

# Lesson 3

# The Middle Ages and the Church



What events changed life in the Middle Ages?

### Lesson Outline

- The Roman Church
- A Time of Change

### VOCABULARY

monastery  
nun  
saint  
Crusades  
Reconquista  
cathedral  
Gothic  
plague

### PEOPLE

Hildegard of Bingen  
Urban II

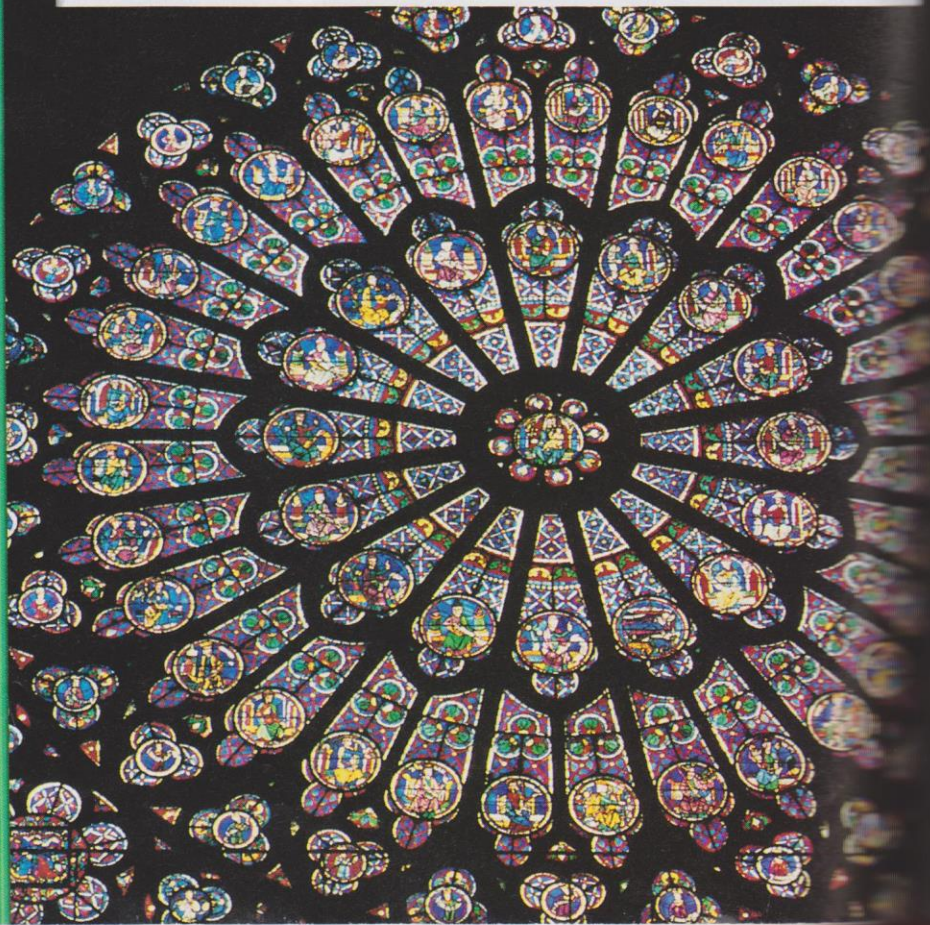
### BUILD BACKGROUND

A monk named Radolphus Glaber wrote these words shortly after A.D. 1000: "So [in] the . . . thousandth year . . . throughout the world . . . churches were rebuilt. . . So it was as though the very world had shaken herself and cast off her old age, and [was] clothing herself everywhere in a white garment of churches." Europe was beginning to build a unique medieval culture.

### READING STRATEGY

Use a chart like the one below to write the cause and an effect for events in this lesson.

