Chapter 10

The Medieval World   
1250–1350

Outline

I. Introduction

A. Columbus and His Expectations

B. John de Mandeville and Marco Polo

C. Unprecedented Interactions between Europe, Asia, and Mediterranean world

D. Connective channels and the Black Death

II. The Mongol Empire and the Reorientation of the West

A. The Expansion of the Mongol Empire

1. Nomadic peoples of Central Asian steppes

2. Highly Accomplished Horsemen and herdsmen

3. Temujin (Genghis Khan)

a. United various Mongol tribes

b. Built up a Large Military Force

c. Grandson Kublai Khan conquers China

d. Crucial Commercial Cities and Trading Posts Incorporated

i. Tashkent, Samarkand, and Bukhara

4. Mongols Conquer Southern Russia and capital (c. 1240 c.e.)

5. Battle of Liegnitz (1241 c.e.)—extent of Westward Expansion

B. Muscovy and the Mongol Khanate

1. Kiev Former Center for Russian control

a. Kiev served as bridge between Byzantium and West

b. Focus Now Shifts to lower Volga under Mongol control

2. Beginning of rise of Muscovy (duchy of Moscow)

a. Less Direct Ties to West

b. Breach with West after crusades

i. Saw themselves as Staunch Defenders of Orthodox church

ii. Lay claim as heirs to Roman Imperial Power

C. The Making of the Mongol Ilkhanate

1. Mongols move into Territory Once Controlled by Persians, Alexander, and Rome

2. Mongols Control Portions of Modern-Day Iran, Iraq, portions of Afghanistan, and Pakistan

3. Territories in Middle East and Anatolia Already Weakened by Past Infighting

4. Byzantine lands in Anatolia absorbed by Mongols

5. Mongols halted in Their Drive toward Palestine by the Mamluk Sultanate of Egypt

D. Pax Mongolica

1. Territory stretched from Black Sea to the Pacific Ocean; One-Fifth of Earth’s Surface

a. No One Absolute Ruler; Tribute from Subject Territories

i. Distribution made Mongol Rule Flexible and Adaptable

ii. Built along Roman and Hellenistic models

b. Rulers Religiously Tolerant

c. Some merchants and Artists Find Ideal

i. Not without Price; Slavery and Forced Relocation

2. Conquest Was Often Bloody and Cities Devastated such as Herat and Baghdad

E. Bridging East and West

1. Mongol control of Caravan Routes from Mediterranean and Black Sea to China

a. Policing Routes; Safeguarding Travelers

b. Encouraged and Streamlined Trade Further contacts between East and West

c. Tabriz one of the Focal Points

2. Europeans begin to Take Advantage; Marco Polo and Other Merchants

3. Conflict among Section of Empire eventually Breaks Down Mongol rule and trade

a. Genoese abandon Tabriz (1344 c.e.)

b. Plague travels from east to West; Disruption of European economy

4. Eventually Conditions Change and network no Longer Sustainable

5. Western dream of reestablishing the Connection Remains

III. The Extension of European Commerce and Settlement

A. Motives for expansion

1. African Gold Trade

2. Growth of European Colonial Empires in the Western Mediterranean Sea and Beyond

B. The Quest for African gold

1. African Gold Trade Not New

2. Catalan and Genoese Merchants Traded Woolen Cloth for gold at Tunis

3. Gold needed because of a Serious Silver Shortage; Limits of technology to mine

4. Balance-of-Payments Problem

a. Too Much Silver Flowing East in Spice Trade

b. Could Not Be Replaced

c. Gold as alternative for Large Transactions

C. Mediterranean colonization: Catalonia, Genoa and Venice

1. Catalonia

a. Colonized Majorca, Ibiza, Minorca, Sicily, and Sardinia

b. Expropriation and extermination of Native Population (Usually Muslim)

c. Economic concessions to Attract Settlers

d. Reliance of Slave Labor

e. Private individuals or Companies Acting under Royal Charters

2. Venice

a. Venetian Colonization Controlled by City’s Rulers

b. Concentrated in the eastern Mediterranean

c. Spices and silks

d. Worked with Native Populations of Diverse Nature

3. Genoa

a. Focused on western Mediterranean

b. Based on Family Networks

c. Sugar and Sweet Wines from West Coast of Africa, especially Madeira

D. From the Mediterranean to the Atlantic

1. European Maritime Commerce Divided between Mediterranean and North Sea

2. Italian Merchants Sailed through Straits of Gibraltar to the North Sea (c. 1270 c.e.)

a. Start of Expansion Pattern of commerce and colonization in Atlantic

3. Canary Islands as “Jumping Off” Point, Especially for Portuguese

4. Significant European presence in northern Atlantic

a. Vikings in Greenland and Newfoundland (1000 c.e.)

b. Not permanent; although Some Presence in Greenland until Fourteenth Century

IV. Ways of Knowing and Describing the World

A. Economic tools: Balance Sheets, Banks, Charts, and Clocks

1. Economic boom from Integration Calls for New, Refined Methods

2. Banking and accounting

3. New partnerships to Minimize Risk

4. Double-Entry Bookkeeping (Credit and debit, Profit, and Loss)

5. The Medici Banking House of Florence

a. Established branches in each of major European cities

b. Allowed for transfer of funds

B. Technological devices

1. Eyeglasses

2. Magnetic compass; *portolani*

3. Mechanical clocks

a. Stimulate interest in Complex Machinery

b. Regulate Daily Life

c. Time Equals Money

C. Knowledge of the World and of God

1. William of Ockham

a. Human knowledge of God only through What God Reveals

b. Encouraged investigation of Natural World

c. Nominalism

i. Emphasizes Empirical Observation

ii. Major foundation of Modern Scientific Method

d. Aided the development of Empiricism—Knowledge Rests on Experience Alone

D. Changing God’s World in Art

1. Naturalism as the Dominant Trait

2. Representations of Humans Became More Proportioned and realistic

3. Frescoes

4. Artists begin to Adapt Techniques from Byzantium

a. Freestanding Pictures on pieces of wood or Canvas Using Tempera

b. Cheaper Materials Meant More Artistic Freedom

5. Giotto di Bondone (c. 1267–1337 c.e.)

a. Lifelike Human Beings and Animals

b. Style becomes the norm by 1400 c.e.

c. Seen as First Painter of the Renaissance

E. A Vision of the World We Cannot See

1. Dante Alighieri (1265–1321 c.e.)

2. *Divine Comedy*

a. Italian vernacular

b. Journey through Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise

c. Combination of Classical Culture and Christian wisdom

d. Fusion of Christian cultures, Latin learning, and Vernacular Artistry

V. Papal Power and Popular Piety

A. Weakening of the papacy and growth of Popular Piety

B. Legacy of Pope Innocent III

1. Innocent III marked the Highest Points of Papal Power but Sowed Seeds of defeat

2. Successor Popes Continued Practice of Centralizing Government of church

3. Become Involved in Protracted Political Struggles that Compromised Papacy

C. Popes conflict with Kingdom of Sicily

1. Call for crusade against Emperor Frederick II

a. Overt Political Move for a Religious Event

2. Further crusade against King of Aragon leads to death to Philip III

a. Philip IV (son of Philip III) resolves To Punish Papacy

D. Clash between Philip IV and Pope Boniface

1. Philip IV Orders Knights to Arrest Boniface

a. Boniface Later Dies of Mistreatment

2. Philip IV controls Clement V

a. Forces Clement V to thank Philip for defense of faith

b. Moves papacy to Avignon, France

E. The “Babylonian Captivity” of the Papacy

1. The papacy at Avignon

a. French popes, French Cardinals Made Avignon “home”

b. Large and Efficient Bureaucracy

c. Avignon Popes Imposed New Taxes and Obligations of churches in France, England, Germany, and Spain

d. Claimed the right to Appoint Bishops and Priests Anywhere and Gain Fees

2. Further Weakened Papacy’s Moral Authority

a. Unseemly luxury

b. Pope Clement VI

i. Selling Spiritual Benefits and Offices

ii. Sexual transgressions

F. Uniting the Faithful: Power of Sacraments

1. Legacy of Pope Innocent III

a. Most People Accessed Church at the Local Level

b. All Persons Should Have Access to Religious Instruction

c. Europe covered by network of Parish Churches

2. Sacraments: Medieval Piety Founded upon Seven Sacraments

a. Baptism

b. Confirmation

c. Confession (or penance)

