

*Everyday Life:*  
**MIDDLE AGES**  
WITH CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES IN EACH CHAPTER

**WALTER A. HAZEN**

 GOOD YEAR BOOKS

# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b><i>Chapter 1—The Feudal System</i></b>	<b>2</b>
Create a Dialogue	6
Recall Information You Have Read	7
Solve a Feudalism Puzzle	8
Do a Scan of Scandinavia	9
<b><i>Chapter 2—Life on a Manor</i></b>	<b>10</b>
Make Inferences from Facts	14
Make a Shoe Box Diorama	15
Fill in a Venn Diagram	16
Prepare a Time Machine Journal	17
<b><i>Chapter 3—Castle Life</i></b>	<b>18</b>
Write a Lead Paragraph for <i>Castle Chatter</i>	22
Solve a Castle Puzzle	23
Help Lord Snootville Eat Better	24
Bake a Pan of Apple Pudding	25
<b><i>Chapter 4—Knights and Knighthood</i></b>	<b>26</b>
Make False Statements True	30
Create a Dialogue	31
Design a Coat of Arms	32
Contribute to a Bulletin Board Display	33
<b><i>Chapter 5—Legends, Myths, and Other Beliefs</i></b>	<b>34</b>
Use Context Clues to Complete Sentences	38
Make a Cereal Box Report	39
Name Those Synonyms and Antonyms	40
Conduct a Superstition Survey	41
<b><i>Chapter 6—The Medieval Church</i></b>	<b>42</b>
Draw Conclusions from What You Have Read	46
Solve Some Cathedral Math	47
Create an Illuminated Letter	48
Recall Information You Have Read	49



## Table of Contents *continued*

<i>Chapter 7—</i>	<b>Fun and Amusements</b>	<b>50</b>
	Make a Collage	54
	Write a Descriptive Account	55
	Compare Entertainment Then and Now	56
	Complete a Vocabulary Exercise	57
<i>Chapter 8—</i>	<b>The Crusades</b>	<b>58</b>
	Interview a Crusader Knight	62
	Solve a Puzzle about the Crusades	63
	Make Complete Sentences of Fragments	64
	Look Up Facts about Islam	65
<i>Chapter 9—</i>	<b>Medieval Towns</b>	<b>66</b>
	Research Bubonic Plague	70
	Finish a Story	71
	Fill in a Venn Diagram	72
	Interpret a Bar Graph	73
<i>Chapter 10—</i>	<b>Schools and Universities</b>	<b>74</b>
	Create University-related Word Problems	78
	Write Your Thoughts to These Questions	79
	Distinguish between Fact and Opinion	80
	Complete a Word Search	81
<i>Chapter 11—</i>	<b>Failures and Achievements</b>	<b>82</b>
	Use Context Clues to Complete Sentences	86
	Draw a Gothic Cathedral	87
	Write an Essay	88
	Make an Outline	89
	<b>Answers to Activities</b>	<b>90</b>
	<b>Additional Resources</b>	<b>92</b>





# Introduction

**I**n CE 476, the western half of the once-great Roman Empire came to an end. This came after years of attacks and invasions by “barbarian” tribes, as the Romans called the Germanic, Celtic, and Slavic peoples to their north and west. The Eastern Roman Empire survived in Constantinople (now called Istanbul) until 1453, becoming known as the Byzantine Empire. After the fall of Rome, European towns were destroyed, roads fell into disrepair, and trade and travel came to a halt. What followed was some three hundred to five hundred years of disorder and confusion, often referred to as the *Dark Ages*. This period made up the early part of the *Middle Ages*, beginning with the fall of Rome and reaching its peak in the 1200s. Most scholars put the end of the Middle Ages around 1500, a time when great changes took place around the world.

*Everyday Life: The Middle Ages* deals with all the familiar things that come to mind when one thinks of the period: knights, castles, manors, tournaments, the Crusades, and the like. It is filled with interesting stories and anecdotes that help to make the people of the age real and personable. As with earlier books in the series, each chapter ends with activities that span the school curriculum. In addition to those that focus on social studies, there are other activities that deal with math, drama, critical thinking, grammar, and cooking, to name a few.