	➔
	➔
	➔
	➔
	➔



700

800

900

1000

1100

1200

1300

1400

1500

**You Are Here**  
1000–1348

## THE ROMAN CHURCH

The Roman Catholic Church was involved in all aspects of medieval life. Few people could read, so the writings of monks are valuable records of life in Europe after the Roman Empire. Time was measured by prayers that were said at specific hours.

### Monasteries

Large amounts of land belonged to Church leaders and **monasteries**. Monasteries were communities where monks lived and dedicated their lives to God.

An Italian monk named Benedict wrote the first plan for monasteries in the A.D. 500s. Monks had to obey the head monk, who was called the abbot. Here are some of Benedict's rules:

*No one, without permission of the abbot, shall . . . give, or receive, or keep as his own, anything whatever: neither book nor tablets, nor pen: nothing at all . . . All things are to be common to all.*

Monasteries were churches, farms, homes, and schools all rolled into one. Most monks spent much of the day in prayer. They also farmed, studied, and made wine, medicines, and craft goods.

Monasteries served as centers of learning in the Middle Ages. Most monasteries had a scriptorium, or a room for making

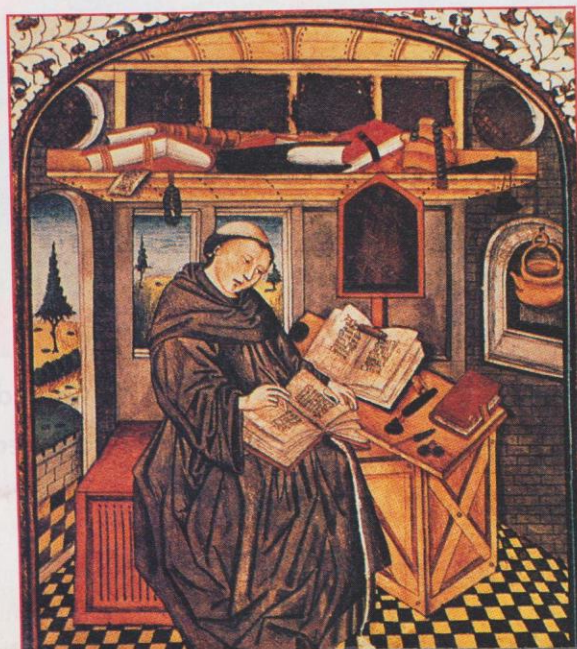
books. Since no printing presses existed, all books were carefully copied by hand. Monks wrote books of prayer and poetry. They also copied old Greek and Roman texts. These beautifully decorated books are called manuscripts. Some had such value that they were chained to desks.

### Women in the Church

Women in the Middle Ages also shared in religious life. Those who chose to serve God by becoming **nuns** lived in special communities called convents. There were also many female **saints** noted for helping the poor. A saint is a person believed to be holy. An example of a medieval religious woman was the German **Hildegard of Bingen**, who lived from 1098 to 1179. She wrote books, composed religious music, and founded a community where nuns lived and worked.



**What served as centers for learning in the Middle Ages?**



Colorful windows decorated churches, such as Notre Dame in Paris, France (left). Many monks copied and illustrated religious books (right).

## A TIME OF CHANGE

In 1095, Pope **Urban II** called for a war to capture Jerusalem and nearby lands where Jesus had lived. Seljuk Turks, who were Muslims, had captured this region, which Christians called the “Holy Land.” The series of wars to take the Holy Land was later called the **Crusades**.

The armies of the First Crusade defeated the Muslims and held the Holy Land for about 100 years. Later, the Muslims took back their lost lands. Seven more Crusades followed, but Muslims held on to the Holy Land.

The Crusades changed Europe. Europeans came into renewed contact with the Middle East and the Byzantine

Empire. They began to want trade goods from the East, such as silks and spices. The Crusades also inspired attacks on non-Muslims. This resulted in the persecution of the Jews of Europe and Eastern Orthodox Christians.