d. Communion

e. Marriage

f. Extreme unction (Last Rites for the dying)

g. Ordination

3. Sacramental System Part of foundation of practices of Medieval Popular Piety

a. pilgrimages

b. crusades

c. Giving Alms to the poor

d. saying the rosary

G. The Miracle of the Eucharist

1. Communion Most Central Sacrament to the lives of medieval Christians

a. Doctrine of Transubstantiation

b. Digestion Not Necessary; Observance Is Sufficient

c. Astonishing Properties Attributed to Host

H. The Pursuit of Holiness

1. Salvation Lay Open to any Christian Who Strove for it

2. Efforts by many to Seek New Paths to Holiness Frequently Condemned

3. Master Eckhart (c. 1260–1327 c.e.)

VI. Struggle for Sovereignty

A. Middle of thirteenth Century Saw Secular Rulers with More Power

1. Strong Territorial Monarchies

2. Increasing Sophistication

a. Royal justice

b. Taxation

c. Propaganda

3. Strong Ties to Church Allows Claim to moral and Spiritual Improvement of realm

B. Problems with Sovereignty

1. Claims Are Only Valid if backed by Real Power

2. Sovereignty Is Won and maintained by Diminishing Other States

3. Process of Sovereignty Is Aggressive and Often Violent

C. Prestige of France and Louis IX

1. After death of Philip Augustus, Heirs Followed Expansionist Policy

2. Pockets Maintain Independence; English-Held Lands and Flanders

a. Battle of Courtrai (Kortrijk)

3. Louis IX

a. Famous for piety

b. Went on Two Failed Crusades; Died on second

c. His departure on crusades

i. Risk Gave Him Influence in Papal Affairs

ii. Reform or Invent Key Aspects of Royal Governance

iii. King inherited Charlemagne’s mantle of protector of Church

d. Brought Back relics from Christ’s crucifixion

D. Edward I and Expansion of English Rule

1. Built up sovereignty from Scratch

2. Father and grandfather fought with Nobles Who Rose up in revolt

3. Took steps to Ensure No Further Revolt

a. Tightening controls on aristocracy and Their Lands

b. Strengthening Parliament

c. Reforming administration of realm

d. Clarifying laws of the realm

4. Outside borders

a. Wales

i. Tried treaties but Failed

ii. Ambitious and Ruthless Campaign of Castle Building

iii. Treated Wales as a Conquered Crusader State

iv. Son and Heir Named Prince of Wales

b. Scotland

i. Edward Pressed His Claim over Scotland (1290 c.e.)

ii. Took Stone of Destiny

iii. Scotland seen as under sovereignty of England

iv. Edward’s Grandson Focuses on France

E. Outbreak of Hundred Years’ War

1. Largest, longest, and Most Wide-Ranging Military Conflict since Punic Wars

a. France and England Principal Protagonists

b. Almost All Other European Powers Involved

2. Source of conflict

a. English Kings Held Territory in Gascony as vassals of French king

b. Problem as Monarchs Claimed Sovereignty within Natural Borders

c. Crossover conflict through economic and Political Ties

i. England ties with Flanders

ii. France ties with Scotland

d. Capetian Dynasty Comes to an end; Valois succeeds

i. Valois Exclude Women from rule or succession

ii. Edward III, son of daughter of Philip IV

iii. English Kings Maintain Claim as heirs

e. Sides Not Equally Balanced

i. England smaller but Better Mobilized

ii. Two victories: Crecy (1346 c.e.) and Calais (1347 c.e.)

VII. From the Great Famine to the Black Death

A. Limits of the Medieval Economy

1. Between 1000 and 1300 Europe’s Population Tripled

2. Pressures to Produce More Brought Changes to the land

a. Forests Cleared, Marshes Drained, Pastureland Reduced

3. Europe Was Barely Able to Feed Itself

4. Climatic Changes; Warming Trend Reverses

a. Rainfall Patterns Changed

b. Shorter Growing Seasons

c. Lessened Agricultural Production

B. Seven years of famine

1. Adverse weather Patterns Continuous

2. Human Actions Make Situation Worse

a. Wars Reduced Farming Effectiveness

i. Scandinavia versus Holy Roman Empire

ii. France versus Flanders

3. Human Suffering Greater Than European Famine Any Since

a. Weakened by years of malnutrition; 10 to 15 percent of Population Perished

b. Disease Killed Animals and People

c. Disruption of trade and shortage of Staple Goods

d. Prices soared

4. Continued problems

a. Seeds fail to germinate

b. Cold summers and Autumns Spent Foraging

c. Poor Risked Death by hunting on Land Reserved for nobility

d. Children Especially Devastated; Immune Systems Compromised

C. A Crisis of Connectivity: Tracing Black Death

1. Spread from Mongolia and reached Sicily in 1347 c.e.

2. Struck European seaports and Then Moved Inland

3. Reach Scandinavia by 1350 c.e.

4. Continued outbreaks for Three Centuries

D. What caused the Black Death?

1. Deadly microbe Yersinia pestis

a. Carried by the bite of fleas or Infected Rats

b. Attacks Lymphatic System (Buboes)

c. Bubonic, septicemic, and Pneumonic Plague

d. Different Manifestations Made Disease More Terrifying

e. Reactions ranged from panic to resignation

2. The search for scapegoats

a. Attacks on Jewish communities throughout Europe

b. No Similar Attacks in Muslim-Held Territories

3. The Flagellants

a. Appeasing the wrath of God

b. Aroused concern of religious and Secular Authorities; Banned

VIII. Conclusion

A. 1250–1350 c.e. time of Significant Change for Europe

1. Growth of power of monarchies led to encroachment on Formally Independent Territories

2. Papacy Lost Power and authority through Avignon Papacy

3. Growth of Population Outstripped Capacity to Feed It

a. Worst Impacts Felt on Regions Most Tied to globalism

b. Black Death Is Worse Example

B. Scale of mortality of Black Death

1. Between One-Third and One Half of Europe’s Population Devastated

2. Profound social and Economic Consequences

3. Was This End of Old World and beginning of New?

General Discussion Questions

1. What environmental factors contributed to the growing economic depression of the fourteenth century?

2. Describe the psychological horror of the Black Death.

3. Why does it seem that the Jacquerie, the English Peasants’ Revolt, and the Ciompi Rebellion were somehow destined to fail?

4. Do you think the Lollards and Hussites were trying to restore Christianity to its primitive state? Or were they trying to change it into something entirely different?

5. What were the causes of the Hundred Years’ War?

6. What does the life and death of Joan of Arc illuminate about the Age of Faith in general? What motivated her to act in such an extraordinary fashion?

7. What forces were at work that helped to speed up the rise of national monarchies in fifteenth-century Europe?

8. In what ways was the development of medieval Russia different from that of Europe?

9. How did the perfection of printing and the spread of books stimulate the growth of cultural nationalism?

Document Discussion Questions

Vikings Encounter the Natives of North America

1. What policies do the Norse settlers adopt toward the native peoples they encounter on the coast of Newfoundland? How effective are they?

2. Given their extensive preparations for colonization and the success of their early efforts, why do you think that Karlsefni and his companions abandoned their settlement in North America? Are there clues discernible in the text?

3. Compare this encounter to the sources describing other interactions between Europeans and the indigenous inhabitants of the New World after 1492 (Chapters 12 and 14). How do you account for any similarities? What are some key differences?

Seals: Signs of Identity and Authority

1. Medieval towns represented themselves in a variety of ways on their seals: sometimes showing a group portrait of town councilors, sometimes a local saint, sometimes a heraldic beast, sometimes distinctive architectural features. Why would Dover choose this image? What messages does this seal convey?

2. Think carefully about the mystery of Charles II’s seal. Usually, an important agreement like a marriage contract (with the son of the French king, no less!) would have carried a king’s official, royal seal. What are the possible reasons why Charles would still have been using this outdated seal? What are the possible ramifications of this choice? In your role as historian-detective, how would you go about solving this mystery?

