The Middle Ages

1066-1485
The Battle of Hastings

- In October 1066, a daylong battle known as the Battle of Hastings ended the reign of the Anglo-Saxons and began the Norman Conquest.
William the Conqueror

- In the battle, Duke William of Normandy, known as William the Conqueror, defeated King Harold of England, the last of the Anglo Saxon kings. William did not want to kill the Anglo Saxons, he just wanted to rule them. The new group under William’s reign became known as the Anglo-Normans.
The Feudal System

• The Anglo-Normans brought a new language, French, and a new social system, feudalism, to the country.
• Feudalism was not just a social system, but also a caste system, a property system, and a military system.
The Feudal System

• The basic chain of feudalism was as follows:
  1. God
  2. Kings
  3. Nobles (Barons, Bishops, etc.)
  4. Knights - who did not own land
  5. Serfs or peasants - who did not own land
The Three Estates

- The three estates (social classes) in the Middle Ages were Aristocracy (kings and their vassals), Clergy (Those who prayed- priests, monks, nuns, friars, etc.), and the Commons (everyone else- doctors, lawyers, clerks, yeomen, etc).
Knighthood

• The primary duty of males above the serf class was military service. Boys were trained at an early age to become warriors.

• After training was complete, the boy was “dubbed” or ceremonially tapped on the shoulder. He was then a knight, had the title or sir, and had full rights of the warrior caste.
Knighthood

• Knighthood was grounded in the feudal ideal of loyalty. Knights had a system of social codes that they were not permitted to break.
Women in the Middle Ages

- Women had no political rights because they were not soldiers in a primarily military system.
- Women were always subservient to men.
- A woman’s husband or father’s position in the feudal system determined her position.
Chivalry

- Chivalry was a system of ideals and social codes governing the behaviors of knights and gentlewomen.
- Chivalry codes included oaths of loyalty to the overlord, observing certain rules of warfare and courtly love.
- Courtly love was nonsexual.
- Chivalry brought about an idealized attitude about women, but did not improve their actual position in life.
- Chivalry gave rise to a new form of literature- romance.
The Effect of Cities and Towns

• Eventually, the increasing population in cities and towns made the feudal system close to obsolete.
• The city classes were lower, middle and upper-middle.
The Crusades

• The Crusades (1095-1270), a series of wars waged by European Christians against Muslims, were waged during the period.

• The prize of The Crusades was Jerusalem and the Holy Land.
St. Thomas a Becket

• Thomas a Becket, the archbishop of Canterbury, was murdered in his own cathedral by four knights because he too often sided with the pope instead of the King Henry who had appointed him to the position.

• Becket’s murder enraged the common people who deemed him a martyr and they lashed out against King Henry which weakened the kings power in his struggle with Rome.
The Magna Carta

- The Magna Carta was signed by King John in 1215.
- The Magna Carta was a document that limited the Church’s power.
The Hundred Years’ War

- The English and French entered into the Hundred Years’ War (1337-1453) because two English kings were claiming they were to take the French throne.
- This war showed that England was no longer represented by the armor clad knight but by the green clad yeoman. Common people were taking up the fight for their country.
The Black Death

- The Black Death, or bubonic plague, struck England in 1348-1349.
- The Black Death was highly contagious and killed approximately one third of the population.
- The Black Death caused the end of feudalism.