

**GLOBAL HISTORY II  
HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS  
DUE FRIDAY, MARCH 13, 2009**



**I. Serfs**

There were always workers called freemen who lived on manors and paid rent to a lord, but most manor workers were serfs. *Serf* comes from a Latin term meaning “slave.” This meaning is not truly accurate. Although they were often treated brutally, serfs had more rights than slaves. For example, serfs owned some land and they could not be bought and sold. However, serfs were bound to the soil. They were considered part of the property and could not leave the manor without permission. Even if a serf’s lord left the manor and a new lord took over, the serfs had to remain there.

Most serfs were farmers. They spent a great deal of time working in the landlord’s fields and were also required to give the landlord a portion of the crops they grew in their own fields. They toiled long hours and were equipped with very primitive wooden plows, sickles, and hoes. The serfs lived in run-down huts that had no windows or floors, and they usually cooked outside to avoid burning down their thatched dwellings. Although eggs and cheese were sometimes available, serfs usually had only black bread and cabbage. They rarely ate meat.

The serfs’ lives improved substantially toward the end of the medieval period. After the Crusades, increased trade brought a greater demand for agricultural products. Naturally, serfs were treated better since the lord desired greater production from his land. Also, since many lords needed money, serfs could sometimes sell their holdings and buy their freedom. Furthermore, many serfs fled the manors to start a new life in one of the many towns that was developing. Any serf who ran away and hid safely in a town for a year and a day was declared by law to be a free person.

*Circle the letter of each correct answer.*

1. How was the life of a serf different from the life associated with a slave?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Describe two ways a serf could attain freedom during the later Middle Ages.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Why were serfs treated better after the Crusades?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. In what way were serfs “bound to the soil”?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## II. The Role of Monasteries

When the Western Roman Empire fell in 476 and the period known as the Dark Ages began, learning did not stop completely. Thanks to the efforts of a small group of dedicated people, much of what the Greeks and Romans had learned and written down was copied and preserved for future generations.



From the earliest years of Christianity, some men (and later women) withdrew to remote regions to devote their lives to religious pursuits. People who shun all worldly comforts for a life of such solitude are called hermits. In time, groups of hermits came together and established monasteries. The hermits were then referred to as monks. Sometime around the year 500, a monk named Benedict (later Saint Benedict of Nursia) established a set of rules that all devotees were required to follow. The Benedictine Rule required that monks swear to the three vows of obedience, poverty, and chastity. By accepting the vow of chastity, a monk promised never to marry.

The monasteries of the Middle Ages made notable contributions to civilization. In addition to copying and preserving ancient manuscripts, the monks operated schools, hospitals, and orphanages, and provided safe havens for weary travelers. They also helped spread Christianity among the German and Viking invaders who overran Western Europe.

Monks did not spend each day entirely occupied with prayer and meditation. Because monasteries were self-supporting institutions, monks had to grow the food they ate. As a result, they made important contributions to agriculture. It was the monks, for example, who often taught local serfs how to make use of the three-field system of farming.

*Decide whether each statement below is fact or opinion. Write F or O in the blanks.*

1. \_\_\_\_ Saint Benedict was the greatest saint who ever lived.
2. \_\_\_\_ Monasteries played an important role in preserving the knowledge of the ancient Greeks and Romans.
3. \_\_\_\_ Saint Benedict established a set of rules for monks to follow.
4. \_\_\_\_ Monks were more religious than the other clergy of the Catholic Church.
5. \_\_\_\_ Monks were good farmers who passed their methods of agriculture on to the serfs.
6. In what ways might western civilization be different if none of the achievements of the monks had ever been made?

---

---

### III. The Crusades



Beginning in 1096, a series of religious wars between Christians and Mohammedans (Muslims) began that would result in the end of feudalism and change European life forever. These wars were the Crusades.

In the eleventh century, invaders known as the Seljuk Turks conquered the Holy Land (Palestine) and threatened to take Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine or Eastern Roman Empire which served as the center of the Eastern Orthodox Church. The Byzantine emperor immediately appealed to Pope Urban II in Rome for military aid. The Pope was sympathetic to the plea, especially since Christians making pilgrimages to the place of Jesus' birth were being severely persecuted by the Turks. At a meeting held in Clermont, France, in 1095, Pope Urban II called for a crusade (holy war) to recapture the Holy Land from the Muslims.

The response to the Pope's plea was overwhelming. Lords and knights volunteered for a variety of reasons, such as religious zeal, the desire for adventure or glory, and the hope of obtaining land and riches. Prisoners and serfs were granted freedom in return for military service. Merchants participated, motivated by the possibilities of increased trade.

Even children played a part in the crusades. There were two Children's Crusades in 1212. Thousands of children set out from France, while another group departed from what is now Germany. Neither Children's Crusade was successful.

From 1096 to 1291, there were eight major Crusades. Although the crusaders failed to gain permanent control of Palestine, they succeeded in gaining safe passage for Christians who went on pilgrimages to the Holy Land.

1. What was the purpose of the Crusades?

---

---

2. For what reason was Pope Urban II supportive of the Crusades?

---

---

3. What were some of the reasons knights were anxious to participate in the Crusades?

---

---

4. How was a typical merchant's reason for fighting in the Crusades different from the reasons prisoners and serfs participated? Explain.

---

---

## IV. Results of the Crusades

The two-hundred-year period of the Crusades had major effects on Western Europe. Feudalism declined, trade increased, and a revival of learning took place. In short, the Crusades helped start the period historians refer to as modern times.

When the Crusades began in the eleventh century, many lords sold their serfs and land to finance a campaign. Other lords raised money for an expedition by granting a charter to a town or village they owned. The people would pay the lord for a charter which designated the town or village as free. With so many lords in the Holy Land, many serfs ran away. Others gained freedom when their lords were killed. Such circumstances weakened feudalism and eventually increased the power of kings.

Just as important as the decline of feudalism was the increase in trade and the economic growth of port cities along the Mediterranean Sea. As goods traveling to and from the Middle East passed through these cities, commerce and shipbuilding flourished.

Finally, Europeans were stimulated intellectually from their contact with Arab and Byzantine cultures. Everywhere the crusaders went they saw great cities with beautiful palaces and other impressive buildings. They also encountered many libraries and left the Holy Land impressed by the scientific knowledge the Arabs had accumulated. The new ideas they brought back to Europe helped bring about the Renaissance, a time of great focus on learning and renewed interest in the arts. The Renaissance began in the thirteenth century.

1. How did the Crusades affect cities such as Venice and Genoa that bordered the Mediterranean Sea?

---

---

2. Why did some lords grant charters during the eleventh century?

---

---

3. How did the Crusades bring about the decline of feudalism?

---

---

---

4. How did the Crusades affect Europe intellectually?

---

---

---