3. The seals of medieval women were almost always shaped like almonds (pointed ovals—the technical term is vesica-shaped). Yet Ingeborg’s seal is round, like the seals of men and corporations. Why might that be the case?

4. In general, what are the values of seals for the study of history? What are the various ways in which they function as sources?

A Declaration of Scottish Independence

1. On what grounds does this letter justify the political independence of the Scots? What different arguments does it make? Which one, in your view, is the most compelling?

2. Why does this letter mention crusading? What are the Scottish lords implying about the relationship between Europe’s internal conflicts and the ongoing wars with external adversaries?

3. Imagine that you are an adviser to this pope. Based on your knowledge of the papacy’s situation at this time, would you advise him to do as this letter asks? Why or why not?

Responses to the Black Death

1. How does Gabriele de’ Mussi initially explain the causes of the plague? How does his understanding of it change as he traces its movements from East to West—and closer to Italy?

2. Why does the Council of Cologne wish to quell violence against the Jews? How does this reasoning complement or challenge what we have learned so far about the treatment of Jews in medieval Europe?

3. In your view, do these two perspectives display a rational approach to the horrors of the Black Death?   
Why or why not?

Lecture Objectives

1. Describe the effects of the Mongol conquests and sketch their significance.

2. Identify the key characteristics of the medieval world system and the responses to it.

3. Define the concept of sovereignty and its importance in this era.

4. Understand the reasons for the papacy’s loss of prestige and the potential consequences.

5. Explain the rapid spread of the Black Death in this historical context.

Topics for Discussion and Further Elaboration

• Explain who the Mongols were and where they came from. Describe the dramatic geographic expansion of the Mongols under Chingiz Khan and his successors.

• Demonstrate how the Mongols become the largest land empire in history. Describe how the death of Ogedei influences Mongol expansion. Reemphasize the importance of continuity of power. Explore the role of “fate” in history. Discuss the opportunities and challenges of “what if” thinking in historical study.

• Explain who Marco Polo was and why he is important. Describe how the Mongols engaged in trade and how their level of engagement in trade changed over time.

• Describe how the Mongols used the trade routes to their best advantage. Explain how these trade routes accelerated contact between the East and the West.

• Describe the reasons for the rise of the Duchy of Moscow under the Mongols.

• Describe the benefits and costs of the Pax Mongolica. Compare and contrast the differences between the Mongols and the Europeans on the subject of religious toleration.

• Describe the economic reasons for the search for African gold. Describe the economic changes in the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries that accelerated the search for African gold.

• Compare and contrast the Mediterranean colonization efforts of Catalonia, Genoa, and Venice in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. Describe the patterns of settlement for each.

• Describe the changes in trade for Europe in the late thirteenth century. Explain how the Canary Islands were the “jumping off” point for the next wave of European exploration.

• Describe Viking exploration efforts in the Atlantic prior to the fourteenth century. Summarize the extent of the exploration and why the settlement in Greenland eventually failed.

• Explain how new banking tools such as were necessary as a result of the trade connections between East and West. Describe the advantages these tools gave to banks and lending houses.

• Describe the new technological devices that helped aid exploration.

• Explain the impact of mechanical clocks. Describe how they forever altered daily life and the relationship between labor and productivity.

• Summarize the changes in the arts—the emergence of new authors and new types of literature, and the importance of naturalism. Explain why the emphasis on naturalism was significant.

• Discuss the importance of Dante’s *Divine Comedy*. Explore the connections between historical, cultural, literary, and artistic changes.

• Describe how popes after Innocent III overextended papal authority and how this, in turn, undermined the papacy.

• Explain how Boniface VIII overextended his authority and led to the exile of the papacy in Avignon.

• Describe the Avignon papacy. Describe how this period of exile both strengthened and weakened the institution of the papacy.

• Compare and contrast the rise in papal power with the decline in papal prestige.

• Describe the growth in religious devotion among the laity during this period. Explain the new emphasis on the sacramental life of the Church.

• Compare and contrast the political conditions in England and France. Trace the beginning of the long conflict between England and France.

• Explain the political conditions in England and France that resulted in the Hundred Years’ War. Reemphasize how conflicts over land and succession repeatedly cause conflict.

• Describe Edward I’s efforts to expand his sovereignty over Wales and Scotland.

• Describe the efforts by monarchs in the thirteenth century to expand their sovereignty. Explain the difficulties for monarchs to establish and maintain sovereignty.

• Explain the advantages gained by Louis IX in going on the crusades.

• Explain the difficulties that Europe was confronting at the beginning of the fourteenth century. Describe how these conditions made the population particularly susceptible to pandemic disease.

• Describe the geographic spread of the plague. Demonstrate its widespread implications on a map.

• Point out the connections between the spread of the plague and the long-established trade routes.

• Explain the tremendous demographic impact of the Black Death on Europe’s population.

• Describe the multiple theories that emerged about how the plague spread throughout Europe. Explain how the Jewish population was scapegoated as a possible cause.

• Explain how modern epidemiologists understand the spread of the plague. Draw a comparison between the plague and how other pandemic diseases have spread rapidly and widely during the modern era—tuberculosis, HIV, swine flu.

• Summarize the economic consequences of the plague and describe how it impacted the “average” individual.

Suggested Readings

Aberth, John. *The Black Death: The Great Mortality of 1348–1350: A Brief History with Documents*. Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2005.

Allmand, Christopher. *The Hundred Years War: England and France at War: c*. *1300–c*. *1450*. *(Cambridge Medieval Textbooks)*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

Blumenfeld-Kosinski, Renate. *Poets, Visionaries, and Saints of the Great Schism, 1378–1417*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006.

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Bumke, Joachim. *Courtly Culture: Literature and Society in the High Middle Ages*. New York, NY: Overlook Press, 2000.

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Jordan, William Chester. *Europe in the High Middle Ages (Penguin History of Europe)*. New York, NY: Penguin (Non-Classics), 2004.

Liss, Peggy K. *Isabella the Queen: Life and Times*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004.

Meyendorff, John. *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia: A Study in Byzantino-Russian Relations in the Fourteenth Century*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Morgan, David. *The Mongols (The Peoples of Europe)*. New York, NY: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007.

Mullins, Edwin. *The Popes of Avignon: A Century in Exile*. Katonah, NY: Bluebridge, 2008.

Pernoud, Régine, et al. *Joan of Arc: Her Story*. London, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999.

Prescott, William Hickling. *History of the Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella the Catholic of Spain*. Ann arbor, MI: University of Michigan Library, 2009.

Rubin, Miri. *Medieval Christianity in Practice (Princeton Readings in Religion)*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009.

Seward, Desmond. *The Hundred Years War: The English in France: 1337–1453*. New York, NY: Penguin (Non-Classics), 1999.

Taylor, Larissa Juliet. *The Virgin Warrior: The Life and Death of Joan of Arc*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010.

Suggested Feature Films

■ *Chimes at Midnight*. 119 min. B/W. 1966. Internacional Films Espanola/Alpine. Orson Welles stars in this film adaptation of *Henry IV, Part II*.

■ *Henry V*. 137 min. Color. 1944. Rank Distributors. Laurence Olivier’s screen version of Shakespeare’s work, which begins as a filmed play in a reconstruction of the Globe Theatre and gradually moves outward until the viewer finds himself in the midst of fifteenth-century war.

■ *Henry V*. 138 min. Color. 1989. Festival. Kenneth Branagh’s brilliant rendition of Shakespeare’s play.

■ *Ivan the Terrible*, *Part One*. 100 min. *Part Two*. 88 min. B/W. 1944–1946. Mosfilm. Eisenstein’s celebrated depiction of the sixteenth-century tsar.

■ *Messenger: The Story of Joan of Arc*. 148 min. Color. 1999. Columbia Pictures. Film account of the conflict between Joan and her conscience.

■ *Mongol: The Rise of Genghis Khan*. 126 minutes. Color. 2007. The story recounts the early life of Genghis Khan, who was a slave before going on to conquer half the world, including Russia in 1206 c.e.