Because of space limitations, *Everyday Life: The Middle Ages* focuses almost entirely on Europe. This is not to say that important events were not happening in other parts of the world. On the contrary, while Europe was engulfed in warfare in the Dark Ages, great civilizations were flourishing elsewhere. Mighty African kingdoms such as Ghana, Mali, and Songhai made notable achievements in the years covered by the European Middle Ages. So too did civilizations in China, India, and what later came to be called Latin America. In the latter, the great Mayan civilization, for example, had existed long before the birth of Christ, to be followed by those of the Aztecs and Incas. And, from reading the text of this book, the student will learn how the Arab civilizations of the Middle East had such a great impact on ushering in modern times in Europe.

*Everyday Life: The Middle Ages* is a book that students should find informative, interesting, and entertaining.

Walter A. Hazen





## CHAPTER I

# The Feudal System

**T**he year is 1015. You live with your family on a manor, or large estate, in rural France. Because it is a warm spring evening, you decide to hitch up a cart and visit a friend who lives on another manor a short distance to the south. You whistle happily as you wave good-bye to your parents and proceed down the cobblestone road.

What is wrong with the above scenario? Several things. If you guessed that no one—child or adult—would venture out alone in the year 1015, you are correct. If you further guessed that most people who lived on manors were serfs with neither access to a cart nor permission to leave of their own free will, you are right again. And if you pointed out that there may or may not have been a decent road, you are extremely clever!



One of many aqueducts constructed by the Romans. Some Roman aqueducts are still in use today.

There is nothing particularly significant about the year 1015. It was just one year in a period of the Middle Ages known as *feudal times*. The word *feudal* refers to “feudalism,” the economic, political, and social system that characterized medieval Europe from about 1000 to 1300. Here is how it all came about.

For more than a thousand years, a people known as the Romans controlled most of Europe and all the lands bordering on the Mediterranean Sea. They built magnificent buildings and constructed fine roads. Some of their roads are still in use today, as are some of the aqueducts they used to transport water. Aqueducts were bridge-like structures that carried water to cities throughout the far-flung world of the Romans.

The Romans were as skilled at government administration as they were at building things. From the city of Rome to the outlying provinces, efficient government and just laws made for an orderly society. This was particularly true during the first two hundred years of Rome’s empire period, extending from about 27 BCE to CE 180. Taxes were collected and manufacturing and trade flourished. People in general were happy and traveled about the empire without fear for their safety.





But then, as the old saying goes, “the bottom fell out.” Within the Roman Empire, economic conditions deteriorated and citizens lost interest in civic affairs. Civil wars became the order of the day, and the army installed one emperor after another on the throne. Twenty-five emperors were murdered within one fifty-year period.

Outside the empire, the sinking of land in northern Europe and pressure from Asian peoples to the east set off mass migrations across the borders of the Roman Empire. It took more than two hundred years, but in CE 476, one tribe, the Visigoths, conquered the city of Rome. Although the eastern part of the Roman Empire continued for another thousand years, in the west the Roman Empire came to an end.

The fall of Rome led to the development of feudalism. Many Germans had lived under Roman rule or had been allies of the Romans against other invaders. In fact, the leader of the Visigoths who conquered Rome was Odoacer, a German who was serving as a general in the Roman army. But Europe was living in a state of almost continual warfare, and few people wrote accounts of the time. Because we know so little about this period of history, people call the period the *Dark Ages*.

For the most part, the Germans and Celts lived in tribes under local rulers. But in the eighth century, one Germanic king managed to bring much of Europe under his control. That king was Charlemagne, or “Charles the Great,” the first Holy Roman Emperor. Charlemagne was king of a German tribe known as the *Franks*. Does that name ring a bell? It should. It is from *Franks* that the name *France* is derived.

Charlemagne ruled from 768 to 814. During his long reign, there was stability in western Europe. But when Charlemagne died, his grandsons were unable to keep his empire together. The result was a breakdown in central government again, although Charlemagne’s laws survived as the basis for the medieval kingdoms of France and Germany.

Matters were made even worse by the regular invasions of the Vikings. Also known as the Northmen or Norsemen, Viking pirates swept out of Scandinavia (Norway, Sweden, and Denmark) in the ninth century, raiding and plundering. The accounts of the Vikings that survive come from the monasteries that were the targets of their raids. A common prayer of the time was, “From the fury of the Northmen, O Lord, deliver us!”

Although remarkably democratic and civil among themselves, the Vikings were very warlike, showing no sympathy for the people they attacked. They





killed women and children with their long-handled axes just as easily as they killed men. After looting and then burning everything in sight, they sailed home in their long, sleek boats.

