

DBQ 3: The Middle Ages: Dark Ages, Age of Faith, Age of Feudalism, or a Golden Age?

Historical Context

The Middle Ages in Europe, a period of time from approximately A.D. 500 to 1400, have been referred to by a variety of terms—the Age of Faith, the Dark Ages, the Age of Feudalism, and even a Golden Age. The medieval era began with the destruction of the Roman Empire and the disorder that followed, which led to the rise of feudalism. During this period of darkness, the Roman Catholic Church provided spiritual direction as well as many nonreligious functions for the people of the times. Many literary, artistic, and architectural advances occurred.

- ◆ **Directions:** The following question is based on the accompanying documents in Part A. As you analyze the documents, take into account both the source of the document and the author's point of view. Be sure to:
1. Carefully read the document-based question. Consider what you already know about this topic. How would you answer the question if you had no documents to examine?
 2. Now, read each document carefully, underlining key phrases and words that address the document-based question. You may also wish to use the margin to make brief notes. Answer the questions which follow each document.
 3. Based on your own knowledge and on the information found in the documents, formulate a thesis that directly answers the question.
 4. Organize supportive and relevant information into a brief outline.
 5. Write a well-organized essay proving your thesis. The essay should be logically presented and should include information both from the documents and from your own knowledge outside of the documents.

Question: Which labels for the Middle Ages best describe the era between 500 and 1400 in Europe: The Dark Ages, the Age of Feudalism, the Age of Faith, or the Golden Age of Europe? You must discuss three labels.

- ◆ **Part A:** The following documents provide information about the Middle Ages in Europe. Examine each document carefully, and answer the questions that follow.

(continued)



DBQ 3: The Middle Ages *(continued)***Document 1**

In *The Middle Ages*, historian Frantz Funck-Brentano made use of previously published texts to describe Europe in the ninth and tenth centuries (Heinemann, 1922, pp. 1–3).

The barbarians have broken through the ramparts. The Saracen [Moors] invasions have spread in successive waves over the South. The Hungarians swarm over the Eastern provinces . . . they sacked town and village, and laid waste the fields. They burned down the churches and then departed with a crowd of captives. . . . There is no longer any trade, only unceasing terror. . . . The peasant has abandoned his ravaged fields to avoid the violence of anarchy. The people have gone to cower in the depths of the forests or in inaccessible regions, or have taken refuge in the high mountains. . . . Society has no longer any government. . . .

According to the author, what were conditions like in Europe during the 800's?

Document 2

This excerpt is from the Homage Oath taken by John of Toul.

I, John of Toul, make known that I am the liege man of the [count and countess of Champagne]. . . . I will aid the count of Champagne in my own person, and will send to the count and countess of Champagne the knights whose service I owe to them for the fief which I hold of them. . . .”

What are the obligations John is promising to uphold? _____

Document 3

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle tells of invasions of England.

- 842 In this year there was a great slaughter in London and Quentavic and in Rochester.
- 846 According to their custom the Northmen plundered . . . and burned the town of Dordrecht. . . . the Northmen, with their boats filled with immense booty, including both men and goods, returned to their own country. . . .

According to this Chronicle, what is happening at this time (842–846)? _____

(continued)

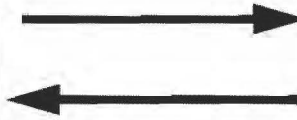
DBQ 3: The Middle Ages *(continued)*

Document 4

FEUDAL OBLIGATIONS

Vassal to lord:

Obligation:
Loyalty
Military service
Ransom, if needed



Lord to vassal:

Obligation:
Protection
Land (fief)

Explain the mutual obligations as illustrated in this diagram. _____

Document 5

A Church council calls for the observance of the Truce of God, 1083.

... That from the first day of the Advent of our Lord through Epiphany ... and throughout the year on every Sunday, Friday, and Saturday, and on the fast days of the four seasons ... this decree of peace shall be observed ... so that no one may commit murder, arson, robbery, or assault, no one may injure another with a sword, club, or any kind of weapon. ... On ... every day set aside, or to be set aside, for fasts or feasts, arms may be carried, but on this condition, that no injury shall be done in any way to any one ... If it shall happen that any castle is besieged during the days which are included within the peace, the besiegers shall cease from attack unless they are set upon by the besieged and compelled to beat the latter back. ...

According to this document, what is the Church trying to accomplish? _____

(continued)



DBQ 3: The Middle Ages *(continued)*

Document 6

This excerpt describes the Middle Ages. (From Gray C. Boyce, "The Medieval Period" in *The 34th Yearbook of the National Council for the Social Studies*, 1964, pp. 69–70.)

... we learn that an age once traditionally described as "dark" had remarkable vitality and exuberance. Even at its worst it performed the function of guarding, frequently by accident and chance, the knowledge and treasures of what had come before, but even more it was creative and inventive, and transmitted to later ages great riches of its own.

