MEDIEVAL EUROPE:
500–1500
Lesson Four Objectives:

- Explain structure of feudalism and the role of the manor system
- Evaluate medieval Europe society
- Describe importance of medieval warfare and evaluate the effects on present day
- Analyze how medieval literature depicts chivalry, knighthood and women

Key Vocabulary:

- Medieval, Charlemagne, Feudalism, Vassal, Serf, Manor, Knights, Chivalry
MEDIEVAL

- From Latin words meaning “Middle Ages”
- 500-1500 Europe was in middle between ancient Rome and Modern Europe
- This time period also referred to as “Middle Ages”
- After Roman Empire, European civilization decentralized with regional leaders fighting each other for land
- Culture was combination of nomadic & Christianity—groups conquered Rome & Christianity that was adopted
**BACKGROUND**

- **Franks**
  - People of the region that is France today
  - 732 prevented Muslim invaders from moving north of Spain

- **Charlemagne (or Charles the Great)**
  - Frankish leader
  - Built empire greater than any since Ancient Rome-larger than Byzantine Empire
  - Considered founder of France
  - Unified Frankish territory and established a short lived empire
  - Spread Christianity during territory expansions
  - Dec. 25\(^{th}\) in 800 was crowned by Pope as new “Holy Roman Emperor”, also by this time had reunited Western Europe
During this time, Germanic invaders overran western half of Roman Empire

- Invasions and warfare caused disruptions of trade, cities and population shifts
- Germanic kingdoms replaced Roman provinces
- Despite upheaval Church remained constant institution; provided order and security

Empire Evolves

- After RE dissolved, small kingdoms sprang up all over Europe
  - England splintered into 7 tiny kingdoms
FEUDALISM

- Treaty of Verdun signed btwn Charlemagne’s sons; fighting heirs
  - Empire divided into 3 kingdoms
  - Kings lost power & central authority broke down
  - Lack central authority led to new system of governing and landholders: FEUDALISM
- **Feudalism**: system of rules based on ownership of land & personal loyalty
- No strong gov’t in Western Europe
- Competing nobility & frequent attacks from outside groups
- Similar feudal system existed in China under Zhou dynasty and also in Japan
- With no strong gov’t, medieval society was based on power & protection of nobility
  - 2 systems developed to regulate life:
    - Feudalism
    - Manorialism
MANORIALISM

- Economic system of self-sufficiency
- Centered on manor estate & surrounding land, as well as all people living on land
- Contrast to feudalism, which system politically based on rights & obligations
- LORD: landowner
  - In exchange for military protection & other services lord could granted land called FIEF
- VASSAL: person who received fief (land grant)
Structure based on pyramid:

- **KING**

- **VASSALS:** Wealthy land owners such as bishops and nobles

- **KNIGHTS:** Maintained pledge to defend their lord’s lands in exchange for fiefs

- **PEASANTS:** Landless, toiled in fields

Status determined a person’s prestige & power, usually inherited

Where else have we discussed inherited social class?
- Majority of people peasants
- Most peasants were SERFS
  - People who could not lawfully leave the place where they were born
  - If born on manor, stayed on manor; bound to land, yet not slaves
  - Lords no sell or buy them
  - Labor produced belonged to lord
- Feudalism: Political
- Manor: Economic side of feudalism
Manor: Lord’s Estate

- Basic economic system
- Based on rights between lord & his serfs
- Lord provided serfs with housing, farmland, protection from bandits
- In return, serfs tended to lord’s land, animals and other tasks to maintain estate
- Everyone worked—men, women & children
- Self-Contained World; Self-Sufficient
  - Only a few square miles
  - Stood in center, see entire world
  - Peasants rarely traveled more 25 miles (this Oneida or Norwich)
  - Consisted of lord’s manor house, church, mill, workshop
  - 15-30 families in village on estate/manor
  - Fields, pastures, woodlands surround village with stream/mill
  - Everything raised/produced on estate needed for lord and daily life
Manor Realities

- Peasant’s paid high price
  - Tax on grain, marriage (weddings take place with lord’s consent), owed TITHE (church tax) to village priest which was 1/10 of income
  - Crowded cottages, ½ rooms, dirt floors, slept on insect infested straw piles, simple diet of bread, cheese, veggies, soup and grain
  - Life was work; children worked
  - Avg. life expectancy 35 years old
  - Accepted life as part of church teachings-God determined a person’s place in society

- *Piers Plowman* by William Langland, 1362
  - Primary document depicted peasant life
A Medieval Manor

- Land cultivated for the lord
- Common fields
- Road

Maps showing: Manor house, Barn, Blacksmith, Bake house, Mill, Village, Church, Priest's house, Forest, Mead, Baker's field, Fall planting, Spring planting, Fallow field.
CHIVALRY

- Without central govt, fighting btwn rulers & invaders was constant
- Europe was a fragmented states
- Due to feudal contract, warriors of noble birth (knights) promised to fight for their lord
  - Combat skills were praised
  - By 1100s, a code of behavior was developing: CHIVALRY:
    - High ideals guided warrior actions & glorified their roles
    - Knights obliged to serve in battle, 40 days of combat a year and spend rest of time training
- Knights
  - Displayed courage in battle & loyalty
  - Code of chivalry developed, ideal conduct for knight
    - Complex set of ideals
    - Knight fight bravely
    - Devoted to feudal lord, heavenly lord and lady
    - Protect weak and poor
    - Loyal, brave and courteous
  - Knight was romanticized & glorified & connected to Christianity
Knights trained at early age of 7 and by age 21 full fledge knight

Mock battles=tournaments
- Fierce & bloody
- Fan favorite

Warfare & Technology
- Saddle & stirrups
- Mounted knights most important part of Army
- Feudal lords raised private armies to defend territories
- Knights fought/rewarded with fiefs-the lord’s most abundant resource
- P. 366-“How to Capture a Castle”
  - Heavy & clumsy weapons

Battles
- Bloodshed
- 1100s massive walls, guard towers around castles; fortress design for defense
- Defending was considered gory: boiling hot water poured, hot oil, molten lead, expert archers
LITERATURE & SONG

- 1100s downplay brutality of knighthood & feudal warfare by idealizing castle life
  - Glorified knighthood & chivalry
  - Tournaments & real battles

- Songs & Poems
  - About knights, ladies & love
  - Called Epic Poems
    - Recounted hero’s deeds & adventures
    - Retold about legendary heroes
    - Knights conflicted between duty & lady
    - *Song of Roland*
      - Earliest & most famous medieval epic poem

- Troubadours
  - Traveling poet/musicians
  - Verses about joys & sorrows of romantic love
WOMEN

- **Women**
  - Most powerless
  - Inferior to men
  - View of church & accepted in feudal society
  - Still important in noble & peasant families

- **Noblewomen**
  - Could inherit estate f/husband under feudal system
  - Could send knights to war
  - Acted as military commander & warrior in husband’s absence
  - Castle defender
  - Had to confine self to gender roles
  - Be passed over in terms of property-passed to sons, not daughters
  - Girls educated by tutors
Peasant Women

- Perform endless labor in home & field
- Young girls learn practical household skills
- Poor
- Powerless
- Yet huge economic contribution in survival of household
QUESTIONS

- Was the distinction between serf & slaves important?
- How did religion support the feudal system?
- Where do we see “chivalry” today?
SOURCES

- Images
  - www.uncp.edu/home/rwb/lecture_mid_civ.htm
  - http://images.google.com/imghp?hl=en&tab=wi
  - www.cartoonstock.com