

History



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Identify the major challenges (social, economic, military, religious, and intellectual) facing Europeans during the Late Middle Ages in Europe. Then explain why Europe did not sink into a "dark age" similar to that which followed the fall of Rome and why instead there was a Renaissance first in Italy and then in Europe north of the Alps.

The centuries between 1300 and 1500 AD have come to be collectively referred to as The Late Middle Ages with respect to European history. While some new innovations in Art and Architecture alongside discoveries in Science and Technology were taking place, there were a lot many uncertainties pertaining to the stability and political administration of various kingdoms across Europe. It won't be an exaggeration to say that progress and prosperity came to a halt, if not a decline, during this period primarily due to rampant warfare, theological uncertainty and natural calamities.

The Great Famine of the early fourteenth century and the subsequent Black Death (the mysterious epidemic breakout) nearly reduced the European population by one thirds. Given the backdrop of this catastrophe, one can understand the stagnation of fine arts; as at this time basic survival proved a challenging proposition in itself. Other contributors to a general social unrest during this era included collective rebellion of the peasants, witnessed especially in France and England. The other conflict on a larger scale was the notorious Hundred Years' War. But the most destabilizing event during the period was the decline in authority of the Catholic Church, due primarily to internal disagreements between different denominations. Hence, the Late Middle Ages were a period of chaos, confusion and listless in many aspects. Yet, much of Europe had endured these tough times and had managed to keep the uniqueness of its civilization intact, till the advent of Renaissance,

wherein the dormancy of European culture gave way to a new blooming. What prevented Europe from sinking into the abyss of the Dark Ages that was suffered by kingdoms in the Mediterranean, was the continued progress seen within the faculties of arts and sciences, albeit at a less vigorous pace. The most critical element of the artistic preservation and improvement during this era came in the form of a revival in ancient historical texts, especially the ones left behind by the Great Roman Empire. In effect, the founding principles of the Renaissance are to be found within this historical framework. While resources were being made futile during the Crusades in Arabia, this conflict benefited European scholars as they gained access to many long lost Greek scriptures. The asylum seeking Byzantine scholars provided other sources of historical record. In other words, through this chance group of events, Europe had had the good fortune of keeping its culture of historical documentation alive and hence continues progress in the fields of literature, fine arts and natural philosophy.

Other technological improvements like printing machines helped turn erstwhile elitist art forms into popular ones. Even the Great Schism of the Catholic Church led to the Protestant Reformation. Further, the opening up of new exotic lands through the discoveries of Vasco da Gama and Columbus helped boost trade and helped European nations to compensate for the severe human and economic destruction witnessed during the Great Plague. Thus, Europe had somehow resolutely survived this tough period of its history and European culture reached its days of glory in subsequent decades with the birth of the Renaissance.