What functions were provided during the Middle Ages according to this author?

Document 7

This description of the positive aspects of the Middle Ages was taken from *Medieval Europe* by H. C. Davis, Oxford University Press, 1946, p. 79.

... Medieval culture was imperfect, was restricted to a narrow circle of superior minds. . . . Measure it, however, by the memories and the achievements that it has bequeathed to the modern world, and it will be found not unworthy to rank with those of earlier and later Golden Ages. It flourished in the midst of rude surroundings, fierce passions, and material ambitions . . . we must judge of them by their philosophy and law, by their poetry and architecture. . . .

How does this author describe the era? _____

(continued)



DBQ 3: The Middle Ages *(continued)***Document 8**

This excerpt is from the monastic vows of Brother Gerald.

I hereby renounce my parents, my brothers and relatives, my friends, my possessions . . . and the vain and empty glory and pleasure of this world. I also renounce my own will, for the will of God. I accept all the hardships of the monastic life, and take the vows of purity, chastity, and poverty, in the hope of heaven; and I promise to remain a monk in this monastery all the days of my life.

What is Gerald promising to do when he becomes a monk? _____

Document 9

In 1095, Pope Urban II issued a call for a holy crusade—a war to recapture the Holy Land.

. . . Your brethren who live in the [Middle] East are in urgent need of your help. . . . For, as most of you have heard, the Turks and the Arabs have attacked them and have conquered the territory of Romania [the Byzantine Empire]. . . . They have occupied more and more of the lands of those Christians. . . . They have killed and captured many, and have destroyed the churches and devastated the Empire. . . . All who die by the way, whether by land or sea, or in battle against the pagans, shall have immediate remission of sins.

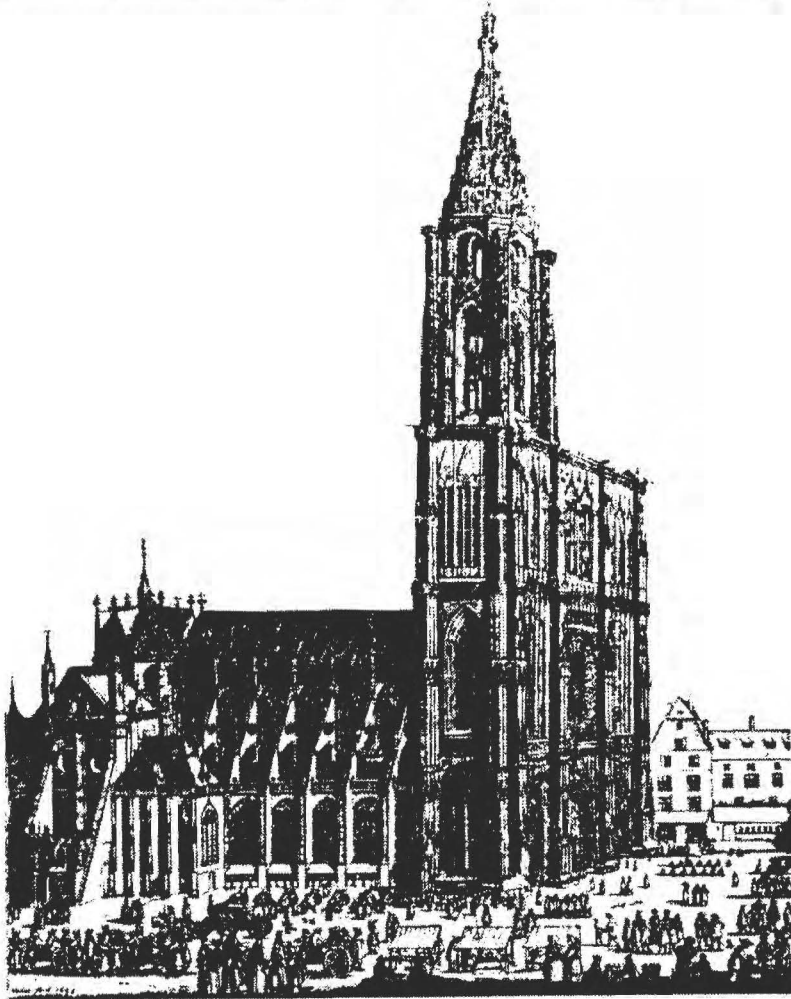
How does this call for a crusade demonstrate the power of the Pope and the Catholic Church?

(continued)

DBQ 3: The Middle Ages *(continued)*

Document 10

Examine this picture of a Gothic cathedral. How does it illustrate the power of the Catholic Church?



◆ Part B—Essay

Which labels for the Middle Ages best describe the era between 500 and 1400 in Europe: The Dark Ages, the Age of Feudalism, the Age of Faith, or the Golden Age of Europe? You must discuss three labels.