■ *The Passion of Joan of Arc*. 85 min. B/W. 1928. M. J. Gourland. The silent-film classic based on actual transcripts of Joan’s trial.

■ *Richard III*. 161 min. Color. 1956. London Films. Considered by many to be the best of Sir Laurence Olivier’s film versions of Shakespeare’s play.

■ *The Seventh Seal*. 95 min. B/W. 1957. Svensk Filmindustri. Ingmar Bergman’s masterful allegory of man’s quest for meaning, in which the crusading knight returns to plague-stricken Europe to battle Death in a game of chess. Excellent as much for its depiction of medieval realities as it is for Bergman’s crisis of faith in the 1950s.

■ *The Virgin Spring*. 87 min. B/W. 1959. Svensk Filmindustri. Bergman’s version of a fourteenth-century folktale.

■ *A Walk with Love and Death*. 90 min. Color. 1970. 20th Century Fox. Directed by John Huston, this film is about two people who fall in love during the Hundred Years’ War and witness the brutal murder of a peasant.

Suggested Classroom Films

■ *Al Andalus*. 34 min. Color. 1975. University Films Library. Covers the intermingling of Spanish and Moorish cultures through the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella. Includes on-site photography.

■ *Ancient Mysteries—The Black Death*. 50 min. Color. 2005. A&E Home Video. What is the Black Death? Where did it come from? Scientists still do not know the origins of this deadly plague.

■ *Biography—Genghis Khan*. 50 min. Color. 2006. A&E Home Video. This fascinating program follows the infamous warlord’s rise to power, from his brilliant tactics in psychological warfare to the alliances he both created and shattered and his seemingly endless successes on the bloody battlefields of thirteenth-century Asia.

■ *Biography—Joan of Arc: Virgin Warrior*. 50 min. Color. 2004. A&E Home Video. Uses photography of medieval and later historical images, interviews with leading scholars, and dramatization to tell the story of Joan of Arc.

■ *Chaucer’s England*. 30 min. Color. 1969. Encyclopaedia Britannica Educational Corporation. Relates the background of the *Canterbury Tales* and dramatizes the “Pardoner’s Tale” in its entirety.

■ *Expansion of Europe: 1250–1500*. 26 min. Color. 1985. Insight Media. Explores the internal devastation caused by the Black Death and the external expansion into East Asia and the New World.

■ *Faith and Fear*. 39 min. Color. 1979. Insight Media. A look at religious responses to an uncertain world.

■ *From Every Shire’s Ende: The World of Chaucer’s Pilgrims*. 38 min. Color. 1969. International Films Bureau. Re-creates the trip to Canterbury with wood carvings, illuminated manuscripts, and films of other historic sites.

■ *Giotto and the Pre-Renaissance*. 47 min. Color. 1969. Universal Educational and Visual Arts. Highlights Giotto’s artistic innovations.

■ *History’s Mysteries—The Inquisition*. 100 min. Color. 2005. A&E Home Video. Unravels the twisted history of “The Inquisition,” a special court established by Pope Gregory IX in 1231 c.e. to root out heresy.

■ *History’s Mysteries—The True Story of Marco Polo*. 50 min. Color. 2005. A&E Home Video. Initially circulated in the fourteenth century, “The Travels of Marco Polo” gave Europeans a glimpse into Far Eastern mysteries. But if Polo was an emissary to Kublai Khan, why is he not mentioned, as are other foreigners, in Khan’s meticulous records?

■ *In Search of History—Scourge of the Black Death*. 50 min. Color. 2005. A&E Home Video. In 1348 c.e., the plague swept from Egypt through Asia Minor and Europe on a path of destruction, killing more than 100 million in countless outbreaks and plunging the world into the Dark Ages.

■ *Joan of Arc*. 140 min. Color. 1999. Live/Artisan. A strong cast, impressive production values, and astute direction distinguish this generally successful dramatization of the tumultuous life of the fifteenth-century French heroine, whose military victories were eclipsed by her martyrdom.

■ *The Late Middle Ages and the National Monarchies*. Two parts, 30 min. each. Color. 1989. Insight Media. Focuses on the economic and political changes of the fifteenth century.

■ *Medieval England: The Peasants’ Revolt*. 31 min. Color. 1969. Learning Corporation of America. Reenactment of the English Peasants’ Revolt of 1381 c.e.

■ *Medieval Theatre: The Play of Abraham and Isaac*. 26 min. Color. 1974. Movie Show Company. Dramatization of a mystery play performance at an English estate in 1482 c.e.

■ *The Mongols: Storm from the East*. *Part Two: World Conquerors*. 50 min. Color. n.d. Films for the Humanities. Looks at the expansion of the Mongol empire into Russia and Europe.

■ *Once upon a Wall: The Great Age of Fresco*. 18 min. Color. 1969. BFA Educational Media. The Metropolitan Museum of Art exhibit of Italian fresco paintings.

■ *The Plague*. 100 min. Color. 2006. A&E Home Video. This documentary gives a great deal of information about the “Black Death,” or what was probably the bubonic plague, that killed up to half of Europe’s and Asia’s populations when it spread uncontrollably in the late 1340s.

■ *Queen Isabel and Her Spain*. 32 min. Color. 1978. International Film Bureau. Covers Isabella’s reign, with special focus on the defeat of the Moors in Granada, the Spanish Inquisition and the expulsion of the Jews, and Columbus’s expedition.

■ *The Real Joan of Arc*. 90 min. Color. 2009. ARTE. Documentary filmmaker and musician Martin Meissonnier (*Life of Buddha*) revisits the story of the world’s most famous martyr, taking us back through time to introduce us to the real Joan of Arc.

■ *The Secrets of Genghis Khan*. 91 min. Color. 2008. Image Entertainment. This is the fascinating tale of the search for the fabled tomb of the notorious thirteenth-century Mongol warrior Genghis Khan.

Solutions to Chapter Questions

Vikings Encounter the Natives of North America

1. Based on the section read, it appeared as if the Norse were reasonable in their dealings with the people they encountered. They engaged in trade with them but wisely (I thought) refrained from trading weapons with them. After all, the Norse would need their weapons and it does not make sense to arm people whom you are not familiar with and whom might one day be your enemies. Based again on the Norse account, they did not offer violence until the natives attacked them. Once hostilities had been started, relations deteriorated.

2. Further reading into the selection, the reason given for why the Norse choose to left is fairly straightforward: “…though the land might be choice and good, there would be always war and terror overhanging them, from those who dwelt there before them.” Because they did not want the pressure of constant warfare, the Norse chose to leave.

3. There are several differences between the encounters of the Norse and the later Europeans. While the Norse were looking for lands, they did not want the difficulties involved in constant warfare with the indigenous population. They were not looking for conquest. The initial interaction between the Norse and the native population was fairly reasonable; they conducted trade with each other. Some of the later interaction between the Europeans and the natives (namely initial relation between the Spanish and the natives of Hispaniola and the French settlers and the native in Canada) were of a similar peaceful nature. Another major difference is a lack of religious conflict. The Spanish and other Europeans were filled with a missionary zeal to convert the natives to their religion of Christianity; the Norse had no such aims.

Seals: Signs of Identity and Authority

1.It would appear that Bruges chose to focus on the city itself rather than an individual lord, prince, or bishop. This would seem to suggest that it was the city (probably an alliance of merchants who were the town council and directed affairs for the town). This would convey that the city held itself as independent, and not under the direct control of any lord or king. The choice would also depict proud in the success of the town as economic force in the region.

2.There are several possible reasons for why Charles II would have continued to use the outdated seal. Possible reasons: the succession to the throne of Sicily may have been contested by other members of his family or another family altogether; his succession may not have been recognized by Catholic Church, the papacy, or some other religious authority; the kingdom of Sicily may have been the target of a crusade launched by the papacy when they were in political conflict with the kingdom of Sicily; he may have considered his inheritance of Anjou as more legitimate that kingship of Sicily; his father may have died while away on crusade to a far-off land and word of his death did not arrive until much later; he may not have wished to ascend to the throne of Sicily. A historian could: check to see if there were legitimate claims to the throne from other sources; check to see if this was a time when the papacy was opposed to the kingdom of Sicily and it was the target of a crusade by checking to see if there were any declarations made by any popes against the kingdom of Sicily; and check to see if there were any conflicts (either within the family or among other families) for control of the kingdom of Sicily.

