Chapter 17 – The Early Middle Ages

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Geography of Europe

The Big Idea
Because Europe has many types of landforms and climates, different ways of life have developed there.

Main Ideas
• The physical features of Europe vary widely from region to region.
• Geography has shaped life in Europe, including where and how people live.
Main Idea 1: The physical features of Europe vary widely from region to region.

- Europe is a small continent, but it is very diverse. Many different landforms, water features, and climates can be found.

- **Eurasia** is the large landmass that includes both Europe and Asia.

- Geographers consider the Ural Mountains to be the boundary between Europe and Asia.

- **Topography** is the shape and elevation of land in a region.
Regions of Europe

Mountain Ranges
These ranges cover much of southern Europe. The Alps, with peaks 15,000 feet high, have large snowfields and glaciers.

North of the Alps
The land is much flatter. It is covered with thick forests and fertile soil.

Northern European Plain
This area has most of Europe’s rivers, which are formed from the melting of snow.

Far Northern Europe
Many rugged hills and low mountains cover this area. You can see these mountains in Scandinavia, Europe’s largest peninsula.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Climate Characteristics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Southern Europe</td>
<td>- Warm and sunny</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Drier with less rain</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northwestern Europe</td>
<td>- Mild and cooler</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Wetter with more rain</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scandinavia</td>
<td>- Freezing and cold</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Large amounts of snowfall</td>
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The different types of climates and landforms made a difference in where people lived and what types of crops they could grow for food. Many different ways of life developed in Europe, because of different climates and landforms.
Most people lived on coastal plains or in the valleys, where the land was flat enough to farm.

Crops like grapes and olives were suited to this type of geography.

Herds of sheep and goats were raised in the mountains.

There were many peninsulas, so people didn’t live far from the sea. Many people became traders and seafarers.
Northern Europe

- Towns grew up along the rivers which had access to the sea.
- Rivers also provided protection from invaders. The city of Paris, France was built on an island in a river to make the city hard for raiders to reach.
- Farmers grew all sorts of crops in the fertile fields that surrounded the towns.
- The lack of mountains was good for farming, but it made the towns easier to be invaded by enemies.
Europe after the Fall of Rome

The Big Idea
Despite the efforts of Christians to maintain order, Europe was a dangerous place after the fall of Rome.

Main Ideas
• Christianity spread to northern Europe through the work of missionaries and monks.
• The Franks, led by Charlemagne, created a huge Christian empire and brought together scholars from around Europe.
• Invaders threatened much of Europe in the 700s and 800s.
Main Idea 1:
Christianity spread to northern Europe through the work of missionaries and monks.

After the fall of Rome, groups moved into Europe and divided the lands among themselves. The leaders of these groups called themselves kings.

The creation of kingdoms marked the beginning of the Middle Ages, a period lasting from 500 to 1500. Another name for this age is the medieval period. We call this time the middle ages because it falls between ancient times and modern times.

At the beginning of the middle ages, Christianity was only common in places like Italy and Spain where Rome had ruled before its fall.
Spread of Christianity

- Christianity slowly spread north. This spread was largely through the efforts of two groups of Christians—missionaries and monks.
- The most powerful force that helped spread Christianity was the pope.
- The pope sent missionaries, people who try to convert others to a particular religion, to Europe.
- Some missionaries traveled great distances to spread Christianity.
- One of the first places the pope sent missionaries was Britain and from there other missionaries went into what is now France and Germany.
- Some missionaries were sent by Patrick, who traveled from Britain to Ireland to convert the Irish people.
Monks

- **Monks** were religious men who lived apart from society in isolated communities.
- Monks were very dedicated to their faith and spent time in prayer, work, and meditation.
- Communities of monks, or **monasteries**, were built all over Europe.
- Most European monasteries followed the rules created by Saint Benedict, an Italian monk.
Influence of Monks

• Although monks lived in isolated communities, they performed many services.
• The monks gave aid to the poor and needy.
• They ran schools and copied books.
• The monks collected and saved writings from Greece and Rome.
• Some monks served as scribes and advisers for local rulers.
Main Idea 2:
The Franks, led by Charlemagne, created a huge Christian empire and brought together scholars from around Europe.

As Christianity spread, political changes also took place. In the 480s a powerful group called the Franks conquered Gaul. Their influence would extend far beyond Gaul in the coming years.

Under a ruler named Clovis, the Franks became Christian.
Charlemagne

- Charlemagne came to power in the 700s.
- He was the leader of the Franks.
- Charlemagne was a fierce and brilliant warrior and a strong king.
- As a warrior, he conquered many kingdoms.
- As a king, his reign included France, Germany, Austria, Italy, and northern Spain.
Accomplishments of Charlemagne

- He led the Franks in building a huge empire.
- The pope, Leo III, crowned Charlemagne the king of the Holy Roman Empire.
- He was a great admirer of education and built schools across Europe.
- Scholars were brought in during his reign to teach in his capital at Aachen.
- Among these scholars were some of the greatest religious scholars and teachers of the Middle Ages.
Main Idea 3:
Invaders threatened much of Europe in the 700s and 800s.

