

The Middle Ages

Lesson 1



MAIN IDEAS

1. Geography has shaped life in Europe, including where and how people live.
2. Christianity spread to northern Europe through the work of missionaries and monks.
3. The Franks, led by Charlemagne, created a huge Christian empire and brought together scholars from around Europe.
4. Invaders threatened much of Europe in the 700s and 800s.

Key Terms and People

Eurasia the large landmass that includes Europe and Asia

Middle Ages the period lasting from about 500 to about 1500

medieval another name for the Middle Ages

Patrick Christian missionary credited with converting Ireland to Christianity

monks religious men who lived apart from society in isolated communities

monasteries communities of monks

Benedict monk responsible for creating the Benedictine Rule, a set of rules for monks

Charlemagne warrior and king who led the Franks in building a huge empire

Lesson Summary

GEOGRAPHY SHAPES LIFE IN EUROPE

Europe is a small but diverse continent with different landforms, water features, and climates.

We call Europe a continent, but it is part of **Eurasia**, a large landmass that includes both Europe and Asia. The climates and vegetation vary widely from region to region. Its geography influenced where and how people lived. In southern Europe, most people lived on coastal plains or river valleys and farmed. Those near the sea became traders and seafarers. In northern Europe, the rivers provided transportation and towns grew along them. Farmers grew all sorts of crops on the excellent farmland near the cities. The flat land, however, made it easy for invaders to enter. These invasions changed Europe.

Why is Europe considered to be part of Eurasia?

Lesson 1, *continued***CHRISTIANITY SPREADS TO NORTHERN EUROPE**

As the Roman Empire fell, various groups from the north and east moved into former Roman lands, creating their own states and making their own kings. These kings often fought among themselves, dividing Europe into many small kingdoms. This marked the beginning of the **Middle Ages**, or **medieval** period.

In the early Middle Ages, most kingdoms of northern Europe were not Christian. The pope sent missionaries and converted much of Britain, then Germany, and France. One early missionary, **Patrick**, was an English Christian who took it upon himself to convert Ireland. Unlike missionaries, **monks** lived apart from society in isolated communities, where they prayed, worked, and meditated. Communities of monks, or **monasteries**, were built all over Europe in the Middle Ages. Most monks followed a strict set of rules created in the early 500s by **Benedict**.

How was Europe ruled at the beginning of the Middle Ages?

Why did Patrick go to Ireland?

THE FRANKS BUILD AN EMPIRE

In the 500s, a powerful Germanic tribe called the Franks conquered Gaul, the region we now call France. The Franks became Christian and created one of the strongest kingdoms in Europe. The Franks reached their greatest power during the 700s under **Charlemagne** (SHARH-luh-mayn). Religious scholarship flourished in Charlemagne's time.

Underline the name of the most powerful leader of the Franks.

INVADERS THREATEN EUROPE

While Charlemagne was building his empire, Europe was being attacked on all sides by invaders. The most fearsome invaders were the Vikings from Scandinavia.

Who were the most fearsome invaders during Charlemagne's reign?

Lesson 1, *continued*

CHALLENGE ACTIVITY

Critical Thinking: Make Inferences The life of a monk was strict. Write a letter from the point of view of someone who wishes to join a monastery. Explain why you want to live the life of a monk.

DIRECTIONS Read each sentence and fill in the blank with the word in the word pair that best completes the sentence.

1. The large landmass that includes both Europe and Asia is called _____ . (**Eurasia/Northern Europe**)
2. _____ were religious men who lived apart from society in isolated communities. (**Charlemagne/Monks**)
3. The _____ fall between ancient times and modern times. (**medieval/Middle Ages**)
5. One of the first missionaries to travel to northern Europe was _____ , who took it upon himself to teach people about Christianity. (**Benedict/ Patrick**)
6. _____ was a brilliant warrior and a strong king who led the Franks in building a huge empire. (**Patrick/Charlemagne**)
7. Monks live in communities called _____. (**monasteries/ medieval**)
8. An Italian monk by the name of _____ created a set of rules that most European monasteries followed. (**Patrick/Benedict**)
9. Another name for the Middle Ages is the _____ period. (**monasteries/medieval**)