## War in Spain

Christians struggled to drive the Muslims out of Spain, as well. As you read, Spain had been captured by Muslim armies in the early 700s. The **Reconquista** (ray kohn-KEES tuh) was a long war fought by Christian armies to recapture Spain. It began in 718, but it did not end until 1492. During this long contact with the Arab world, Spain was deeply influenced by Islamic culture.

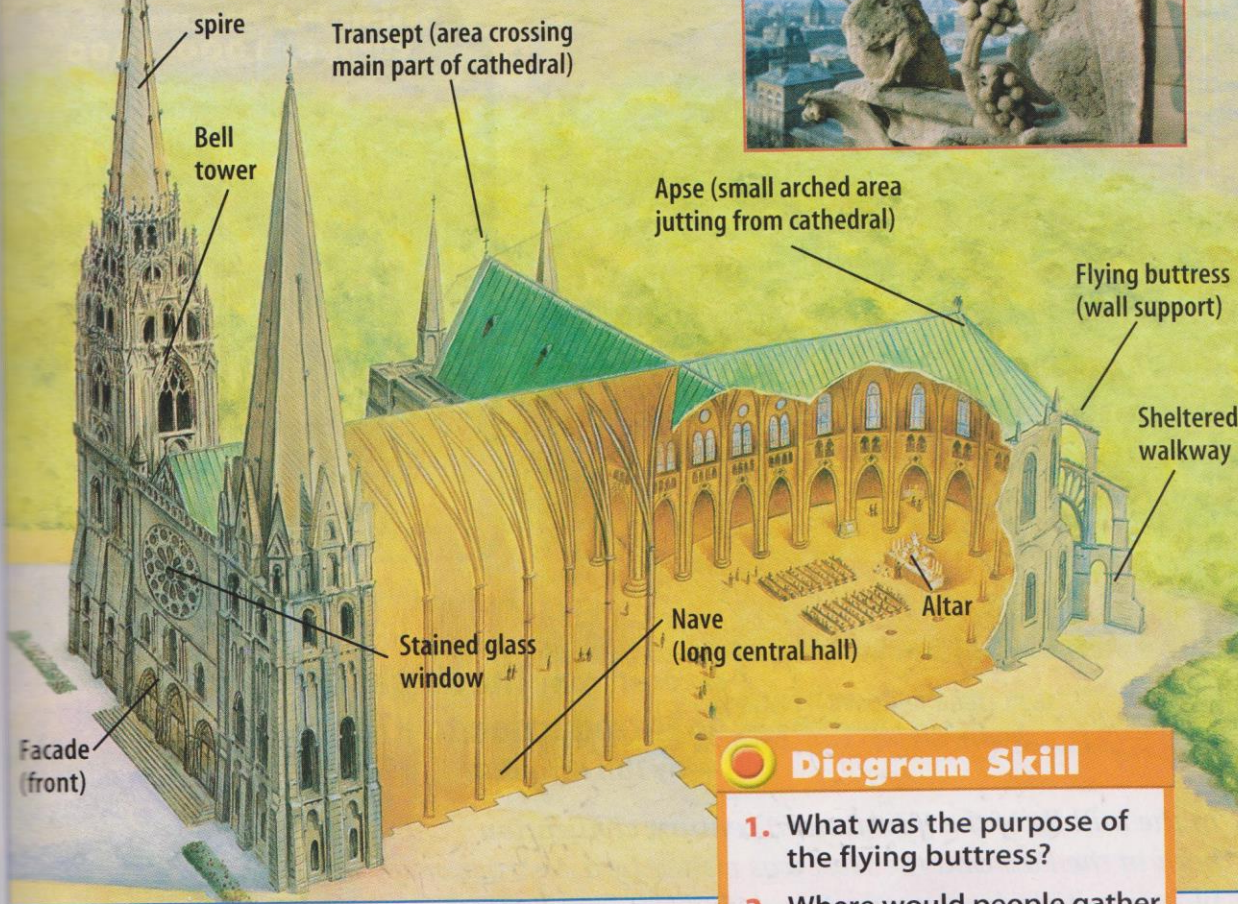
## Religion in the Middle Ages, c. 1300



## Map Skill

1. Where did the routes of the First Crusade come together?
2. Christians from which part of Europe led the First Crusade?