Many groups posed new threats to Europe. Invaders began to attack settlements all over the continent.

The Magyars came into Europe from the East.

From Scandinavia came perhaps the most frightening invaders of all, the Vikings.

Because Vikings could sail their ships up rivers, their raids weren’t limited to coastal areas. They also reached inland cities and attacked cities in the Iberian and Italian peninsulas.
Invaders of Europe

**Muslims**
- Muslim armies poured into southern France and northern Italy.

**Magyars**
- Magyars were fierce warriors who swept into Europe, attacking towns and destroying fields.

**Vikings**
- Vikings came from Scandinavia and raided Britain, Ireland, and other parts of western Europe.
Feudalism and Manor Life

The Big Idea
A complex web of duties and obligations governed relationships between people in the Middle Ages.

Main Ideas
- Feudalism governed how knights and nobles dealt with each other.
- Feudalism spread through most of Europe.
- The manor system dominated Europe’s economy.
- Towns and trade grew and helped end the feudal system.
Main Idea 1:
Feudalism governed how knights and nobles dealt with each other.

- Kings were unable to defend their empires. Nobles had to defend their own land. As a result, nobles' power grew, and kings became less powerful.
- To defend their lands, nobles needed soldiers. The best soldiers were knights, warriors who fought on horseback. Knights needed weapons, armor, and horses, so nobles gave land to the knights to support them.
- A knight who promised to support a lord in exchange for land was called a vassal.
- Feudalism was a system of promises that governed the relationships between lords and vassals.
As a result, nobles gave knights fiefs, or pieces of land, instead of money for their military service.

A noble who gave land to the knight this way was called a lord.

A knight who promised to support a lord in exchange for land was called a vassal.

The vassal swore that he would always remain loyal to his lord.

This system of promises that governed the relationships between lords and vassals is called feudalism.
Lords

- Lords sent help to the vassals if they were attacked.
- They built castles to defend themselves against attacks.
- The lords could not punish the vassals without good reason.
- If a lord failed to do what he was supposed to, the vassal could break all ties with him.
Vassals

- Served their lords in times of war
- Gave money to their lords on special occasions such as weddings
- Gave their lords food and shelter whenever they came to visit.
Main Idea 2:
Feudalism spreads through much of Europe.

- Feudalism was created by the Franks, but the system spread to other countries.
- Frankish knights introduced feudalism into northern Italy, Spain, and Germany.
- Feudalism then spread to eastern Europe and to England.
A French noble named William was the duke of Normandy (France) when it decided to conquer England. The duke invaded and defeated England in 1066 in a battle near the town of Hastings (The Battle of Hastings) and became known as William the Conqueror.

William and his men defeated the English, and William declared himself king of England.

He gave his knights land in return for their loyalty.

This was the beginning of feudalism in England.
Main Idea 3:
The manor system dominated Europe’s economy.

When knights received land from their kings, they did not have time to farm it. At the same time, there were poor people who needed a way to grow food. The manor system was a way to take care of both problems.
A large estate owned by a knight or lord was called a **manor**.

The manor included a large house or castle, pastures, fields, and forests.

Most medieval lords kept one-half to one-third of the land for themselves.

The rest of the land was divided among peasants, small farmers, and **serfs**, workers who were tied to the land on which they lived.
Serfs and Peasants

- Although they were not slaves, they could not leave the land without permission.
- They spent most of their time working for the lord in exchange for a small piece of land to farm for themselves.
- Farm labor was hard, and everyone worked, even children.
- The lords wanted people to produce everything they needed to live.
The lords controlled everything that happened on their land.

They resolved disputes and collected taxes from the people on their land.

The lords lived more comfortably than the serfs and peasants, but they still had to worry about disease and warfare.
Women in the Middle Ages

- Regardless of social class, women in the Middle Ages had fewer rights than men.
- Women still had important roles in society. They supported their families, ran manor households, and supervised servants. They also governed manors when their husbands went to war.
- Eleanor of Aquitaine had great political power. She eventually became queen of France through marriage and later queen of England through marriage.
- Other women who wanted power and influence joined the most powerful of institutions, the Christian Church.
During the Middle Ages, most people lived on manors or small farms, and towns were small. After about 1000 AD, things began to change, as some towns turned into big cities.
More people lived in Europe because more food was available.

New technology, such as a heavier plow and the horse collar, meant that farmers could be more productive.

Trade increased as the population grew and trade routes began to develop across Europe.

People began to leave the farms and move to the towns in order to make more money.

Growth of trade led to the decline of feudalism. Knights began to demand money for services and serfs and peasants left their manors for towns.
Feudal Societies

The Big Idea

Although the feudal systems of Europe and Japan were similar, their cultures were very different.

