

UNIT 1: THE RISE OF DEMOCRATIC IDEAS

democracy - means "rule by the people"

- more than 2,000 years old, yet still considered the most modern form of govt.
- Greeks introduced the idea around 500 B.C.

The 4 "R"s of Democracy:

1. Representative govt. - elected officials represent the people who elect them
 - if voters disapprove of representatives, they can vote them out of office in the next election
 - people are the highest authority
2. Rule by Law - no one is above the law, everyone must obey the law
 - a written constitution serves to establish basic laws by which the people are governed
 - laws give people power and protection
 - laws that may be unjust can be changed (Martin Luther King, Jr., in the civil rights movement)
3. Rights of the Individual - each person is important, so each one has the right to make decisions, good or bad
 - civil rights - rights of citizens to be treated equally under the law, equality of opportunity
 - civil liberties - freedom of speech, press, religion, assembly, petition
4. Reason - democracies base their decisions on reasoned argument
 - debates in legislatures are aimed at finding the best solutions to problems through exchange of information and opinions

THE MIDDLE AGES - FEUDAL SOCIETY IN EUROPE: 500 A.D.-1350 A.D.

feudalism - system of rule by local lords who were bound to a king by ties of loyalty
- brought order out of chaos during the Middle Ages

knights - mounted warriors who served a lord

lords - greater nobles

vassals - lesser lords

- land was granted to knights in exchange for military service to lords + the king

feudal manor - lands administered by a lord

serfs - peasants who were tied to the land of lords

duties and obligations:

lords to serfs: 1. protected peasants in time of war (knights)

2. provided justice through a manor court

serfs to lords: 1. spent 3 days per week working for the lord (farming land, repairing the castle, digging the moat, etc.)

2. peasant families paid rent for land they farmed themselves

3. paid fees (mill for grain, oven for baking)

4. if male head of household died, heirs paid a fee for the right to continue farming the land

three field system - a method of crop rotation

- peasants planted winter crop in fall, summer crop in spring

- left 3rd field fallow (allowed soil to rest)

- next year, crops were rotated, with a different field left fallow

- system spread planting/harvesting over the year, didn't wear out the soil - new crops improved diet, reduced risk of starvation

The Catholic Church in the Middle Ages

Importance of the local parish priest:

1. for many, he was their only contact with the church
2. performed mass in the manor
3. helped the sick + poor
4. collected a tithe (church tax)
5. served as a teacher (if he could read or write)

Church had power within the social structure of feudalism:

1. kings + nobles enlisted educated clergy in their courts (they had major influence in political affairs)
2. Church controlled huge tracts of land (land = power)
3. high church officials were often feudal lords
4. the route to salvation was achieved through the seven sacraments (sacred rites administered through the parish priest)

religious orders - groups of monks and nuns who dedicated their lives to God

- they helped improve medieval life:

1. monastery farms used new agricultural techniques
2. some orders cared for the sick, orphans, the homeless

The Black Death - bubonic plague (carried by fleas on rats) - deadly disease that killed about one third of the people in western Europe in the 1300s

- farms were abandoned, trade collapsed, medieval economy in ruins

The Crusades

crusade - a military expedition against enemies of the church

- Pope Urban II called for the First Crusade in 1095 after Seljuk Turks took control of Palestine - Pope wanted to rescue the Holy Land from Muslims (he'd heard stories of Muslims attacking Christians)
- knights were eager to fight:
 1. Pope promised them salvation, excused them from some taxes and debts
 2. they heard of riches in the Holy Land
 3. some dreamed of carving out their own kingdoms in the Holy Land
- brutalities of the crusades - knights killed Muslim and Jewish men, women and children when taking Jerusalem
- effect on Jewish communities - Jews accused of killing Christian children, mobs attacked Jewish neighborhoods, Jews were prevented from owning land, forced out of most trades
- The Fourth Crusade - crusaders attacked Constantinople in 1204 (Venice's main trade rival)
- results:
 1. seriously weakened the Byzantine Empire
 2. attack on Constantinople diverted attention away from the Holy Land
 3. high ideals of early crusades gave way to greed
- crusades helped Europe emerge from the Middle Ages:
 - 1) shipbuilding, 2) trade with the Middle East, 3) increased travel helped expand Europeans' view/knowledge of other lands/people/cultures

The Hundred Years' War: 1337-1453 - France vs. England

-Eleanor of Aquitaine (France) married Henry II (England) - this brought vast French lands under English control - when Edward III of England claimed the French throne in 1337, war broke out

- new weapons introduced during this war: 1) longbow - knocked knights off their horses, 2) gunpowder - used in cannon - destroyed walls of fortified castles and towns

-Joan of Arc (1412-1431) - in 1429, she told French King Charles VII that heavenly voices had told her to lead French army against England - her faith and patriotism inspired the French to new victories

-1431- Joan was captured by Burgundians (French who were loyal to England), turned over to the English, tried for heresy, and burned at the stake

Effects of the 100 Yrs.' War:

France - emerged from war with a growing sense of national pride

- strong loyalty to the king (Louis XI)
- king gained power to raise taxes, kept a standing army (no longer had to depend on lords' knights)

England - kings now devoted full attention to England

- parliament (legislature) bargained for additional rights in exchange for approving new taxes

The Decline of Feudalism in Europe:

1. strong rulers emerged to protect people + provide good govt. - the need for a warrior class (knights) disappeared
2. growth of towns + money economy hurt feudal nobles
3. many nobles died in battle during 100 Yrs.' War
4. effect of longbow/gunpowder in warfare
5. taxes -> \$ -> kings' standing armies