3.One possible reason is because she was regent for a male son, Magnus, who was elected king of both norway and Sweden in 1319. Because she was ruling in the name of a male and not in her own right, the seal might have been designed this way to reflect this.

4.The seals can tell historians the relative value that was placed on persons and places based on the use of seals. As stated in the explanation, seals were used as symbols of authority and legitimacy. The seals themselves were visual representations of the power and authority exercised by powerful individuals, towns or corporations. Also, seals depiction can give an idea of the attributes this people, places and corporations prided themselves on. The dates on the seals can also help historians establish relative time lines of importance for these entities.

A Declaration of Scottish Independence

1. The letter argues that the Scots have fought for and maintained their property for a long time (an unbroken line of 113 kings); they also claim that they have the protection of St. Andrew and have been good Christians, faithful to the religion of Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, victory belongs to the winner and there are no “fair” rules about conquest. Even though the Scots make two arguments, one political and one religious, there is no guarantee of sovereignty based on either of those arguments.

2. The letter mentions crusading as an obvious incentive. The authors make a twofold argument: one, that there would be more kings, knights, and other persons available for crusades to take on the infidels in the Middle East if there was not so much infighting taking place within Europe. The second argument is that if the Scots did not have to worry about the English coming to take their land, then they, too, would be available for crusades. The obvious implication is that if the pope stepped up and ordered a halt to the English efforts at conquest, he would have both English and Scottish troops available for the crusades.

3. The letter was dated 1320 c.e. This means that the papacy has been moved to Avignon, France, and the popes are, for intents and purposes, under the control of the French kings. This has some positive aspects for the Scots writing this appeal. The French and English have long been at war with each other over English lands in France. Also, the Scots have often allied themselves with the French against the English. On the one hand, it would work to the benefit Scots and it would be against the interests of the English. On the other hand, with English attention not directed towards the Scots, they could turn against the French, their traditional enemies.

Responses to the Black Death

1. In the description, it is almost as if the disease just appeared as a consequence of the Tartars laying siege to the city of Caffa. His use of the term *infested* brings up a suggestion that they were disease-ridden to start with. There is an idea that the disease up as a natural consequence of what the Tartars were doing. There is also an implication that the disease was divine justice: “… raining down from heaven to strike and crush the Tartars’ arrogance.”

- Once the disease moves on to hit the Christian/European populations, his writing mentions possible ways in which the disease was spread and the efficacy of efforts to stop the transmission of the disease. He mentions that the disease is indiscriminate, striking regardless of religion or ethnicity.

2.The reason why the Council of Cologne wants to quell violence against the Jews is not really for the benefit of the Jews. As stated in the passage, they are concerned that “… it could lead to the sort of outrages and disturbances which would whip up a popular revolt among the common people—and such revolts have in the past brought cities to misery and desolation.” In other words, it would devastate the city and everyone one would suffer. If you consider that most city councils were made up of wealth merchants and businessmen, it is understandable why they would not want this sort of destruction to take place—it would harm their interests.

- Interestingly enough, this reasoning does work with and against the prevailing treatment of Jews in Europe. The letter by the council acknowledges that these sorts of things have happened before and it has the capacity to harm the entire community. Again, their efforts are more motivated out of self-interest than interest in protecting the Jews within their community. It goes against what we’ve seen because it advocated not attacking the Jews but goes along in that the protection for the Jews is in no way offered for the protection of the Jews.

3.From a twenty-first-century perspective, no, these perspectives do not display a rational approach to the horrors of the Black Death. One has to look at the event in historical context. This is a disaster of biblical proportions; massive depopulation of Europe; an indiscriminate wave of death that strikes just about everyone from all walks and stations of life. In the mind of the medieval European something this devastating could only come from the hand of God. So, without the modern-day understanding of disease and disease transmission, there is really no rational way for those in the Middle Ages to understand what is going on and as a consequence there is no logical action to halt or even understand what is taking place.

Reviewing the Objectives

1*.* One of the more significant ways the Mongols had an impact on Europe was that formation of the Mongol Empire widened channels of communication, commerce, and cultural exchange between Europe and the Far East, leading to the emergence of a new world system. Although there had long been strong links between the Mediterranean world and the Far East (trade along the network of trails known as the Silk Road can be traced far back into antiquity, and there had been overland networks were bound together by Europe’s waterways and by the sea) it was not until the late thirteenth century that Europeans were able to establish direct connections with India, China, and the Spice Islands of the Indonesian archipelago. To facilitate the movement of people and goods within their empire, the Mongols began to control the caravan routes that led from the Mediterranean and the Black Sea through Central Asia and into China, policing bandits and making conditions safer for travelers. They also encouraged and streamlined trade by funneling many exchanges through the Persian city of Tabriz, on which both land and sea routes from China converged. These measures both accelerated and intensified the contacts possible between the Far East and the West. Prior to Mongol control, these commercial networks had been inaccessible to most merchants. Now travelers at both ends of the route found their way smoothed. The view of the world that had been fostered by Mongol rule continued to exercise a lasting influence. European memories of the Far East would be preserved and embroidered, and the dream of reestablishing close connections between Europe and China would survive to influence a new round of commercial and imperial expansion in the centuries to come.

2*.* Western civilizations’ increased access to the riches of the Far East during the period of the *Pax Mongolica* ran parallel to a number of ventures that were extending Europeans’ presence in the Mediterranean, and beyond it. These endeavors were both mercantile and colonial, and in many cases resulted in the control of strategic trade routes or islands by representatives of a single adventurous state.

- The medieval demand for gold accelerated during the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and could not be satisfied by these established trading relationships that existed and as a result changes were necessary. The luxuries coveted by Europeans were now too costly to be bought solely with bulk goods, which were in any case a cumbersome medium of exchange. Although precious textiles (usually silk) were a form of wealth valued by the Mongols, the burgeoning economy of the medieval globe demanded a reliable and abundant supply of more portable currency. There developed a rapid rise in a demand for coinage. Silver production, which had enabled the circulation of coinage in Europe, fell markedly during the 1340s as Europeans reached the limits of their technological capacity to extract silver ore from deep mines. This shortfall would lead to a serious cash-flow problem, since more European silver was moving east than could be now be replenished from extant sources. Gold therefore represented an obvious alternative currency for large transactions, and in the thirteenth century some European rulers began minting gold coins. But Europe itself had few natural gold reserves. To maintain and expand these gold coinages, new sources of gold were needed. The most obvious source was Africa, especially Mali and Ghana.

- Another characteristic was a change in the manner in which money and money contacts were maintained. The economic boom that resulted from the integration of European and Asian commerce called for the refinement of existing business models and accounting techniques. New forms of partnership and the development of insurance contracts helped to minimize the risks associated with long-distance trading. Double-entry bookkeeping, widely used in Italy by the mid-fourteenth century, gave merchants a much clearer picture of their profits and losses by ensuring that both credits and debits were clearly laid out in parallel columns, a practice that facilitated the balancing of accounts. The Medici family of Florence established branches of their bank in each of the major cities of Europe and were careful that the failure of one would not bankrupt the entire firm, as earlier branch-banking arrangements had done. Banks also experimented with advanced credit techniques borrowed from Muslim and Jewish financiers, allowing their clients to transfer funds without any real money changing hands—and without endangering their capital by carrying it with them. Such transfers were carried out by written orders, the direct ancestors of the check, the money order, and the currency transfer.

3*.* The popes of the thirteenth century continued to centralize the government of the Church (following the example laid out by Pope Innocent III) but they also became involved in protracted political struggles that compromised the papacy’s credibility. As a prime example, because the Papal States bordered on the kingdom of Sicily—which comprised the important city of Naples and southern Italy—subsequent popes came into conflict with its ruler, the Emperor Frederick II, who proved a fierce opponent. And instead of excommunicating him and calling for his deposition, the reigning pope called a crusade against him—a cynical admission of crusading’s overtly political motives. To implement this crusade they became preoccupied with finding a military champion to advance their cause. They found him in Charles of Anjou, the youngest brother of the French king Louis IX. Charles made matters worse by antagonizing his own subjects, who offered their allegiance to the king of Aragon. The pope then made Aragon the target of another crusade, which resulted in the death of the new French king, Philip III (r. 1270–1285). This constant use of papal authority to accomplish secular ends tarnished the reputation of the high office.