Main Ideas

• Feudal societies shared common elements in Europe and Japan.
• Europe and Japan differed in their cultural elements such as religion and art.
Main Idea 1:
Feudal societies shared common elements in Europe and Japan.

Feudalism was not used only in Europe. There was also a very similar system in place in Japan.
Lords and Vassals

- Kings and lords were like the emperors and daimyo, or landowners, of Japan.
- They controlled the lands and had warriors who helped them defend their property.
- In Europe the warriors were known as knights. In Japan they were known as samurai.
Knights and Samurai

- Both knights and samurai swore their loyalty to their lords.
- Bushido was the code of honor for the samurai.
- **Chivalry** was the code of honorable behavior for the knights in Europe. Chivalry required knights to be brave and loyal but humble and modest at the same time.
- Knights and samurai were both greatly admired by the people of their country.
Main Idea 2:
Europe and Japan differed in their cultural elements such as religion and art.

Europe and Japan were similar in some ways, such as the feudal system. However, they also had cultures that were very different.

Feydalasim lasted much longer in Japan than it did in Europe.
Differences between Europe and Japan

Art

European art was mainly about religion and depicting scenes from the Bible. Japanese art was about nature and beauty. Japanese poets created haiku, short, three-line poems of 17 syllables that describe nature scenes.

Religion

Nearly all Europeans were Christian. The Japanese blended elements of Buddhism, Shinto, and Confucianism.
**Life on a Manor**

Manors were large estates that developed in Europe during the Middle Ages. Many manors were largely self-sufficient, producing most of the food and goods they needed. This picture shows what a manor in Britain might have looked like.

- **The lord of the manor** lived in a large stone house called the manor house.
- **Peasants** grew vegetables in small gardens near their houses.
- In the fall, peasants worked to harvest crops like wheat.
- **Sheep** grazed on grassy fields, and villagers used sheep's wool to make clothes.
- **Harvested wheat** was taken to the mill and ground into flour, which was used to make bread.
- The village **blacksmith** made iron tools for farming.
- **The village church** was built on a small piece of land that belonged to the lord.
Europe’s geography has influenced the development of different ways of life. It has influenced, for example, what crops people have grown and where cities have developed.

1. Farmers have long grown olives and other hardy crops in the drier, warmer areas along the Mediterranean in southern Europe.

2. Cities have grown along rivers such as the Rhine in Germany. Rivers have been routes for moving people and goods.

3. Many people in cold, snowy Scandinavia have settled on the coasts, looking to the sea and lands beyond for the resources they need.
Medieval Market

In the Middle Ages, some towns held large trade fairs each year. This illustration shows a bishop blessing a trade fair in France.
Samurai and Knights

Although Japanese samurai and European knights never actually met, they had much in common. Both were the elite warriors of their time and place.
Europe: Physical

1. Region  What four peninsulas do you see labeled?
2. Movement  How might the Alps have affected the movement of peoples?
Saint Patrick
AD 400s

Patrick was a monk who helped convert the Irish to Christianity. As a teenager, Patrick was kidnapped in Britain and taken to Ireland, where he was forced to work as a shepherd. After six years, he escaped. But later he returned to Ireland to spread Christianity. According to legend, he won favor with the Irish by driving all of the snakes in Ireland into the sea. After Patrick died, he was declared a saint by the people of Ireland.
Charlemagne’s Empire

Frankish Kingdom, AD 768
Territories added by Charlemagne, AD 768–814
Charlemagne’s capital

0 100 200 Miles
0 100 200 Kilometers

GEOGRAPHY SKILLS
INTERPRETING MAPS

Location In what directions did Charlemagne expand his empire?
Invasions of Europe, AD 800–1000

Vikings used their versatile ships to invade many areas of Europe.

Settlements and Invasion Routes
- Vikings
- Muslims
- Magyars

Movement: Which group invaded the most areas?

Geography Skills: Interpreting Maps
**Feudal Society**

**Kings and Queens**
Kings and queens were the greatest lords of Europe, and all nobles and knights were their vassals.

**Nobles**
Nobles were vassals of kings and queens. Many were also lords of lower-ranking nobles and knights.

**Knights**
Knights served their noble lords in exchange for land.

**Peasants**
Peasants owned no land, so they were not part of the feudal system. But many peasants worked on land owned by nobles or knights.

**How could a noble be both a lord and a vassal?**
Comparing and Contrasting Europe and Japan

**Feudal Europe**
- Christianity
- Religious themes in art and literature

**Feudal Japan**
- Buddhism, Shinto, Confucianism
- Nature themes in art and literature

**Feudal government**
- Royalty (kings and queens, emperor)
- Nobles (lords, daimyo)
- Warriors (knights, samurai)
- Warrior codes of honor (chivalry, Bushido)
- Peasants worked land
Visual Summary

Use the visual summary below to help you review the main ideas of the chapter.

After Rome fell, Christianity spread into northern Europe.

Life in Europe was based on feudalism and manor life.

Both Europe and Japan developed feudal societies.
Click window above to start playing.