political and economic world

Topics of Study

I. The Holy Roman Empire – What characterized this new monarchy in Europe? How did it adapt to meet the challenges of its times? What accounts for its decline?

From Pepin to Charlemagne to Louis Christmas Mass, 800 (Implications)
The Carolingian Renaissance Carolingian Decline

II. Interactions and Invasions – What groups invaded Europe in the Middle Ages? What were the Vikings like and why are they misrepresented? What effect did the Vikings have on Europe?

Islam The Vikings and Magyars
Intellectual Wealth and Origins
Grandness Characteristics and Stereotypes
Contact with Europe Effect on Europe

III. Feudalism – What was feudalism and why was it adopted in Europe? Who were the winners and losers in the feudal system and why?

Definition and Origins Lords and Manors
Peasants and Serfs Knighthood, Chivalry, and Courtly Love

IV. Spread of Feudalism – How did the feudal system spread throughout Europe? What were the consequences of its spread? What were the implications of William the Conqueror's victory at the Battle of Hastings?

William the Conqueror and Harold The Battle of Hastings
Godwinson The Bayeux Tapestry

Further Reading

Patterns of Interaction, Chapter 13, "European Middle Ages, 500-1200," pp. 350-374

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Below is a tentatively complete list of key names, places, events, ideas, concepts:

- Names
 - Carolingian Dynasty
 - Charles Martel (“The Hammer”)
 - Charlemagne (Contributions and Achievements)
 - Louis the Pious
 - Muslims
 - Interactions with the European World (i.e. Cordoba)
 - Magyars
 - Vikings
 - Reasons for Leaving Scandinavia
 - Culture
 - Misconceptions
 - Rollo
 - Feudalism
 - Social and political hierarchy
 - Manors and Manorialism
 - Edward the Confessor
 - William the Conqueror
 - Harold Godwinson
 - The Bayeux Tapestry
- Events
 - Battle of Tours, 732 C.E.
 - Coronation of Charlemagne on Christmas Day Mass, 800 C.E.
 - Treaty of Verdun, 843 C.E.
 - Second Wave Invasions in the Carolingian Empire (Magyars, Muslims, Vikings)
 - Viking Interactions with the Old and New World
 - Rollo Negotiating with Europeans, 911 C.E.
 - The Battle of Hastings, 1066 C.E.
- Ideas and Concepts
 - Charlemagne’s Missi Domestici
 - Feudalism and Manorialism
 - Chivalry, Knightly Code, Courtly Love
 - Viking Misconceptions
 - General Sequence of Historical Events