The lack of a central government led to the development of the feudal system mentioned earlier. This feudal system grew out of people's need for protection. With no strong kings to maintain law and order, people turned to local lords for help. At the heart of the system were personal arrangements between two parties.



Lithograph of a Viking warrior. The Vikings terrorized Europe in the early Middle Ages.

Feudal arrangements involved kings, powerful lords, and lesser nobles. Even though kings had little power, they were still kings, and on occasion they needed to raise an army, as did dukes and nobles. To do so, they granted tracts of land to the lords beneath them. A king or lord who gave land to a lesser lord became the latter's overlord. The one receiving the land became the vassal of the one who granted it. The land itself was called a *fief*.

A vassal who received land from a king or higher lord was obligated to fight for him for a certain number of days a year. If the vassal himself had vassals, they were obligated to fight also. Specially trained warriors called *knights*, lived in the castles or manor houses of great lords, or received a knight's fee, usually enough land to yield 20 pounds income a year. They paid for their keep by serving in the lord's army. In a later chapter, you will read about training to become a

knight. For now, it is enough to say that only after successfully passing through the ranks of page and squire did a young man attain knighthood.

Sometimes feudal arrangements and agreements were quite complicated. It was not unusual for a person to be a vassal to two or more lords at the same time. Having received a fief from each, he was therefore obligated to serve both. This posed no problem unless his two overlords went to war against each other! Sometimes the vassal's contract would say what he was to do. For example, he might have to fight for one lord but send a number of his knights to fight on the other side!

A vassal had responsibilities other than to serve his lord in battle. He also had to sit on the lord's court, where he might judge the guilt or innocence of





another vassal. If his lord stopped by for a visit, the vassal had to provide food and shelter for his superior and all of his party. Not the least of the vassal's promises was to help pay the ransom demanded when his lord was unfortunate enough to get himself captured by an enemy.

The lord/vassal relationship was a serious arrangement not to be taken lightly. It was initiated with great ceremony at the castle or manor house of the lord. The vassal knelt before his lord and placed his hands between the hands of the lord. He then solemnly swore that he would honor all the commitments expected of a vassal. This formal acknowledgment on the part of the vassal was called "doing homage." At the lord's demand, this ceremony, with its accompanying promise of allegiance, was repeated.

Technically, the peasantry were not part of the feudal system, because they were not warriors. They lived a hard life under the manorial system, which existed even before feudalism. Some were serfs, who were actually bound to the land. If the land was sold, the serfs went along with it as part of the deal. Others were freedmen, tenant farmers who paid the lord in money and a portion of their crops for the right to work the land. The lord gave his serfs and tenants protection and they turned to him for justice. In exchange, the lord charged taxes, required labor, took some of the crops, and generally made sure that the peasants were too poor to leave the land.

Last, not every knight was a vassal to a lord. This was especially true toward the end of the feudal period. Some knights hired themselves out to the highest bidder for their services. They were known as mercenary knights. Mercenary knights were more professional soldiers than true knights. They became important toward the end of the feudal period when kings and lords started having difficulty rounding up enough knights to fight for them.

As you have seen, feudalism was a complicated system of agreements made between lords and vassals. But it served its purpose in an age characterized by a lack of government.



In this painting, King Charles V presents his sword to one of his vassals. A king's vassal was obligated to fight for his lord for a certain number of days a year.







Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Create a Dialogue

Our brave French knight, Sir Gallant, is faced with a dilemma. He has the misfortune of being a vassal to both the Count of Rouen and the Count of Amiens, who, as luck would have it, are about to settle an argument over a piece of land on the field of battle. Both counts send out a call for their vassals and their vassals' knights to assemble immediately for the purpose of forming an army.

What is Sir Gallant to do? Can he choose to support one count at the expense of the other? Can he somehow serve both? How is he to make use of the four knights in his service? He is, in modern slang terminology, "caught between a rock and a hard place."

On the lines opposite, create a dialogue between Sir Gallant and his wife, Jeanne, as they discuss what he should best do. Write any solution you may have to the problem into the course of their conversation.





Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Recall Information You Have Read

How well do you remember what you read? The ability to recall information is a learning skill that grows in importance as you advance from one grade to the next in school.

Without looking back over the chapter, define or identify as best you can the names and terms listed below.

1. feudalism

---

---

2. vassal

---

---

3. overlord

---

---

4. fief

---

---

5. homage

---

---

6. Vikings

---

---

7. serf

---

---

8. aqueduct

---

---

9. Visigoths

---

---

10. Charlemagne

---

---