- Because of the political nature of these conflicts, Philip’s son, Philip IV, resolved to punish the papacy for misusing its powers. King Philip IV engineered a conflict between himself and Pope Boniface VIII. The pope had protested against Philip’s plan to bring a French bishop to trial on a charge of treason—thus violating the bishop’s ecclesiastical immunity. Philip accused Boniface of heresy and sent a troop of knights to arrest him at the papal residence. Boniface died a month later. Philip then forced the new pope, Clement V, to thank him publically for his zealous defense of the faith and then, in 1309, moved the entire papal court from Rome to Avignon (*ah-vee-NYON*), a city near the southeastern border of his own realm.

- On another level, the scandalous personal behavior of several popes, such as Clement VI who openly sold spiritual benefits for money and engaged in multiple sexual transgressions, brought the high office into disrepute. This lessening of the prestige and authority of the papacy would make it easier for others to challenge the Church, including Martin Luther.

- Another consequence of politicizing the papacy in this way is that it would open the door to the Great Schism, which follows shortly after.

4*.* The text defines sovereignty as inviolable authority over a defined territory.

- A king seeking to extend and maintain his sovereignty would need to enforce rights of lordship constantly over his territory and, if necessary, exert his rule. In that case, the king would either need to forge an alliance with any territories on the borderlands or negate their independence or might need to assert his sovereignty by absorbing these regions into an ever-growing kingdom.

- There is a problem with this system. A claim to sovereignty is only credible if it can be backed up with real power, and a state’s or ruler’s power must never seem stagnant or passive. The problem of sovereignty, then, is the zero-sum game: one state’s sovereignty is won and maintained by diminishing that of other states. The process of achieving sovereignty is thus an aggressive and often violent one, affecting not only the rulers of territories but also their peoples.

5*.* According to the text, in 2011, scientists were able to confirm that it can be traced to the deadly microbe *Yersinia pestis*, and that it did indeed originate in China. *Y. pestis* actually causes three different kinds of contagion: bubonic plague and its even deadlier cousins, septicemic and pneumonic plague. In its bubonic form, this microbe is carried by fleas that travel on the backs of rats; humans catch it only if they are bitten by an infected flea or rat. Bubonic plague attacks the lymphatic system, producing enormous swellings (buboes) of the lymph nodes in the groin, neck, and armpits. Septicemic plague occurs when an infected flea introduces the microbe directly into the human bloodstream, causing death within hours, often before any symptoms of the disease can manifest themselves. Pneumonic plague, perhaps the most frightening variation, results when *Y. pestis* infects the lungs, allowing the contagion to spread silently and invisibly, in the same way as the common cold.

- By 1300, Europe was connected to Asia and the lands in between by an intricate network that fostered commerce, communication, and connections of all kinds. This had positive and negative consequences. The quick spread of The Black Death would be one of the negative consequences. This deadly pandemic spread from China to Mongolia, northern India, and the Middle East during the 1330s and 1340s. By 1346, the plague had reached the Black Sea, where it was transmitted to the Genoese colonists at Caffa. Because of the increased trade links that had already been established as a result of the economic contacts fostered under the Mongols, Genoese ships brought it to Sicily and northern Italy. From Italy, it spread westward along trade routes, first striking seaports, then turning inland with the travelers who carried it. It moved with astonishing rapidity. By 1350 it had reached Scandinavia and northern Russia, then spread southward again until it linked up with the original waves of infection that had brought it from Central Asia to the Black Sea. The path the disease followed was one that was laid out by merchants and enterprising cities and countries seeking to make a profit from goods from the Far East.

People, Ideas, and Events in Context

1*.* The Mongols were one of many nomadic peoples inhabiting the vast steppes of Central Asia. Essentially, the Mongols were herdsmen whose daily lives and wealth depended on the sheep that provided shelter (sheepskin tents), woolen clothing, milk, and meat. But the Mongols were also highly accomplished horsemen and raiders.

- In the late twelfth century, a Mongol chief named Temujin began to unite the various tribes under his rule. He did so by incorporating the warriors of each defeated tribe into his own army, gradually building up a large and terrifyingly effective military force. In 1206, his supremacy over all these tribes was reflected in his new title: Genghis Khan, from the Mongol words meaning “universal ruler.” In 1209, Genghis Khan began to direct his enormous army against the Mongols’ neighbors. Taking advantage of the fact that China was then divided into three warring states, he launched an attack on the Chin Empire of the north, managing to penetrate deep into its interior by 1211. These initial attacks were probably looting expeditions rather than deliberate attempts at conquest, but the Mongols’ aims were soon sharpened under Genghis Khan’s successors. Shortly after his death in 1227, a full-scale invasion of both northern and western China was under way. In 1234, these regions also fell to the Mongols. In 1279, one of Genghis Khan’s numerous grandsons, Kublai Khan, would complete the conquest by adding southern China to this empire.

- This empire was also connected to western and central Asia in ways unprecedented in its long history. For Genghis Khan had brought crucial commercial cities and Silk Road trading posts (Tashkent, Samarkand, and Bukhara) into his empire. One of his sons, Ögedei, building on these achievements, laid plans for an even more far-reaching expansion of Mongol influence. Between 1237 and 1240, the Mongols under his command conquered the Russian capital at Kiev and then launched a two-pronged assault directed at the rich lands of the eastern European frontier. The smaller of the two Mongol armies swept through Poland toward Germany; the larger army went southwest toward Hungary. In April of 1241, the smaller Mongol force met a hastily assembled army of Germans and Poles at the battle of Liegnitz, where the two sides fought to a bloody standstill. Two days later, the larger Mongol army annihilated the Hungarian army at the River Sajo. It could have moved even deeper into Europe after this important victory, but it withdrew when Ögedei Khan died in December of that same year.

- These combined conquests of made them masters of territories that stretched from the Black Sea to the Pacific Ocean: one-fifth of the earth’s surface, the largest land empire in history. Within this domain, no single Mongol ruler’s power was absolute. Kublai Khan (1260–1294), who took the additional title Khagan or “Great Khan,” never claimed to rule all Mongol khanates directly. In his own domain of China and Mongolia, his power was highly centralized and built on the intricate (and ancient) imperial bureaucracy of China; but elsewhere, Mongol governance was directed at securing a steady payment of tribute from subject peoples, which meant that local rulers could retain much of their power.

- This distribution of authority made the Mongol rule flexible and adaptable to local conditions—in this, it resembled the Persian Empire (Chapter 3) and could also be regarded as building on Hellenistic and Roman examples.

- To facilitate the movement of people and goods within their empire, the Mongols began to control the caravan routes that led from the Mediterranean and the Black Sea through Central Asia and into China, policing bandits and making conditions safer for travelers. They also encouraged and streamlined trade by funneling many exchanges through the Persian city of Tabriz, on which both land and sea routes from China converged. These measures both accelerated and intensified the contacts possible between the Far East and the West. This improved trade relations helped to generate revenue for the empire.

2*.* One of the groups that benefited was merchants from the Italian city of Genoa. It was these same merchants from Genoa who controlled trade at the western ends of the Silk Road, especially in the transport depot of Tabriz. They would bring the items from the Far East back to Sicily and northern Italy. From Italy, these trade goods would spread westward and northward.

- Italian merchants, such as those from Genoa, began to sail through the Strait of Gibraltar and on up to the wool-producing regions of England and the Low Countries. This was a step toward the extension of Mediterranean patterns of commerce and colonization into the Atlantic Ocean.

- Merchants from Genoa had established trading colonies in Tunis to expedite this process, exchanging woolen cloth from northern Europe for both North African grain and sub-Saharan gold. They ended up establishing extensive interests in the western Mediterranean, where they traded bulk goods such as cloth, hides, grain, timber, and sugar.