## Chartres Cathedral



### Diagram Skill

1. What was the purpose of the flying buttress?
2. Where would people gather for a church service?

### Cathedrals

After 1100, Europeans began to build **cathedrals**, or large Christian churches. About 1140, a French churchman named Suger (SOO jay) had an idea. By using a series of arches, buildings could be made higher and could have many windows. The style that developed with pointed arches, soaring spaces, and buttresses for support is called the **Gothic** style. **Chartres** is one of the most famous Gothic cathedrals.

### Black Death

Siena, Italy, was one of Europe's bustling cities. Trade flourished and the people of Siena had been building a great

cathedral since the 1100s. Its construction was halted in 1348, when a **plague** struck Western Europe. A plague is a terrible disease that spreads quickly. It is caused by bacteria spread by rats and fleas.

This plague, later called the Black Death, wiped out one third of the western European population during the next 130 years. At that time no one knew what caused the sickness.

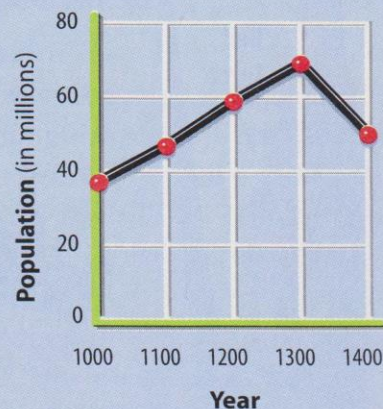


How did church architecture change in the Middle Ages?

## Bubonic Plague

The bubonic plague was the most frightening disease of the Middle Ages. Fleas spread the disease from rats to humans. Ninety percent of the people who caught the bubonic plague died. Look at the graph and primary source on this page and answer the questions below.

Estimated Population of Europe, 1000–1400



Source: Brigham Young University

### Primary Source:

excerpt from *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*  
—by Ibn Khaldun

*In the middle of the [fourteenth] century, civilization both in the East and the West was visited by a destructive plague, which devastated nations and caused populations to vanish. It swallowed up many of the good things of civilization and wiped them out. It overtook the dynasties . . . It lessened their power and curtailed their influence. . . . Settlements and mansions became empty, dynasties and tribes grew weak. The entire inhabited world changed.*



### QUESTIONS:

- 1 In the period between 1300 and 1400, what was the drop in Europe's estimated population?
- 2 What percentage of Europe's population was this?
- 3 What effect, according to Ibn Khaldun, did the rapid decrease in population have on governments?



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## PUTTING IT TOGETHER

Around the year 1000, Europe began to recover from the collapse of Roman power. Great buildings, such as cathedrals, were built in the new Gothic style.

Pope Urban II encouraged Christian knights to go to the Holy Land in the Middle East and conquer the lands where Jesus had lived. These Crusades introduced Europeans to the learning and wealth of the western Asian world. Demand for trade goods from these areas revived trade throughout Europe. However, contact with the rest of the world helped spread a disease that killed more than one-third of Europe's population. It would take many years before Europe would fully recover.



Crusaders leave their boats near a walled city in the Holy Land.

## Review and Assess

1. Write a sentence for each vocabulary word.


**cathedral**    **Gothic**  
**Crusades**    **Reconquista**

2. How did monasteries protect learning?
3. List three events that changed life in the Middle Ages.
4. For Pope Urban II, what was the main purpose of the Crusades?
5. Make a **generalization** about the effects of the Crusades on Europe.

## Activities

Copy the map on page 352. Write other routes to the Holy Land that the Crusaders might have used.

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 Suppose you are a visitor to Chartres, France, in the Middle Ages. **Write** a letter to friends at home describing the new cathedral.