

Medieval europe essay sample

[Parts of the World](#), [Europe](#)



1. What characteristics defined medieval west Europe?
 2. How did manorialism affect the legal, social and economic position of the serfs?
 3. How did feudal monarchs organize power? How was their power limited?
 4. What problems did the medieval church face and how did it solve them?
 5. What changes occurred in agriculture, towns and commerce after 1000?
 6. What social, economic, religious and political changes ended this era?
- Vocab: a) 3 field system b) vassals c) scholasticism d) Hanseatic League e) guilds f) Black Death g) Crusades

Review Questions:

1. Medieval west Europe contained political structures comparable to the more recent civilizations of Russia, Japan, and sub-Saharan Africa. There were many signs of a developing society in this part of Europe: economic productivity, population growth, technological achievement, increased political complexity, and artistic and intellectual advancement. The development of Western civilization was attributed to politics and social structure. As far as intellectual growth, medieval west Europe produced the university and Gothic architectural forms and ideas.
2. Manorialism was the organization of economic and political obligations between landlords and peasants. In this type of local political organization, serfs, or people living and working on manors, bore many burdens from society, but they were not slaves. Serfs retained some political freedoms; they had inheritable ownership of houses and land as long as they met all obligations. As far as their economic power, the peasant villages created by the serfs provided for them a community life and limited self-government.

3. Feudal monarchs organized power by beginning bureaucratic administration and specialization of official functions. Later on, when William the Conqueror invaded England in 1066 C. E., he merged feudal techniques with a more centralized government; royal officials, or sheriffs, supervised local justice throughout the kingdom. The power of feudal monarchs was limited by the church, the military strength of the aristocracy, and the development of urban centers.

4. Several periods of decline and renewal marked the pattern of the medieval Catholic Church. Its wealth and power often made its officials turn to secular matters. Monastic orders and popes from the eleventh century C. E. worked to reform the ways of the church. Pope Gregory VII tried to free the church from secular influence by issuing that priests must remain unmarried and bishops must not be appointed by the state. Independent church courts began to develop in order to lead on religious concerns and problems.

5. After 1000 C. E., the agricultural field opened wide with the increased production of the moldboard plow, the three-field system, horse collars, and stirrups. This and the diminishing of Viking incursions allowed population growth and encouraged the innovation of the economy. Expanding towns emerged with regional trade centers with craft production and a new merchant class. New agricultural land was developed to meet food demands, and the demand for labor made conditions easier for serfs. Urban centers spread literacy, popular culture, and religious life. Cathedral schools began to evolve into universities, and architecture and art reached new levels.

6. At the close of the medieval era, peasants had been able to shake off their harsh manorial constraints; with landlords using trade to improve their living styles, the economy increased landlord-peasant tensions. Peasants wished for more freedom and control of land, while landlords wanted higher revenues. Urban growth promoted the increase of specialized manufacturing and commerce, with Italian businessmen introduced to banking and the increase of trade across Europe. Governments left merchants alone apart from taxation and borrowing, which allowed them to gain an independent role in society. Most peasants and landlords were not a part of a market system. As with other regions of the world during this time period, women's roles became limited because of the increasing complexity of economic and social life. Male-dominated organizations held their ground, and patriarchal structures were firmly established by the close of the medieval period.

Vocabulary:

A. Three-field System: Developed in the ninth century C. E.; where one-third of the land was left unplanted each year to increase fertility.

B. Vassals: Members of the military elite who received land or a benefice from a lord in return for military service and loyalty.

C. Scholasticism: Dominant medieval philosophical approach that was based on the use of logic to resolve theological problems; so-called scholasticism because of its center in the schools or universities.

D. Hanseatic League: An organization of cities in northern Germany and southern Scandinavia for the purpose of establishing a commercial alliance.

E. Guilds: Sworn associations of people in the same business or trade in a single city; this stressed security and mutual control, limited membership, regulated apprenticeship, guaranteed good workmanship, and often established franchise with cities.

F. Black Death: Plague that struck Europe in the fourteenth century C. E. which significantly reduced Europe's population and affected its social structure.

G. Crusades: Wars against the Muslim control of the Holy Land; Pope Urban II called for the First Crusade in 1095 C. E., which appealed to the piety of the West's rulers and common people.