- And as more and more mariners began to sail waters less familiar to them, pilots began to make and use special charts that mapped the locations of ports. Called *portolani*, these charts also took note of prevailing winds, potential routes, good harbors, and known perils. Increased trade meant a demand for increased information about the areas in which these merchants were going to trade. The greater demands of trade would require more information to make sailing safer and more economically reliable.

3*.* One of the new developments during this period was the rise in a philosophy called nominalism. This philosophy calls for humans to investigate the natural world and to better understand its laws—without positing any necessary connection between the observable properties of nature and the unknowable essence of divinity.

- The nominalists’ distinction between the rational comprehensibility of the real world and the spiritual incomprehensibility of God encourages investigation of nature without reference to supernatural explanations: one of the most important foundations of the modern scientific method. Nominalism also encourages empirical observation, since it posits that knowledge of the world should rest on sensory experience rather than abstract theories. Giotto’s artwork can be seen as an extension of this philosophy. He was preeminently an imitator of nature. His paintings have people and things from nature that look and behave like they would in real life. The emphasis is made to have these items seem lifelike, something that one could observe in nature.

- In his most famous work, the *Comedy*, Dante describes an imaginary journey through Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise, a journey beginning in a “dark wood”: a metaphor for the personal and political crises that threatened Dante’s faith and livelihood. In the poem, the narrator is led out of this forest and through the first two realms (Hell and Purgatory) by the Roman poet Virgil, who represents the best of classical culture. But he can only be guided toward knowledge of the divine in Paradise by his deceased beloved, Beatrice, who symbolizes Christian wisdom. In the course of this visionary pilgrimage, Dante’s narrator meets the souls of many historical personages and contemporaries, questioning them closely and inviting them to explain why they met their several fates: this is his ingenious way of commenting on current events and passing judgment on his enemies. In many ways, this monumental poem represents the fusion of classical and Christian cultures, Latin learning and vernacular artistry. Ultimately, Dante’s *Comedy* responded creatively to the political turmoil that engulfed Italy during his lifetime, a situation that was transforming the papacy in ways that he condemned. Indeed, many of the men whom Dante imaginatively placed in Hell were popes or men who had held high office in the Church, foreign rulers who sought to subjugate Italian territories (like the Holy Roman Emperor), or rapacious Italian princes and factional leaders who fought among themselves, creating a state of permanent warfare among and within cities (like Dante’s native Florence).

4*.* What was at stake was the traditional battle of who held the greater power and authority, was it the popes or the kings? This had always been a struggle between the two power groups since the rise of the Catholic Church. The actual cause for the conflict can be seen as an extension of that struggle. The papacy insisted on the final jurisdiction over members of the clergy. When Philip IV chose to prosecute a bishop for treason, he was placing church members under the legal authority of the king.

- The papacy’s residency at Avignon was called the “Babylonian Captivity”—it was a deliberate reference the forced kidnapping of the Jewish political and religious leadership when they were taken to Babylon during the sixth-century b.c.e. The obvious reference is that a corrupt, secular, and hostile force had taken away the spiritual leaders of the true faith (Christianity saw itself as an extension of the earlier Hebrew faith).

- Most medieval Christians accessed the Church at a local level, within their communities. In these churches, parish priests not only taught the elements of Christian doctrine, but also administered the sacraments (“holy rites”) that conveyed the grace of God to individual Christians, marking significant moments in the lifecycle of every person and significant times in the Christian calendar.

- Medieval piety came to revolve around these even sacraments: baptism, confirmation, confession (or penance), communion, marriage, extreme unction (last rites for the dying), and ordination (of priests). This sacramental system was the foundation on which the practices of medieval popular piety rested. These sacred ceremonies would help the believer in his or her journey toward salvation.

5*.* Thetext defines sovereignty as inviolable authority over a defined territory.

- A king seeking to extend and maintain his sovereignty would need to enforce rights of lordship constantly over his territory and, if necessary, exert his rule. In that case, the king would either need to forge an alliance with any territories on the borderlands or negate their independence or he might need to assert his sovereignty by absorbing these regions into an ever-growing kingdom.

- There is a problem with this system. A claim to sovereignty is only credible if it can be backed up with real power, and a state’s or ruler’s power must never seem stagnant or passive. The problem of sovereignty, then, is the zero-sum game: one state’s sovereignty is won and maintained by diminishing that of other states. The process of achieving sovereignty is thus an aggressive and often violent one, affecting not only the rulers of territories but their peoples, too.

- After the death of Philip Augustus in 1223, the heirs to the French throne continued to pursue an expansionist policy, pushing the boundaries of their influence out to the east and south. There were significant pockets of resistance, though, notably from the southwestern lands that the kings of England had inherited from Eleanor of Aquitaine and from the independent towns of Flanders that had escaped conquest under Philip Augustus.

- Louis IX was famous for his piety and for his conscientious exercise of his kingly duties. Unlike most of his fellow princes, he not only pledged to go on crusade—he actually went. And while both of his campaigns were notorious failures, they cemented Louis’ saintly reputation and political clout.

- First, Louis’ willingness to risk his life (and that of his brothers) in the service of the Church would give him tremendous influence in papal affairs, giving him a great deal of authority recognized by the pope. Second, the necessities of ensuring the good governance of his kingdom during his years of absence prompted Louis to reform or invent many key aspects of royal governance; this laid the groundwork for establishing a bureaucratic structure capable of maintaining authority over his lands. Third, Louis’ first crusading venture was seen as confirmation that the king of France had inherited the mantle of Charlemagne as the protector of the Church and the representative of Christ on earth.

- Unlike Louis, Edward had to build up the sovereignty of his state almost from scratch. When Edward himself became king in 1272, he took steps toward ensuring that there would be no further revolts on his watch, tightening his control on the aristocracy and their lands, diffusing their power by strengthening that of Parliament, reforming the administration of the realm, and clarifying its laws.

- Having seen to the internal affairs of England, Edward looked to its borders where he was able to extend his sovereignty at the cost of his neighbors. Since Welsh chieftains had been major backers of the barons who had rebelled against his father, Edward was determined to clean up the border region and bring “wild Wales” within the orbit of English sovereignty. He initially attempted to do this by making treaties with various Welsh princes, but none of these arrangements were stable or gave Edward the type of control he wanted. He accordingly embarked on an ambitious and ruthless campaign of castle-building, ringing the hilly country with enormous fortifications on a scale not seen in most of Europe; they were more like the crusader castles, and Edward certainly treated the Welsh (who were actually his fellow Christians) as infidels. Indeed, he treated conquered Wales like a crusader state, making it a settler colony and subjecting the Welsh to the overlordship of his own men. When his son, the future Edward II, was born in 1284 at the great castle he had built at Caernarvon, he gave the infant the title “Prince of Wales,” a title usually borne by a Welsh chieftain.

- Edward then turned to Scotland, England’s final frontier. Until now, control of Scotland had not been an English concern: the Scottish border had been peaceful for many years, and the Scottish kings did homage to the English king for some of their lands. In 1290, however, the succession to the Scottish throne was disputed among many rival claimants, none of whom had enough backing to secure an election. Edward intervened, pressing his own claim to the kingdom and seemingly prepared to take Scotland by conquest. To avoid this, the Scots forged an alliance with the French, but this did not prevent Edward’s army from fighting its way through to Scone Abbey in 1296. Scone was a symbolic target: the site of the Stone of Destiny on which Scottish kings were traditionally enthroned. So Edward seized it, brought it back to Westminster Abbey in London, and embedded it in the coronation chair of his namesake, Edward the Confessor, the last Anglo-Saxon king of England.

- Edward considered the subjugation of Scotland to be England’s manifest destiny: he called himself “the Hammer of the Scots,” and when he died he charged his son Edward II (1307–1327) with the completion of his task.

- Part of the problem is that for a claim to sovereignty to hold validity, a king had to press his claims and expand at the cost of his neighbors a claim to sovereignty is only credible if it can be backed up with real power, meaning that a state’s or ruler’s power could never seem stagnant or passive. This meant a constant struggle to assert authority.

- The most fundamental source of conflict, and the most difficult to resolve, was the fact that the kings of England held the duchy of Gascony as vassals of the French king; In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, when the French kings had not yet absorbed this region into their domain, this fact had seemed less of an anomaly. But as Europe’s territorial monarchies began to claim sovereignty based on the free exercise of power within the “natural” boundaries of their domains, the English presence in “French” Gascony became more and more problematic. That England also had close commercial links, through the wool trade, with Flanders—which consistently resisted French imperialism—added fuel to the fi re. So did the French alliance with the Scots, who continued to resist English imperialism.

6*.* According to the text, between the years 1315 and 1322, a cooling climate caused nearly continuous adverse weather conditions in northern Europe. Winters were extraordinarily severe. Rains prevented planting in spring or summer, and when a crop did manage to struggle through it would be dashed by rain and hail in autumn.

- In southern Europe, around the shores of the Mediterranean, the effects of climate change were more muted, and there were also different channels through which food could be distributed. Nonetheless, the overall health of this region suffered from the disruption of trade and the shortage of some staple goods, as well as from the highly unstable political situation we have already discussed.

- As food grew scarcer, prices climbed unpredictably. Cold summers and autumns were spent foraging for food. Hunting was restricted to the nobility, but even those who risked the death penalty for poaching found little game. Wages did not keep pace with rising prices, and so those who lived in towns and depended on markets had less to spend on scarce provisions. Only a year after the famine began, townspeople were dying of ailments that would not have been fatal in good years.

- The effects of the famine were especially devastating for children, since even those who survived would be highly susceptible to disease, due to the severe impairment of their immune systems.

7. What were the long- and short-term causes of the Black Death?

The Great Famine, which occurred right before the arrival of the disease, helped set the stage for a possible worsening of the Black Death. The effects of the famine were especially devastating for children, since even those who survived would be highly susceptible to disease, due to the severe impairment of their immune systems. This meant that the health of Europeans was already compromised before the arrival of the microbe.

According to the text, in 2011, scientists were able to confirm that it can be traced to the deadly microbe *Yersinia pestis*, and that it did indeed originate in China. *Y. pestis* actually causes three different kinds of contagion: bubonic plague and its even deadlier cousins, septicemic and pneumonic plague. In its bubonic form, this microbe is carried by fleas that travel on the backs of rats; humans catch it only if they are bitten by an infected flea or rat. Bubonic plague attacks the lymphatic system, producing enormous swellings (buboes) of the lymph nodes in the groin, neck, and armpits. Septicemic plague occurs when an infected flea introduces the microbe directly into the human bloodstream, causing death within hours, often before any symptoms of the disease can manifest themselves. Pneumonic plague, perhaps the most frightening variation, results when *Y. pestis* infects the lungs, allowing the contagion to spread silently and invisibly, in the same way as the common cold.

Thinking about Connections

1*.* Great questions in Western Civilization often take place around the same idea: what if the European world was changed in some manner (usually religious). Based on what the text has to say, the Mongol khans differed from most contemporary Western rulers in being highly tolerant of all religious beliefs. Imagine the difference that one circumstance would make. Because of the European world’s insistence that Christianity was the one true faith, many European nation-states and individual actors engaged in behavior that could be described as horrific: the crusades, the Inquisition, the wars between Catholics and Protestants, the efforts to wipe out the Albigensians and Waldensians, the frequent massacres of the Jews, the burning of witches; the list goes on. I think that one of the biggest changes would be the lack of killing for religious sake.

- Also, if the Mongols were successful in conquering most of Europe, what would the fate of Christianity be? Would the Catholic Church have fallen with the fall of Rome and the conquest of Italy? Yes, there would still be the conquest and death that comes from building an empire, but at least one component, religious war might be avoided.

2*.* The patterns of conquest were not new. Even the European interest in African gold that led them to this new way of colonization was not new. It had been going on for centuries, facilitated by Muslim middlemen whose caravans brought a steady supply from the Niger River to the North African ports of Algiers and Tunis.

- One thing that did change was the motive for conquest; the need for a valuable metal with which to create coins for a new world trading system. The medieval demand for gold accelerated during the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and could not be satisfied by these established trading relationships. The luxuries coveted by Europeans were now too costly to be bought solely with bulk goods, which were in any case a cumbersome medium of exchange. The burgeoning economy of the medieval globe demanded a reliable and abundant supply of more portable currency. Silver production, which had enabled the circulation of coinage in Europe, fell markedly during the 1340s as Europeans reached the limits of their technological capacity to extract silver ore from deep mines. This shortfall would lead to a serious cash-flow problem, since more European silver was moving east (thanks to greater contacts with the East during the Pax Mongolica) than could now be replenished from extant sources. Gold therefore represented an obvious alternative currency for large transactions, and in the thirteenth century some European rulers began minting gold coins. But Europe itself had few natural gold reserves. To maintain and expand these gold coinages, new sources of gold were needed. The most obvious source was Africa, especially Mali and Ghana—which was called “the Land of Gold” by Muslim geographers.

- The heightened European interest in the African gold trade, which engaged the seafaring merchants of Genoa and Catalonia in particular, coincided with these merchants’ creation of entrepreneurial empires in the western Mediterranean. During the thirteenth century, Catalan adventurers conquered and colonized a series of western Mediterranean islands, including Majorca, Ibiza, Minorca, Sardinia, and Sicily. Except in Sicily, which already had a large and diverse population that included many Christians, the pattern of Catalan conquest was largely the same on all these islands: expulsion or extermination of the existing population, usually Muslim; the extension of economic concessions to attract new settlers; and a heavy reliance on slave labor to produce foodstuffs and raw materials for export.

- These Catalan colonial efforts were mainly carried out by private individuals or companies operating under royal charters; they were not actively sponsored by the state—this was another new development. They therefore contrast strongly with the established colonial practices of the Venetian maritime empire, whose strategic ventures were focused mainly on the eastern Mediterranean, where the Venetians dominated the trade in spices and silks. Venetian colonies were administered directly by the city’s rulers or their colonial governors, and they included long-settled civilizations like Greece, Cyprus, the cities of the Dalmatian coast: so Venetian administration of these colonies laid just another layer on top of a many other economic, cultural, and political structures.

- The Genoese, to take yet another case, also had extensive interests in the western Mediterranean, where they traded bulk goods such as cloth, hides, grain, timber, and sugar. They, too, established trading colonies; but these tended to consist of family networks that were closely integrated with the peoples among whom they lived, whether in North Africa, Spain, or the shores of the Black Sea.

- One of the ways in which these new efforts of conquest and colonization differed is the religious seal that the Catholic Church put upon them. These often violent enterprises could be justified on the grounds that they were supporting papally sanctioned Christian causes. To take one prominent example, the strategic goal of the crusades that targeted North Africa in this era was to cut the economic lifelines that supported Muslim settlements in the Holy Land. Yet the only people who stood to gain from this were the merchants who dreamed of controlling the commercial routes that ran through Egypt; not only those that connected North Africa to the Silk Road, but the conduits of the sub-Saharan gold trade.

3*.* The medieval system appears like an earlier version of our new global economy. There were merchants then (companies now) whose interests went beyond those of the traditional state to which they were born or belonged to. These merchants understood that money could be made by dealing with people based on an economic self-interest that superseded that of traditional nation-state loyalty.

- The extent of the trade links also rivals that of today’s world. Goods and items from the Far East would travel across the world through an extensive network of merchants, cities and supply lines to make their way to the other side of the globe. Essentially the main difference would be the amount of time this travel took. Whereas travel then took months or even years to come across that vast distance, modern-day multinational shippers could cover that distance in days.

- Essentially it appears as if the system has merely been refined and streamlined but remains essentially the same. One could even argue that recent history in the last 150 years would be similar; the conquest of regions (such as Africa and Asia) in order to capture more markets and raw materials was not all that much different that the Mongols efforts to extend their own authority over a vast territory. There would be, however, one difference. The Mongols never made any pretense as to what they were doing or why. The colonialism of the European powers made substantial efforts to convince themselves that what they were doing was right because they were bringing Christianity to the other disparate populations of the world. The Mongols never rationalized what they were doing in terms of religion.